

# PROCEEDINGS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH IN EDUCATION & SCIENCE

 **ICRES2024**

APRIL, 27-30

ANTALYA/TURKEY

EDITORS

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www.icres.net

**Volume 1, Pages 1-2855**

**Proceedings of International Conference on Research in Education and Science**

**© 2024 Published by ISTES**

**ISBN: 978-1-952092-63-3**

**Editors: Mack Shelley & Omer Tayfur Ozturk**

**Articles: 1-186**

**Conference: International Conference on Research in Education and Science (ICRES)**

**Dates: April 27-30, 2024**

**Location: Antalya, Turkiye**

**Publication Date: December 01, 2024**

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# The Comparison of Self-Esteem of Elementary School Students Based on Geographical Analysis

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**Abstract:** Self-esteem is one of the factors that influence children's social-emotional development. The level of self-esteem was determined by the surrounding environment which includes the family, school and community environment. At this time there is still limited research that examines student self-esteem at the elementary school level based on geographical factors. The purpose of this research is to find out whether there are differences in the self-esteem of students who live in rural area and students who live in urban. The approach used in this study was a quantitative approach to comparative research. The population of this study were elementary school students who lived in rural area with 50 students as respondents and students who lived in urban with 50 students as respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The data collection technique used in this study was the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, observation and interviews. While the data analysis technique used was descriptive statistics and independent sample t test. The results of the study showed that there were significant differences in self-esteem between students who live in rural and students who live in urban. In addition, the self-esteem of students who live in villages is lower than the self-esteem of students who live in cities.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, Geographical analysis, Elementary school students

**Citation:** Hidayat, A. R., Eliasa, E. I., & Supramono, A. (2024). The Comparison of Self-Esteem of Elementary School Students Based on Geographical Analysis. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1-14), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Social and emotional development in children is essential in shaping the child's personality and patterns of interaction with the surrounding environment. Each child can experience different emotional and social



development. Factors such as the family environment, social interactions, and personal experiences can influence a child's social and emotional development. Socio-emotional competence refers to an individual's ability to acquire and effectively apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, express empathy for the feelings of others, build and maintain positive relationships with peers, and make responsible decision (Wang et al., 2019). Lack of socio-emotional competence is the root cause of various psychological and behavioral problems, which seriously hinder students' academic progress and growth of body and mind (Rautakoski et al., 2021). Therefore, social-emotional competence can be an important factor affecting social adaptability (Liu et al., 2023). One aspect that is closely related to individual social and emotional development is self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation or emotional response to their physical characteristics, personality, social identity, and behavior (Liu et al., 2023).

Self-esteem is an individual's assessment and perception of his own worth (Donnellan et al.; MacDonald & Leary, cited in Orth et al., 2018). It includes generally held and internalized attitudes about oneself, including individual beliefs, feelings, and evaluations of their abilities, physical appearance, self-worth, and potential. Self-efficacy, empathy and emotional intelligence have a significant positive relationship with self-esteem (Fuentes et al., 2019). Self-esteem can affect how a person views and relates to himself, others, and the world around him. High self-esteem leads to an increase in one's social relations, social relations and self-esteem have a reciprocal relationship in all stages of life which reflects positive feedback (Harris & Orth, 2020). High self-esteem is closely related to good health, success in academics, and coping with stress (Sowislo & Orth; Di Guinta et al.; cited in Pinquart & Gerke, 2019).

The importance of self-esteem lies in positive personal feelings and self-esteem (García et al., 2019). Individuals with healthy self-esteem tend to have stronger beliefs in overcoming challenges and facing failure. They tend to feel valuable, competent, and valuable as individuals. High self-esteem can also affect other aspects of a person's life, including mental health, physical health, interpersonal relationships, and academic or professional achievement (Orth & Robins, 2022). Self-esteem is very important for understanding one's well-being and success (Monteiro et al., 2022). Individuals with a high level of self-esteem can be identified through the following characteristics: having self-respect, considering themselves a valuable person, appreciate his abilities, but still admit his mistakes. Meanwhile, individuals with low self-esteem are known through the following characteristics: these individuals lack self-esteem, think that they are worthless, and have weak abilities (Altmann & Roth, 2018).

Self-esteem focuses on two main functions, especially its relation to positive psychology, self-control or regulation, and positive emotions. One of the first important functions is self-protection, which is related to the maintenance of identity. This is related to protection from stress in everyday life, help in dealing with disappointment, and bounce back from failure. The next function relates to increasing or developing self-capacity. This is related to the role of self-esteem to help move beyond the comfort zone, the courage to take risks to cross the limits of ability, see new opportunities, explore new dimensions of life, career, and interpersonal dimensions (Mruk, 2018).

Self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative attitude towards oneself (Rosenberg cited in Pinquart & Gerke, 2019). In addition to positive attitudes, negative attitudes also affect individual self-esteem. Self-esteem can be influenced by factors such as life experiences, environmental influences, social interactions, and the judgments and criticisms of others. Traumatic experiences or repeated demeaning experiences can damage a person's self-esteem and lead to the development of low self-esteem. In addition, there are other factors that influence self-esteem. Academic difficulties experienced in everyday life have an impact on self-esteem, the decrease in self-esteem becomes greater when facing difficulties (Gá et al., (2022). People who have high self-esteem are more resistant to environmental influences that are inconsistent with their own observations, and they are able to solve problems in an easier way than people who have low self-esteem (Cesar et al., 2021).

Self-esteem can be developed and enhanced through steps such as recognizing and changing negative thought patterns, honing skills and talents, setting realistic goals, dealing with fear, and honing social skills. Achievement, social support, and positive recognition can also contribute to increased self-esteem. It is important to remember that self-esteem is not about feeling better than others or being perfect. This relates to self-acceptance with all the strengths and weaknesses possessed, and the recognition that all individuals have value and dignity as human beings.

Self-esteem is very important for individual mental development. As in the previous explanation, self-esteem influences an individual's perspective on himself and the surrounding environment so that self-esteem becomes one of the determining factors for success in an individual's life. High self-esteem correlates with a better ability to handle stress and problems. Conversely, low self-esteem will have difficulty solving problems. Self-esteem affects the way a person makes decisions. This affects someone in living their life, they will be more confident, optimistic, and easy to actualize themselves in achieving their goals. Adolescents with low self-esteem have poorer mental and physical health, poorer economic prospects, and higher rates of criminal behavior during adulthood (Park, 2018). Self-esteem issues can contribute to behaviors such as problems with alcoholism, drug addiction, and engaging in sexual problems, as well as other harmful behaviors (Baumeister & Campbell cited in Park, 2018).

There are several factors affecting self-esteem, including environment, gender, socioeconomic, social relationships, and age (Orth et al., 2018). The surrounding environment has a more dominant influence on self-esteem. This includes the family, school and community environment. As stated Łukasiewicz & Sokulska (2018) factors influencing self-esteem are the support from the people around them, including the parenting style (Peng et al., 2021) and peers. Parents are one of the most significant influences on self-esteem and the main source of positive and negative experiences in a child's life (Park, 2018). Thus, the environment has an impact on individual self-esteem. As stated by Orth et al., (2018) that both genes and environment have an effect on self-esteem, but environmental factors have a greater influence than genes.

Several studies have stated that environmental factors have a significant impact on a person's self-esteem. This environmental factor is related to the geographical conditions of an area such as remote areas and urban areas.

This geographical condition allows for different circumstances in socioeconomic, cultures, and social relations. All of these aspects play a role in determining the condition of self-esteem. As an example, students who live in urban environments have more benefit by having teachers providing emotional and academic support. Relationship between student and teacher in urban environments can help determine the future success of students living and studying in urban (Akin & Radford, 2018). Meanwhile, rural areas tend to experience limitations in accessing public facilities such as education and health. Different things are shown in the aspect of social relations of children who are in the village. Friendships of children in rural areas are relatively compact and relationships between peers are closer than children in urban areas. This shows that children in urban areas tend to behave individually (Rui, 2019). The livelihood aspect also determines the social economic situation. The majority of rural areas have livelihoods related to agriculture. According to research conducted by Ma (2021), working as a farmer experiences difficulties in terms of socio-economic conditions, children's education, and welfare.

Paselloreng Village is one of the villages in Gilireng District, Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The village is a transmigration destination village determined by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia. Most of the people living in Paselloreng Village have livelihoods related to agriculture and animal husbandry. The education level of the people in the village is still in the low category. Based on this, it is necessary to know the state of self-esteem of students who live in Paselloreng Village to obtain an overview of the state of self-esteem based on the geographical location of an area.

## Method

This research uses a quantitative approach with a comparative research type. This study aims to determine differences in student self-esteem based on the geographic conditions where they live. This study will compare the self-esteem of students who are in rural areas and urban areas. Respondents in this study were elementary school students who lived and studied in coastal areas with a total of 50 students. As a comparison, the researcher also took respondents with the same level and lived in urban areas with a total of 50 students. The subjects in this study were elementary school students in grades 5 and 6.

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling taking into account several reasons such as the same level of education, the average age in the group, and the proportion of male and female students. Data collection techniques used in this study are Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, observation and interview. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a standard source that is widely known and used to measure self-esteem. This scale consists of 10 items which are divided into 5 positive statements and 5 negative statements. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale rated on a Likert scale. Respondents can check one of the four choices with the answers: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. This scale has been scored within a range of a minimum score of 10 and a maximum score of 40 (Sinclair et al. cited in Garcia et al., 2019).

The data analysis technique used is descriptive statistics and independent sample t test. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the average self-esteem between students who live in rural areas and students who live in urban areas. Meanwhile, independent sample t test used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the self-esteem of students who live in rural and urban students.

## Results

This study aims to find out two things. First, a description of student self-esteem in villages and cities. Second, differences in self-esteem of students who are in the village and in the city. The following is a descriptive analysis of the self-esteem data of students living in villages and cities.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Self-Esteem

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Sum
Self-Esteem of Rural Student	22,82	22,50	21	3,180	18	30	1141
Self-Esteem of Urban Student	32,34	32,00	35	4,138	21	39	1617

Based on table 1 above, it is known that the average (mean) self-esteem of students living in rural areas is 22,82 in the moderate category, the standard deviation is 3,180, the highest value is 30 and the lowest value is 18. Meanwhile, the average value (mean) self-esteem of students who live in urban areas is 32,34 in the high category, a standard deviation of 4,138, the highest score is 39 and the lowest score is 21. The mean difference (mean) between the self-esteem of students who live in villages and in the city of 9,52.

### Self-Esteem Description of Students Living in Rural Area

Table 2. Self-Esteem of Rural Student

Category	Score Range	The Number of Student	Percentage (%)
$30 \leq X$	High	2	4,0%
$20 \leq X < 30$	Moderate	40	80,0%
$X < 20$	Low	8	16,0%

Based on table 2, it is known that there are 2 students who have a high category with a percentage of 4,0%. While the number of students who have a moderate category is 40 students with a percentage of 80,0%. The number of students who have low self-esteem is 8 students with a percentage of 16,0%.

### *Self-Esteem Description of Students Living in Urban Area*

Based on table 3, it is known that there are 37 students who have a high self-esteem with a percentage of 74,0%.

While the number of students who have a moderate self-esteem category is 13 students with a percentage of 26,0%. There are no students who are in the low self-esteem category.

Table 3. Self-Esteem of Urban Student

Category	Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
$30 \leq X$	High	37	74,0%
$20 \leq X < 30$	Moderate	13	26,0%
$X < 20$	Low	0	0%

#### Normality Test

The normality test was carried out to find out whether the data is normally distributed. The normality test is one of the assumption tests to determine the type of hypothesis test that will be used, whether the test is parametric or nonparametric. Data conditions are said to be normally distributed when Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) greater than 0,05. The following are the results of the self-esteem normality test for rural students and urban students.

Table 4. Normality Test of Students' Self-Esteem

Data	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Explanation
Self-Esteem of Rural Student	0,087	$0,087 > 0,05 = \text{normal}$
Self-Esteem of Urban Student	0,200	$0,200 > 0,05 = \text{normal}$

Table 4 shows that student self-esteem in villages and cities is normally distributed. This can be seen from the results of the Asymp value. Sig. (2-tailed) self-esteem of students in villages and cities is more than 0,05. Asymp value. Sig. (2-tailed) student self-esteem in the village is 0.087 while the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) self-esteem of students in the city is 0.200. Thus, it can be concluded that student self-esteem data in villages and cities is normally distributed so that parametric tests can be carried out for hypothesis testing.

#### Homogeneity Test

Homogeneity test was carried out to find out whether the data from the two samples is homogeneous. The data is said to be homogeneous if the significance value is greater than 0,05. The following is the data on the results of the student self-esteem homogeneity test in villages and cities.

Table 5. Results of homogeneity test

Data	Sig.	Explanation
Self-Esteem between Rural and Urban Students	0,054	$0,054 > 0,05 = \text{homogeneous}$

Table 5 shows that the homogeneity test results between students' self-esteem in villages and cities are

homogeneous. This can be seen from the value of Sig. self-esteem between students in the village and in the city of 0.054 more than 0.05. Thus, the self-assessment data between students in the village and in the city is homogeneous so that a hypothesis test can be carried out using a parametric test.

### *Hypothesis Test Results*

The results of the hypothesis test are determined by the results of the assumption test, based on the results of the normality test it is known that the self-esteem data of students in villages and cities is normally distributed, while based on the results of the homogeneity test it is known that the self-esteem data of students from rural and urban groups is homogeneous. Thus, it is determined that the hypothesis test used is the independent sample t-test.

### *Independent Sample t-Test*

Independent Sample t-Test aims to test two sample groups that have no relationship. The data tested using this analysis is the self-esteem of students in villages and cities. This analysis was conducted to find out whether there are differences between students' self-esteem in villages and students' self-esteem in cities. The data is significantly different if the Sig. (2-tailed) more than 0,05. The following are the results of testing the differences in student self-esteem in villages and cities.

Table 6. The Result of Independent Sample t-Test

<b>Data</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Self-Esteem of Rural and Urban Students	0,000	0,000 < 0,05 = significant

Based on table 6, it is known that the Sig. (2-tailed) the self-esteem of students in villages and students in cities is 0,000, less than 0,05. The research hypothesis is formulated as follows.

$H_0$  : There are significant differences in self-esteem between rural and urban students

$H_1$  : There is no significant difference in self-esteem between rural and urban students

Based on the results of the independent sample t-test, it is known that  $H_0$  accepted and  $H_1$  rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there are significant differences in self-esteem between students in villages and students in cities. Furthermore, based on the results of descriptive statistics, it is known that the self-esteem of students in villages is lower than that of students in cities.

## **Discussion**

At the present time, there are not many research results that examine self-esteem comparisons in terms of geographical factors. Most of the current research focuses on adolescent self-esteem, so it is rare to find the results of research studies for elementary school students. This study aims to determine self-esteem between



students who live and attend school in villages and cities. Self-esteem can be interpreted as the way a person views his abilities. The level of a person's self-esteem is different and influenced by various factors, both factors that come from within a person (internal factors) and factors that come from outside (external factors).

Based on research data collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, it is known that there are significant differences in self-esteem between rural students and urban students. The results of the analysis show that the self-esteem of students in villages is lower than that of students in cities. These results are in line with research conducted by Tauro et al., (2018) which shows there is a significant difference between the self-esteem of urban adolescents and rural adolescents. In addition, adolescents living in urban areas have higher self-esteem than adolescents living in rural areas. The difference in self-esteem of students who live in villages and cities is influenced by various factors including geographical factors. As stated by Ma (2021) that there are differences in aspects of mental resilience, self-esteem, emotional and imitative behavior based on geographical conditions. Geographical factors include the environment where the child lives including the family, school and community environment. The surrounding environment has an impact on the growth and development of both physical and psychological children.

Geographical factors are closely related to ecological aspects. According to Bronfenbrenner cited in Buser et al., (2020), in ecological systems theory, an individual is believed to be part of an integrated functional system which includes various psychological processes such as cognitive, affective, emotional, motivational and social interacting with one another. The ecological aspect consists of five systems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Ecological theory stems from an understanding of the relationship between environmental conditions and human behavior (Stokols cited in Buser et al., 2020). Ecological theory comes from various types of scientific disciplines, including the health sciences which are heavily influenced by community and developmental psychology (Eriksson et al., 2018).

The ecological system is a wide broad scope related to the development of individual psychology. In ecological studies, the environment is the core connected to many aspects of life, the environment can have a positive or negative impact on individuals. One of them is the impact on self-esteem as a result of interaction with the environment. The low self-esteem of students who live in villages can be caused by limitations in accessing public facilities, such as the low quality of education, caused by limited facilities and infrastructure. Rural areas tend to experience infrastructure gaps in the field of communication media, especially in the provision of internet facilities. This gap is motivated by socio-economic factors and geographical factors (Hampton & Shin, 2023).

On the other hand, urban areas are associated as areas that have adequate supporting facilities. In general, the urban situation is synonymous with economic growth, good quality education, wider employment opportunities, higher incomes and access to quality health services. (Dorélien & Xu, 2022). The learning environment, self-esteem, and resilience are drivers of student success in urban areas (Fallon cited in Akin & Radford, 2018). However, in terms of teaching aspects, villages and cities are relatively similar, because the applied curriculum

has the same standard in each region. The teaching process carried out by rural teachers and urban teachers has similarities, especially in the material structure that serves as reinforcement in pedagogical practice (Martin & Mills, 2022).

The family environment plays a key role in the process of social and emotional development of children, especially in the aspect of self-esteem. The home environment is the main factor influencing the development of children's self-esteem at an early age to adulthood with long-term effects (Orth, 2018). The quality of the home environment includes quality of parenting, cognitive stimulation, and physical home environment, quality of parental relationships, presence of fathers, maternal depression, and family poverty status. (Orth, 2018). Parenting styles, especially parenting styles applying warm family treatment and associated with the internalization of social values, produces high self-esteem (Martinez et al., 2020). Wrong parenting patterns will result in aggressive child behavior patterns (Perez-Gramaje et al., 2020). High educational stress, physical and emotional violence originating from the family environment are the main factors affecting low self-esteem (Nguyen et al., 2019). Positive relationships between parents and children can increase children's self-esteem and these two aspects affect emotional and behavioral problems in children (Shi et al., 2022). Parental support, especially mothers, has a positive relationship with self-esteem and can reduce the likelihood of being involved in deviant behavior (Liu et al., 2018).

The relationship existing between children and peers, especially in the school environment, also influences the child's self-esteem. The school environment includes teacher and peer relationships in which it becomes a determining factor in the development of children's self-esteem (Chen & Ma, 2023). The impact of this relationship can be either a positive impact or a negative impact. The negative impact will affect the low self-esteem of students. Children who have low self-esteem will more easily become victims of their peers. This happens because when they communicate both verbally and non-verbally, they are unable to defend themselves or fail to defend themselves when they become victims so that the incident is likely to recur (Geel et al., 2018). Intervention from the family and school environment needs to be done to increase self-esteem as an effort to prevent risky behavior (Banstola et al., 2020). Time spent with family and peers has a positive relationship to self-esteem, more time spent with family and peers is followed by an increase in self-esteem (Hampton & Shin, 2023). The community environment also influences the state of children's self-esteem, including patterns of community behavior playing a role in the state of children's self-esteem. An unsafe environment will have an impact on feelings of anxiety and worry which have an impact on low self-esteem.

As previously explained, geographical aspects affect student self-esteem. The impact arising from this influence can be either a positive influence or a negative influence which will determine the level of student self-esteem. The existence of social support from the environment has a positive effect on self-esteem. Students who receive high social support tend to have high self-esteem, self-esteem also has a positive relationship with academic achievement (Li et al., 2018). Along with increasing social support, there is an increase in self-esteem (Wang et al., 2019). On the other hand, low social support has an effect on low student self-esteem. Social feedback is the most relevant aspect in forming self-esteem. This is influenced by social support or exclusion based on ties that

are established from a closer or wider social environment. The existence of the behavior of comparing oneself with others can increase or reduce one's self-esteem (Schmuck et al., 2019). Low self-esteem is an important factor that can increase susceptibility to depressive symptoms (Masselink et al., 2018). Self-esteem has a correlation with anxiety, depression, and academic stress which significantly affect the quality of life of students and their relationship with the emergence of suicidal ideation (Nguyen et al., 2019).

The state of self-esteem possessed by students will determine their social-emotional development in the future, the state of self-esteem influences many things. One of the conditions of self-esteem affects academic achievement which will ultimately determine one's quality of life. Self-esteem serves as a shield against mental health threats such as fear and loneliness so that it can overcome anxiety and depressive symptoms (Rossi et al., 2020). The social environment is one of the factors that influence self-esteem, in the social environment there are social values such as a culture of popularity (Purnama et al., 2021). For this reason, aspects of self-esteem need to get serious attention in the process of students' social-emotional development. Efforts need to be made to address this issue, one of which is through strengthening the role of the family, school and community. Social support is an effort to increase student self-esteem. The social context that is around significantly influences the student's condition (Bronfenbrenner cited in Li et al., 2018). The living environment needs to provide attention, show concern and help for students who experience difficulties. In addition, it is necessary to provide a place for students to develop potential that is oriented towards increasing self-esteem. Things that can be done by doing physical activity. As stated by Dale et al., (2019) that increasing physical activity affects the increase in self-esteem. This research is limited to testing whether there are significant differences in self-esteem between rural students and urban students, especially students at the elementary school level. Due to the limited research that examines the influence of geography on student self-esteem, it is necessary to conduct similar research to increase data related to comparisons of self-esteem in villages and students in cities.

## **Conclusion**

Self-esteem is an attribute attached to an individual, self-esteem is seen as the way a human being sees his self-image. Self-esteem can be influenced by various factors. This study aims to examine the self-esteem of elementary school students in terms of geographical factors which include the condition of an area such as rural and urban areas. Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that there are differences in self-esteem between students who live in villages and students who live in cities. Furthermore, this study shows that the self-esteem of students who live in villages is lower than the self-esteem of students who live in cities.

## **Recommendations**

As a recommendation, future research can examine more deeply related to the dominant factors that influence the low self-esteem of students who live in villages. Schools have a vital task in creating conditions that can increase students' self-esteem. Schools are expected to realize this through the role of teachers in schools.

Teachers in rural areas are expected to be able to create a positive learning environment for students by providing assignments and challenges according to students' abilities. It is important for teachers to reward and recognize student achievement. In addition, teachers need to provide emotional support to students, especially when students experience failure. Meanwhile, teachers in cities can support students in participating in extracurricular activities that suit their talents and interests, teachers must encourage interaction and cooperation within the school environment, teachers must also encourage respect for diversity and build an inclusive culture in the classroom.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express gratitude for financial support on publication of this article from BPPT (Balai Penerimaan Pendidikan Tinggi)/ Center for Financing Higher Education of The Ministry of Education and Culture of The Republic Indonesia and LPDP (Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan)/ Indonesia Endowment Funds for Education of The Ministry of Finance of The Republic Indonesia with the Awardee ID Number 202231103976.

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# Leadership Education Value in Taoism Wu Wei and the Platonism Philosopher King

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**Abstract:** There is an essential concept in Taoist wisdom called Wu Wei. The term is Lao Zi's advice aimed at understanding the limits of human behavior as a leader to face various possibilities. This leadership concept has similarities and differences with Platonic teachings called Philosophers King, which has often become an ideal standard for leadership in the Western world. This research is intended to bring these two concepts of Eastern and Western leadership as materials for developing character-building education. This study uses the literacy comparison method to synthesize the two concepts above. The results of this study show that both the leadership teachings of Wu Wei-Lao Zi and the Platonic philosopher King favor the leader's intelligence to control himself to be able to control the conditions and others. Several differences between the two concepts can be considered to develop character education in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Leadership education, Wu Wei, Philosopher King , Daoism, Platonism

**Citation:** Pandanari, D. S., Kalumbang, Y. P. T., & Permatasari, Y. K. (2024). Leadership Education Value in Taoism Wu Wei and the Platonism Philosopher King. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 15-23), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Character education has become one of the objectives of education, especially in Indonesia. One of the goals of education is to shape people into responsible figures and understand morality in society. This further affects the development of the concept of leadership because, in that concept, there are goals that are the same as those aimed at by the object of character education. In Eastern philosophy, there is a teaching that is now being recognized as one of the beliefs by the Indonesian state, namely Taoism. Taoism has a philosophical foundation known worldwide as Daodejing (Michael, 2022), believed to be taught by a classical Chinese philosopher

named Lao Zi. In Daodejing, Lao Zi teaches a concept that is often repeated, namely the concept of Wu Wei. This concept is intended to teach humans to behave like water. The moral purpose of Wu Wei is that humans can explore themselves to master situations in everyday life. The self in Taoist philosophy is never separated from other people (Lai, 2007), so when a person can recognize himself, he will be able to recognize the condition of others.

Meanwhile, in classical Western philosophy, it is recorded that a famous philosopher, namely Plato, taught various subjects ranging from morality and politics to education. Plato is known as one of the developers of philosophy in Greece and the Western world because the concepts he taught influenced the development of philosophy and the development of world politics in general. As a philosopher and educator of wisdom, Plato proposed that a leader or King must be a philosopher as well. This concept is then commonly known as the King of Philosophers or Philosopher King. The development of the concept of the philosopher king later became the inspiration for the development of political science to see the virtues that must exist in a leader.

Due to its outstanding contribution to the world of education, morality, and especially the concept of leadership, this study seeks to find the harmony and differences between the two concepts. Both Wu Wei and King Philosophers can be considered in determining the direction of character education and leadership in Indonesia and the world. The purpose of this study is to find a synthesis of two leadership concepts with different worlds of discourse, namely in the eastern (China) and western (Greek) parts of the world.

## **Method**

The research method used in this thesis was a qualitative methodology, which was chosen to do the literature comparison on two objects (Wu Wei and Philosopher King) in the main discussion. This research is one of the results of a pre-research interview in which several respondents stated that Chinese philosophy should be proposed as material for character development education. This research is from April to June 2022 with several steps, namely discourse collection, literature collection, literature comparison, and analysis.

## **Findings**

### **Wu Wei Leadership**

Taoism is one of the oldest philosophical structures in the Eastern world. Taoism, developed in China, is believed to have been taught by Lao Zi around 500 BC. The book that Lao Zi and his disciples passed down is called the Daodejing or Tao Te Ching. The mention of teachings in the book is now called Taoism. The year 500 BC was when ancient China was still experiencing wars between nations. Each region has a head of state or King who seeks to defend his territory or seeks to expand his power. In this context, many intellectual figures teach philosophy, ethics, politics, literature, and even strategies for acting as a consequence of a life always haunted by war. These philosophers include Kong Qiu (commonly called Confucius), Han Fei, Li Zi, Mo Zi,

and Xun Kuang.

Among these names, the figure of Lao Zi is one of the most trusted in his teachings. He not only compiled his teachings based on revelation but also based on conversations with his students and on his experiences and observations of the context that included his people. In one part of Lao Zi's teachings, there is a dualism called the universal rule or law of nature, commonly known as Yin and Yang. These two concepts are the initial foundation that a philosophy student must understand. For Lao Zi, human actions must have two different but complementary sides. This foundation will also help students understand the concept of Wu Wei ethics.

Wu Wei's ethical concept cannot simply be called the primary Lao Zi teaching because there are many other principles that humans need to know to build a decent life. However, this concept is often referred to by Lao Zi because it is an essential principle for maintaining human survival. The following is Lao Zi's opinion that shows the importance of Wu Wei's teachings in Taoism:

*"The Dao... is at once the beginning of all things and the way all things pursue their path. When individual things possess this Dao, it becomes its character or virtue (de). The ideal life for the individual, the ideal order for society, and the ideal type of government are all based on and guided by it. As a way of life, it denotes simplicity, spontaneity, composure, weakness, and most importantly, non-action (Wu Wei)."* (Wang, 2012).

Philosophers and sinologists further developed this Wu Wei concept as the basis of leadership science because it contains practical attitudes that a leader can carry out. Xiang'er, a Daodejing catechist, has also identified the nature of an enlightened person in the Dao as a king figure (Michael, 2018). In other words, a supreme person (King) is a trait that Taoism aims to achieve. Wu Wei's translation can mean silence, controlling behavior, or controlling events. In addition, Wu Wei can also be interpreted as following the flow of life or acting like water (Y.-T. Lee et al., 2008). Another alternative to understanding Wu Wei is to understand it by not putting in much effort, not forcing one's will, not making any artificial effort, or being spontaneous and unintentional.

This very varied translation of Wu Wei gave rise to various interpretations. From an opposing point of view, Wu Wei teaches a person to be passive, lazy, do nothing, or surrender without trying. However, this interpretation is disputed by some philosophers and students of Taoism, giving examples such as Zhuangzi. Zhuangzi illustrates the importance of Wu Wei by describing the importance of Lao Zi's teachings to be silent and to know oneself or to be non-coercive (Small, 2019). Thus, Zhuangzi stated, "Flying with wings is easy. However, flying without wings is difficult. Being smart in science is easy. Being smart without knowledge is difficult." In this statement, Zhuangzi describes that the most significant human challenge is not to know many things in the world but to know himself or what is called Ziran (Wu & Kang, 2019). Since ancient times, many people have been brilliant but cannot control themselves or others. This is not the ideal attitude in Taoism. To understand how Wu Wei works, there is one of Lao Zi's teachings which reads:

"Not leaving the house already knows the world's problems. Not peeking from the window already understands

the laws of nature. The further he goes out in search of knowledge, the less he gets. So, Sheng Ren (a philosopher with a Dao spirit) did not go far to understand the world. It does not need to be obvious what the problem is. Not being forced to work.”(Wang, 2012) This statement of Lao Zi is an apt description of self-control and Wu Wei. Wu can also be interpreted as (non-), and Wei is an active behavior (or action). So literally, Wu Wei is non-action, which does not mean doing anything but doing based on Dao principles, which is doing the right thing at the right place and time. In Lao Zi's teachings, one does not need to put much effort into acquiring knowledge because one should be recognized. In addition, the effort made to know oneself is less than the effort that must be made to know the whole world. This is because, back in the teachings of the natural laws of Taoism, it is already established in Yin Yang.

Based on the context of the phenomena that existed in Lao Zi's lifetime, it takes a philosophical building to organize one's life. This makes the teachings of Lao Zi, including Wu Wei, can be interpreted according to the problems humans face. Wu Wei is one of Lao Zi's teachings that can be applied in character development education because this principle teaches one's ideals or standards of behavior to achieve ideal self-conditions or to live well as a leader. Several translations of Wu Wei are associated with human education to be wise.

The *first* is that Wu Wei was later developed into one of the foundations of leadership science, also often referred to as the science of imitating water or Water Leadership. In addition to his description of the metaphor of life like water, Lao Zi also tries to explain that a person who has self-control can allow himself to become one with nature and thus follow the prevailing natural conditions. A person who is wise and can know himself will be at one with nature and thus not manage nature (Nelson, 2009), exploit nature, or go against the laws of nature as proposed by Chen and Holt that actions that have intentions are very contrary to the universal will of nature. Where it causes destruction and destruction to the human world itself (Chen & Holt, 2002). In short, the nature of Wu Wei in this art of imitating water is to allow oneself (passive motion) to be in harmony with nature.

*Second*, Wu Wei can also be interpreted as abolition or self-emptying. This means that a person needs to try actively cleaning himself from the additional attributes attached. In other words, Wu Wei also emphasized the importance of letting go of oneself, or what in the modern world is known as selfishness. Signs of merit, rank, or fame are impurities that can make the 'water' in the soul impure. Through Wu Wei philosophy, Lao Zi taught a person how to discover his essence, which is that part of the Dao or that which is unspeakable, untouchable, and unrecognizable by simple human reason. Laozi, through Wu Wei, also does not want us to try too hard to recognize nature through all the knowledge that exists in the world because humans already have their small world, namely themselves. Thus, Lao Zi stated:

“The more you learn, the more knowledge you gain. The more we learn the Dao philosophy, the more we lose and the less we get less and less. So, it comes to the realm of 'Wu Wei' behavior. When it reaches the behavior of 'Wu Wei,' nothing cannot be done. Managing a country should not be associated with personal interests. If he has a personal interest, he is no longer fit to be a leader.” (Wang, 2012)

In the leadership of Wu Wei, a leader cannot have personal intentions or wills. Personal will, in this context, is a desire that is contrary to a person's role, name, or responsibility. As an individual who is expected to lead himself or others, a leader must understand Wu Wei's behavior in the sense of throwing away all intentions driven by his passion or lust. By marginalizing the name, a leader will not be bound by personal desires and create a transformative leadership process (Zhang & Tan, 2021).

Wu Wei, in a straightforward interpretation, does bring the conclusion that everything should be handled, not trying too hard, and even leading to an attitude of surrender. However, more than that, Wu Wei is an attitude to silence, silence, or calm all desires because the primary goal of Wu Wei is to increase human potential through the elimination of the control of Desire. With the removal of this control of Desire, humans can be at one with nature, where, in one case, a leader can listen to the voices of those who put their trust in him. Thus, the practice of a leader, according to Lao Zi's teachings, is to "minimize individual will and the practice of 'forgetting' one's tendencies and intentions brings perfection to one's capacities" (Wang, 2012).

The principle of Wu Wei aims to educate people to be calm and calm individuals through the path of self-control. Therefore, according to Lao Zi, someone, especially a compulsive leader, will leave his foundation (Yao & Chen, 2017). This has implications for the concept of leadership and character, where someone who does the Wu Wei principle can become a responsible leader, prioritizing the interests of others, not expecting rewards, and understanding ethical boundaries according to universal knowledge of natural laws.

### *The Leadership of the King of Philosophers*

Slightly different from the background experienced by Lao Zi when teaching Wu Wei self-regulation, Plato teaches the concept of the philosopher king to his students in the context of a sovereign state. The polis where Plato taught was in Athens, where wars could still be suppressed through political means. As the primary goal of Plato's education, he hoped that all his students could obtain self-fulfillment or maximize their abilities with another big goal is to build a good society. In the context of Plato, it is necessary to understand a slight difference from the current context where, at that time, Plato agreed to an oligarchic form of government. An oligarchy that is meant today is when there is a group of educated people willing to manage the running of a country.

Meanwhile, Plato disagreed with democracy because, for Plato, not all people can be responsible. After all, not all people are educated people, let alone a philosopher. However, because the ultimate goal of Plato's teachings is to create suitable conditions through thinkers, it is necessary to reconsider the identification of a good leader for Plato.

According to Plato, a good leader is a philosopher with other abilities than a king, and this concept is commonly referred to as a philosopher king. The philosopher king presupposes a person who studies wisdom, logic, ethics, metaphysics, and even rhetoric so that he has the maximum rational capacity. If someone already has this



ability, he can learn about politics, nature, and the state's workings. Thus, a philosopher king has a remarkable ability to control society and organize society and its devices. Plato is known to have high hopes for the intellectuals of his time. Thus, he revealed:

"There will be no end to the problems of the state ... mankind itself until philosophers become kings of the world ... and political and philosophical power thus fall into the same hands." (Plato, 2007). Nevertheless, there is a critique of this concept that not all philosophy students, even Plato's most prominent student, Aristotle, had the Desire to rule as a philosopher king. In addition, the leadership of an aristocratic state has many shortcomings because of the emergence of confusion in determining the leader (Kuljanin, 2019). In addition, not all philosophy students have a grand vision of a nation, even if they wish to participate in building a nation. Despite the criticism of the philosopher king in Plato's thinking, this concept is still suitable for developing organizational leadership traits (Zyglidopoulos, 2021). Therefore, we need to re-analyze the character of a leader, according to Plato, which is adequate for the development of character education.

The *first* characteristic that can be found is that the leader, according to Plato, must be able to solve problems. This problem can be overcome through reason and little physical strength. As an additional note, Plato also emphasizes the importance of physical health for his students even though the appeal could be more dominant in his teachings, emphasizing the world of ideas. While the *second* characteristic is the ability to control oneself. In this case, a philosopher king needs to do several things to practice self-control. Although Plato did not advocate scourge or self-denial as was done by the ascetic philosophers at that time, he still suggested the control of lust and Desire. Self-control can then be done by doing *sophrosune*, or a person's ability to be self-critical. By understanding his shortcomings, a leader can embody the nature of not being arrogant and trusting others. In the dialogue *Socrates and Critias* written by Plato, it is stated that this activity (*sophrosune*) (Wibowo, 2015) is the next step in knowing oneself apart from because a philosopher king can collect discourses that he must know. However, he also needs to map out what he needs to know. What discourse or knowledge he does not know.

The *third* characteristic is to understand reality, which can only be studied by the philosopher Soren. For example, to make sure someone is a friend or foe, several things must be considered both through ethical and political standards. Someone who is not trained to question things as philosophers always do will make mistakes as a leader because they only pay attention to a reality based on its advantages or disadvantages. For example, a philosopher who deserves to be a leader is someone who can question the value of beauty (Wogu et al., 2017). This affects the standard of human values and good values possessed by the philosopher king.

In addition, this trait also leads a person to be able to distinguish between good and bad things where law, diplomacy, education, and even trade require it. A prince (descendant of King) alone may not know it. Only philosophers can solve this problem. In short, according to Plato, the leader requires mastery of discourse on the things that are his responsibility (Bauman, 2018).

The *fourth* trait is to recognize and control others. Of course, this control cannot be applied by relying on

violence. Mastery over others can be achieved by understanding and willing to hear the opinions of others. Since a leader favors the opinions of many, he must also master the main idea or purpose of the opinions of others. Furthermore, a leader needs to filter ideas from the people around him, especially for ideas that have the potential to be implemented (Sarigiannidis, 2021). In other words, a leader needs to understand and master the discourse that exists in society. It is the ideas that exist in a society that become the reference for a philosopher king to lead.

The *fifth* characteristic is controlling the state without monopoly or using force. Plato is a philosopher who is most against violence. It is primarily self-directed, and the consequence of that concept is the opposition of violence to others. A philosopher king, even with vast power or a large military fleet, cannot arbitrarily do anything to injure people. This is stated in the term *heauton biazeisthai* (Pacewicz, 2006) or 'using cavalry force.' For Plato, a leader will find the ideal way to solve problems. Therefore, a leader is required to master much knowledge. The function of knowledge here is to find the best possible. If a leader does not have sufficient discourse, he will not know the problem, cannot find a way out, and usually, the last way to deal with problems is to make their own decisions (monopoly) or use violence.

#### *Combines The Concepts*

The similarity of the two concepts above is that both Plato and Lao Zi propose the nature of a wise leader. Lao Zi emphasizes leaders who nurture, protect, care for, and soothe. In other terms, leaders in Lao Zi's philosophy are maternal leaders (Flavel & Hall, 2020). Meanwhile, Plato's leadership is more Platonic because a good philosopher king, according to Plato, emphasizes the importance of mastering discourse and understanding other people so that they can make wise decisions.

In other words, leadership, according to Lao Zi, is passive, while leadership, according to Plato, is more active. By combining the two concepts above, an analysis emerges where there is a weakness in the interpretation of Wu Wei and Lao Zi's teachings, namely, when the question arises, where can one know the universal laws of nature without seeking or studying knowledge about them? However, character learning and science education, whether social, metaphysical, religious, or scientific, takes much time.

On the other hand, Plato's concept of the philosopher king also has shortcomings where a philosopher king is considered more necessary to recognize various sciences so that there is no definite explanation or clear principle about how much a leader needs to know himself, compared to his portion to recognize situations and people who put their trust in one, or, in other words, the leader needs to accept differences of opinion with a pluralistic attitude (Catana, 2020). This is a shortcoming of the concept of the philosopher king proposed by Plato. However, through this concept, we know that a leader needs extensive knowledge and the ability to manage the knowledge he has so that it can be applied when he is dealing with other people. Self-knowledge is also essential in Plato's teachings, but further interpretation and research are needed to understand the practical steps in living the concept.

## Conclusion

Through this research, several conclusions emerge, including that the leadership philosophy that appears in the concept of the philosopher king by Plato and Wu Wei by Lao Zi have in common, including the superiority of self-control. This becomes an excellent objective to be included in the output of character education. By controlling oneself, one can control his role in the world until the next he can rule the world. Furthermore, self-control can only be achieved by educating oneself through the learning process, for example, regarding social conditions, natural science, and spirituality. The only difference between the concepts of Wu Wei and the King of Philosophers is that each has a different emphasis. Through the concept of the philosopher king, Plato favors the wealth of knowledge even though self-control is considered necessary, while in the concept of Wu Wei, self-control is the main one, and science can be put aside.

Someone who wants to be a leader still needs to learn many things, at least to be open-minded to new things. This inclusiveness goal then leads our research to a synthesis between the principles of Wu Wei and the King of Philosophers in which someone who wants to be educated or learn to become a leader with good character must strive to realize good things actively through the learning process, but on other occasions can also consider other things. Humans cannot change natural nature, so they must respect and follow it. Wu Wei is taught with the aim that one can lead by silence or control a situation by negating or not doing something. At the same time, the concept of the philosopher king teaches that a leader can know and take action actively. These two different characters can be referencing material for teaching character development, especially as a suggestion for how to shape oneself to be a good leader in Western and Eastern traditions.

## Acknowledgement

This research could be carried out thanks to the 2022 Bina Nusantara University Internal Grant. Without support and assistance from agencies, this research would not produce conclusions and proposals for the world of education.

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## Methods of Preventing Complications of Hemorrhoidectomy

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**Abstract:** Hemorrhoids is one of the most common pathologies of anorectal region. At least 4.4% of the population suffer from this disease. According to statistics, every tenth patient with hemorrhoids needs surgical treatment. Therefore a great number of patients undergo hemorrhoidectomy every year. That is why, there is a need to have methods for preventing complications of this surgical intervention. Identify and apply methods of prevention from the most significant complications of hemorrhoidectomy. We performed analysis of scientific articles. There were investigated management of complications after a hemorrhoidectomy and prevention of such complications. Based on the literature, we improved treatment strategy and implemented it. Nowadays, there are a number of clinical studies that have shown the effectiveness of venotonics in the non-surgical treatment of mild hemorrhoids. Moreover, these drugs are prescribed to patients who have undergone hemorrhoidectomy. Venotonics reduce intensity of exudation in the area of inflammation by means of increasing venous tone. As a result, patient's pain is relieved in the postoperative period. In addition, venotonics can be used to prevent other postoperative complications, including bleeding. For instance, some clinical studies showed a reduction in the risk of bleeding in patients after surgery in comparison with the control group. According to the performed meta-analysis, topical application of glycerin trinitrate showed effectiveness in reducing post-operative pain. Application of glycerin to the mucous of the anal canal was associated with less intensity of pain for 2 weeks after hemorrhoidectomy. The effectiveness of ointments with local anesthetics has been studied for a long time. This drugs demonstrated significant analgesic effect in the postoperative period. Patients who were applied a combined ointment with lidocaine and prilocaine after hemorrhoidectomy noted significant reduction in pain. Improved treatment strategy showed significant efficiency. In particular, we managed to relief postoperative pain without using narcotics, to prevent occurrence of bleeding in postoperative period and to avoid appearance of anal stenosis.

**Keywords:** Hemorrhoids, Treatment, Hemorrhoidectomy, Complications, Prevention.

**Citation:** Sulyma, V., Malinovsky, S., & Bashmakov, I. (2024). Methods of preventing complications of hemorrhoidectomy. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 24-33), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Hemorrhoids are one of the most common proctological diseases in the world. Its prevalence reaches up to 35-40% of the total population, with a higher incidence among middle-aged people with a high socioeconomic status. It is estimated that about 50% of the general population experience symptomatic hemorrhoids at some point in their lives. In addition, pregnant women are prone to a high risk of developing hemorrhoids. The prevalence of hemorrhoids in pregnant women ranges from 20% to 30%, and up to 80% of pregnant women suffer from hemorrhoids in the third trimester.

Other subjects with an increased risk of developing hemorrhoids are the elderly and people with a high body mass index.

The severity of hemorrhoids is divided into four stages. Medical treatment and lifestyle changes are suitable for stage I-II hemorrhoids, which make up the vast majority (> 90%) of all reported cases, while later stages III-IV of the disease require surgical treatment, which can have a number of complications.

The main manifestations of chronic hemorrhoids are:

- rectal bleeding (usually fresh blood);
- protrusion of formations;
- discomfort, possible moderate pain;
- mucous secretions from the rectum;
- possible secondary anemia.

During the examination of a patient with hemorrhoids, enlarged and pathologically changed external and internal hemorrhoidal nodes can be detected, while manifestations of external changes in the hemorrhoidal plexus indicate, as a rule, acute hemorrhoids (acute thrombosis of pinched hemorrhoidal nodes), which often manifests as painful bluish formations from the outside of the anus, they occur spontaneously, perhaps after unusually strong exertion or the consumption of alcohol or spicy food.

The skin covering the outer part of the anus is usually firmly attached to the underlying tissues, and if thrombosis develops in this tightly held area, the pressure in these tissues increases rapidly, often causing considerable pain. The pain is usually constant and can be very severe.

Sometimes the increased pressure in the thrombosed external hemorrhoidal node leads to the destruction of the covering skin, and the coagulated blood begins to flow out.

Patients may also complain of periodic swelling, pressure, and discomfort associated with external hemorrhoids that are not thrombosed and suggestive of chronic external hemorrhoids with the location of enlarged and



pathologically altered nodules on the virtual "clock face" at 5, 7, and at 11 "hours".

The presence of pathologically changed and enlarged internal hemorrhoidal nodes can be established during the examination of the patient.

Painless rectal bleeding or anal tissue prolapse is often associated with symptomatic internal hemorrhoids.

An external prolapsed hemorrhoid is a protruding hemorrhoidal tissue that can often be felt on the outside of the anus during defecation or hygiene procedures after it. This tissue often turns inward spontaneously or may be pushed back inward by the patient. Symptoms, as a rule, slowly progress over a long time and are often periodic, associated with psycho-emotional and physical stress, alcohol, so-called "spicy food".

Bleeding caused by internal hemorrhoids is usually bright red and may stop quickly after a bowel movement. Not all patients with symptomatic internal hemorrhoids will have significant bleeding. Instead, prolapse (falling out of nodes) may be the main or only symptom. The shedding of the tissue can cause significant irritation and itching around the anus.

Patients may also complain of discharge of mucus, difficulty with the act of defecation, or the feeling that feces are "stuck" in the anus.

The severity of hemorrhoids has four stages, which correspond to the first 4 points of the classification, and are manifested by one or another state of prolapse and maneuverability of internal hemorrhoidal nodes:

- discomfort, slight pain, discharge of pink blood during defecation without loss of knots;
  
- discomfort, slight pain, release of pink blood during defecation with the loss of knots during defecation, after which the knots are independently inserted into the anal canal;
  
- discomfort, slight pain, discharge of pink blood during defecation with loss of knots during defecation and any other physical activity, after which the knots do not move into the anal canal on their own, they must be moved by the patient's hands;
  
- discomfort, slight pain, discharge of pink blood during defecation with internal hemorrhoidal nodes constantly sticking out, the nodes are not inserted into the anal canal by themselves, when the nodes are inserted into the anal canal by the patient's hands, they fall out again.

This state of affairs requires a solution to the issue of effective treatment of patients with chronic and acute hemorrhoids.

In particular, dietary and lifestyle changes that require strict adherence by the patient are usually considered the

first step in any conservative hemorrhoid treatment. Medical treatment is mainly based on the use of topical preparations containing anti-inflammatory components, including steroids, anesthetics and / or antiseptics. However, in most cases, randomized trials have not been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of various substances, which in some cases - for example, steroids - are associated with the potential onset of undesirable manifestations. (*Mamchur, V., Sulyma, V., 2021*).

Hemorrhoids mainly affect people of working age, the exacerbation of the disease usually recurs from 2 to 6 times a year, and the periods of temporary incapacity reach up to 1 month, which causes large economic losses. Currently, 3 main methods of hemorrhoid treatment are used: conservative, minimally invasive and radical surgical. The used traditional methods of treatment do not always lead to the desired results and, despite the availability of many methods of treatment of hemorrhoids, the problem does not lose its relevance.

Existing methods of surgical treatment are still accompanied by a considerable number of postoperative complications, such as bleeding, severe pain syndrome, dysuric phenomena, local swelling and inflammation, which leads to additional suffering for the patient, increases the cost of treatment and prolongs the period of temporary disability.

According to statistics, every tenth patient with hemorrhoids needs surgical treatment. Therefore a great number of patients undergo hemorrhoidectomy every year. That is why, there is a need to have methods for preventing complications of this surgical intervention.

Surgical hemorrhoidectomy is necessary for the large third- and fourth-degree hemorrhoids when medical management has failed, when there is a large bulging external component, or when incarcerated internal hemorrhoids need immediate medical treatment. This activity reviews the evaluation and treatment of hemorrhoidal disease and highlights the role of the interprofessional team in evaluating and treating this condition. (*Cristea, C., Lewis, C.R., 2022*).

However hemorrhoidectomy of the Milligan and Morgan variety (open hemorrhoidectomy) remain the gold standard. Identify and apply methods of prevention from the most significant complications of hemorrhoidectomy. Surgical treatment of patients with chronic hemorrhoids of coagulation of biological tissues is most often used.

## **Method**

We performed analysis of scientific articles. There were investigated management of complications after a hemorrhoidectomy and prevention of such complications. Based on the literature, we improved treatment strategy and implemented it.

Nowadays, there are a number of clinical studies that have shown the effectiveness of venotonics in the non-surgical treatment of mild hemorrhoids. Moreover, these drugs are prescribed to patients who have undergone hemorrhoidectomy. Venotonics reduce intensity of exudation in the area of inflammation by means of increasing venous tone. As a result, patient's pain is relieved in the postoperative period. In addition, venotonics can be used to prevent other postoperative complications, including bleeding. For instance, some clinical studies showed a reduction in the risk of bleeding in patients after surgery in comparison with the control group. (Sheikh, P., et al., 2020).

A modified electro-surgical device, the LigaSure, has become available for the last decade as a 'vessel-sealing system'. This system delivers electro-diathermy energy across its jaws much like a bipolar diathermy device with minimal lateral spread of current or heat.

We used the LigaSure device for hemorrhoidectomy in grade III and IV hemorrhoids and compared our results with conventional hemorrhoidectomy of the Milligan and Morgan variety.

Hemorrhoidectomy is associated with significant pain-related complications such as urinary retention and constipation. Additionally meticulous hemostasis needs to be ensured to avoid postoperative hemorrhage. Occasionally the operative field can become quite bloody, prolonging the surgery. We found that LigaSure hemorrhoidectomy was a major improvement over the conventional technique in all these parameters. Technically the LigaSure method is much more simpler and can be safely and effectively carried out by relatively inexperienced surgeons. (Khanna R., et al., 2010).

According to the performed meta-analysis, topical application of glycerin trinitrate showed effectiveness in reducing post-operative pain. Application of glycerin to the mucous of the anal canal was associated with less intensity of pain for 2 weeks after hemorrhoidectomy. (Ratnasingham, K., et al., 2010)

The effectiveness of ointments with local anesthetics has been studied for a long time. This drug demonstrated significant analgesic effect in the postoperative period. Patients who were applied a combined ointment with lidocaine and prilocaine after hemorrhoidectomy noted significant reduction in pain. (Rahimi, M., et al., 2012) Several meta-analyses have shown efficiency in postoperative pain relief with oral metronidazole. (Lyons, NJR., et al., 2017).

The drug inhibits activity of anaerobic flora in the rectum. Thus, the intensity of the inflammatory reaction decreases, which leads to pain reduction. (Xia, W., et al., 2018).

Treatment of hemorrhoids is a problem of modern surgery. In the structure of proctological diseases, hemorrhoids occupy almost 40%. Up to 30% of patients need surgical treatment.

Existing methods of surgical treatment are still accompanied by a considerable number of postoperative

complications, such as bleeding, severe pain syndrome, dysuric phenomena, local swelling and inflammation, which leads to additional suffering for the patient, increases the cost of treatment and prolongs the period of temporary disability.

Hemorrhoidectomy methods are accompanied by quite a large number of postoperative complications, such as pain syndrome, urination disorders, bleeding, local edema, narrowing of the anus, which leads to additional patient suffering and increases the cost of treatment.

The use of the LigaSure (Covidien) and EK-3000M (SVARMED) electrocautery generators for the removal of hemorrhoids and cauterization of blood vessels in hemorrhoidectomy can also be complicated by stricture of the anus. We studied the dependence of the development of anal strictures on the method of anesthesia during surgery.

The use of generators for electrocoagulation of vessels, which "boil" them, makes it possible to perform seamless hemorrhoidectomy. This necessitates the development of hemorrhoidectomy methods using the latest technologies.

Performing electrosurgical hemorrhoidectomy using the modern LigaSure technique, due to the small spread of the damage zone and the absence of sutures in the anal region, leads to a decrease in pain syndrome, absence of bleeding and swelling of tissues, acceleration of wound healing, shortening of treatment periods and temporary disability.

The described technique is safer, faster and significantly reduces the number of postoperative complications compared to the standard method of excision of hemorrhoidal nodes.

The technology of performing advanced hemorrhoidectomy according to Milligan-Morgan: the patient is in the position for perineal lithotomy on the back with legs bent at the hip and knee joints, placed on stands.

After treatment of the operative field, divulsion of the anal sphincter is carried out with a rectal mirror, revision of the anal canal. With a window clamp, the internal node is pulled up by the top and the bent electrode of the LigaSure apparatus is placed on its stretched base, which includes the vascular leg. Conduct electroligation of the base of the node at an intensity of 2 or 3 LEDs, after which the internal hemorrhoidal node is removed above the clamp without stitching the vascular pedicle.

The external hemorrhoidal node is grasped, after the node is pulled, electroligation of its base is performed, the node is removed above the clamp. The other 2 internal and 2 external hemorrhoidal nodes are sequentially removed in the same way.

Equipment: The LigaSure electrothermal system, designed for sealing vessels up to 7 mm in diameter, provides controlled energy delivery to tissues and effective compression. The basis of the mechanism of action on tissues

is the melting of collagen and elastin. The strength of the "welded zone", consisting of partially denatured protein, is comparable to the strength of stitched fabric.

## Results

Throughout 2020-2021, we analyzed the results of treatment of 612 patients who underwent hemorrhoidectomy using the LigaSure. By analyzing these data, we identified the most common complications of this surgical intervention.

For symptomatic grade III and IV hemorrhoids, some form of hemorrhoidectomy remains the accepted modality of treatment.

The traditional methods like the Milligan—Morgan method have been in practice for more than half a century for want of a better alternative. Recent years have seen the introduction of newer techniques with relative merits and demerits.

The most significant recent introduction has been the circular stapling device for prolapsed hemorrhoids. This has been criticized for not treating the external component of hemorrhoids and the skin tags. Additionally the stapler cartridges are expensive and beyond the reach of most patients.

Trials have also emphasized the significantly shorter convalescence period, patients resumed daily activity after a week. Comparison of LigaSure with other methods for hemorrhoidectomy has found that the operative time and postoperative pain were lesser with LigaSure.

In particular, bleeding in the early postoperative period directly from the wound was detected in 16 patients (2.61%). In 13 patients (2.12%), bleeding was observed for 2-3 days after the operation. It was accompanied with bright *red blood* mixed with feces. During revision of the wound in such patients, bleeding from the wound was not detected. Subsequently, these patients underwent an endoscopic examination, but the location of bleeding was not identified.

Apparently, bleeding was associated with stressful factors. On the 8-9th day after discharge, bleeding was observed in 18 patients (2.94%), that was accompanied with bright red blood mixed with feces. It was also associated with a stressful factor and uncontrolled taking of NSAIDs.

No statistically significant differences were observed in postoperative bleeding, urinary retention, difficult defecating, anal fissure, anal stenosis, incontinence, postoperative pain, return to normal activities, and hospital stay.

Our analysis shows that LigaSure is an effective instrument for hemorrhoidectomy, which results in shorter

operation time and lower recurrence rate.

Patients treated with LigaSure had a significantly shorter operative time and hospital stay. The blood loss during operation was less in LigaSure group. No statistically significant differences were noted in postoperative bleeding, difficult defecating, anal fissure, anal stenosis, and incontinence.

Based on our study and analysis of literature, we have improved treatment strategy.

The treatment included:

1. The day before surgery, patients were administered proton pump inhibitors at a dose of 40 mg per day. They continued taking for 21 days after the surgery;
2. Patients had their last meal 3-4 hours before surgery;
3. Mechanical bowel preparation was performed on the day of surgery by using a combination of sodium dihydrogen phosphate and disodium phosphate (Enema-Sella);
4. Previously, the day before the operation and immediately before the operation, the patients took anxiolytics, in particular, the benzodiazepines;
5. Patients were administered venotonics 2 days before surgery and 4 weeks after. These medications contains diosmin and hesperidin (Ginkor Fort , Phlebodia, Venosmil);
6. In the postoperative period, an ointment with a local anesthetic, glycerin and a topical glucocorticosteroid was applied. It was made by the pharmacy, according to our prescription;
7. After surgery, patients had been taking orally metronidazole 500 mg 3 times a day for 7 days;
8. Patients took nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs with severe pain.  
Opioid analgesics were not used;
9. In order to prevent scarring and narrowing of the anus in the postoperative period, we performed anal dilation on the 14th and 28th days after discharge.

Performing electrosurgical hemorrhoidectomy using the modern LigaSure technique, due to the small spread of the damage zone and the absence of sutures in the anal region, leads to a decrease in pain syndrome, absence of bleeding and swelling of tissues, acceleration of wound healing, shortening of treatment periods and temporary disability.

## **Discussion**

The described treatment strategy was used during 2022 for the management of 312 patients. In the study group, 235 patients (75%) underwent hemorrhoidectomy, and 77 (25%) underwent hemorrhoidectomy with excision of rectal fissures using the LigaSure.



Analyzing the results, a decreasing in the frequency of postoperative complications was identified in the study group in comparison with the control group. In particular, 3 patients (0.96%) had postoperative bleeding, but they were successfully treated conservatively. Stressful bleeding was observed in 1 patient (0.32%), who abused NSAIDs. In 2 patients (0.64%) during examination on the 14th day after discharge, a tendency to narrowing of the anal canal was revealed. Diprosan was injected into the scar tissue of these patients and followed by finger dilation on 28 day after operation.

Such combined therapy combines a rapid local anesthetic effect with effectiveness in accelerating local healing and restoration of local vessels to a normal state. This dual mechanism of action allows you to control both subjective (pain and discomfort) and objective (prolapse and bleeding) symptoms of hemorrhoids, reducing inflammation and improving vascular tone.

It made possible preventing scar stenosis of the anal canal by conservative methods. Administration of ointment with a local anesthetic, glycerin and topical corticosteroid and NSAIDs leads to optimal patients pain relief without usage of opiates.

## **Conclusion**

LigaSure hemorrhoidectomy is a sutureless, closed hemorrhoidectomy technique dependent on a modified electro-surgical unit to achieve tissue and vessel sealing. It is safe and effective, has less blood loss, postoperative pain and complications compared to conventional hemorrhoidectomy. Technically it is much simpler because suturing is not required and hemostasis is easy to achieve.

Improved treatment strategy showed significant efficiency. In particular, we managed to relief postoperative pain without using narcotics, to prevent occurrence of bleeding in postoperative period and to avoid appearance of anal stenosis.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend using the proposed technologies in the practices of surgeons-proctologists for medicaments treatment or surgical operations of patients with chronic hemorrhoids.

## **Acknowledgements**

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the advice and support of representatives and staff Dnipro State Medical University and Regional Proctology Centre (Dnipro, Ukraine) in the preparation of our work and this text.

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## The Influence of Ethnomathematics with Worked Example Strategy on Students' Geometric Thinking Skill: Quasi Experiment

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**Abstract:** Choosing an unsuitable method of delivering material is one of the factors that gives students difficulties in applying concepts in solving mathematical problems. Strong mathematical concepts will help students develop their mathematical thinking skills, including geometric thinking skill. The use of ethnomathematics combined with worked example strategies will make learning more meaningful, and concepts will be stored in long term memory during the learning process. The aim of this study is to figure out the influence of the ethnomathematics approach using a worked example strategy on the geometric thinking skills of seventh grade students. This research falls under the type of quantitative research using a quasi-experimental approach. The study was conducted in an experimental class that received mathematics instruction using an ethnomathematics approach and a worked example strategy and a control class that received mathematics instruction using a direct learning model. According to the findings of the study, the ethnomathematics approach using the worked example strategy had a positive impact on the geometric thinking skills of seventh grade students. However, there is no significant difference in the geometric thinking skills of seventh grade students between the direct learning model and the ethnomathematics approach using worked example strategy.

**Keywords:** Ethnomathematics, Worked Example Strategy, Geometric Thinking

**Citation:** Risywandha, I. & Dhoruri, A. (2024). The Influence of Ethnomathematics with Worked Example Strategy on Students' Geometric Thinking Skill: Quasi Experiment. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 34-45), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Learning mathematics is closely associated with many cultures in Indonesia. Be it cultural ceremonies, pieces of art, or regional customs. This culture can be used to support the success of mathematics learning on certain resources. Ethnomatematics is the study of the relationship between mathematics and culture. According to (Murtafiah et al., 2022), learning activities that involve collaborating math issues with culture are projected to be a new alternative in problem solving in both the classroom setting and in everyday life.

Geometry is one of the mathematical materials that can be used to teach ethnomathematics. According to the findings of a study conducted by (Fauzi & Arisetyawan, 2020), students still struggled with employing concepts and principles, as well as addressing verbal problems when answering geometry questions. These obstacles that students face are undoubtedly influenced by a variety of circumstances, both internal and external.

One of the external variables contributing to students difficulties in addressing verbal problems is a lack of learning habituation. Giving problems with a close context to students' life when learning geometry, either as a model method or as material for practicing questions, can encourage greater geometric thinking skills. According to (Fitriana et al., 2022), using an ethnomathematics approach for geometry learning can help students strengthen their geometric reasoning abilities. Furthermore, if students learn using the proper method, their geometric thinking skills are likely to improve.

### **Ethnomathematics**

According to (Mania & Alam, 2021; Rosa et al., 2016), ethnomathematics seeks to connect mathematical ideas and methods entrenched in local activities (emic) with academic conceptual frameworks (ethics). Emic analysis extends this approach, but studying cultures according to established ethical processes inhibits the identification of cultural variation (Haskell et al., 1992). Thus, the emic method focuses on the meaning of objects in individual lives, such as mathematical artifacts, while also utilizing value theory to describe how people organize knowledge in their own surroundings.

This is consistent with what (Meaney et al., 2008) state about "certain cultural practices, such as those that are ethno-mathematically embedded in cultural language." Members of various cultural groups have evolved logical processes connected to quantification, measuring, and modeling, in addition to language, to understand and explain their social, cultural, and historical environment. In this study, ethnomathematics is a science that may merge mathematics and culture through integrating local cultural phenomena into mathematics learning. More specifically, this study focuses on square and rectangular materials.

### *Worked Example Strategy*

The worked example strategy is a cognitive load theory-based method. The presentation of material through worked examples allows students to employ their cognitive resources more effectively in knowing, remembering, and understanding the structure of issues and their solutions as demonstrated in the examples (Cooper, 1990). A worked example is a teaching method that gives a problem statement together with a comprehensive step-by-step solution from beginning to end.

According to (Sweller, 2011), the stages of learning worked example strategy through introduction phases followed by a phase acquisition. 1) Level of identification (introductory) is the first stage of learning in which students acquire prerequisite material that must be mastered before moving on to new material. 2) The

acquisition stage (acquisition) is the central stage of learning using the worked example strategy. This level will make use of the prerequisite material from the previous stage. Students are given examples to study, and after studying each example, problems are supplied for students to complete. Students will gain an understanding of the plan or steps that can be employed to address the problem as a result of the numerous examples provided.

According to several experts and research findings, the benefits of learning using worked examples are as follows: 1) provide opportunities for students to focus on the challenges supplied and the processes that have been provided; 2) Students are able to solve the problem; 3) Allow students to practice activating knowledge gained by addressing similar problems so that it may be applied to different problems.

### *Geometric Thinking*

Geometric thinking refers to a student's capacity to use geometric concepts in mathematics studies and other areas of life. Geometric thinking is concerned with how people reason utilizing geometric shape and spatial relationship features (Ling et al., 2021; Lumbre et al., 2023; Massarwe, 2023; Pavloviová et al., 2022; Yitmen & Almusaed, 2022). Geometric thinking, as defined by (Aditya & Musa, 2016), is the ability of students to observe objects, build definitions based on the inherent characteristics of objects, recognize the relationship between one object and another object, and apply it in solving geometric problems.

The notion of geometric thinking development was inspired by study undertaken by a husband and wife team, Pierre van Hiele and Dina van Hiele-Geldof (two Dutch educators). Van Hiele's geometrical thinking theory has five levels, according to (van de Walle et al., 2020). Each level outlines how we think, what sorts of geometrical ideas we think about (referred to as objects of thought), and what students can achieve (referred to as products of thinking).

#### *Level 0: Visualization*

Students progress from thinking about shapes and what they "look like" to creating classes or groups of shapes that appear to be "like." At this level, students will sort and categorize forms depending on their appearance. "I put these shapes together because they are all pointy." As a result, at this level, the dominant appearance/form can dominate students reasoning about shape qualities. For example, students at level 0 who see a square with sides that are neither horizontal nor vertical may mistake it for a diamond.

#### *Level 1: Investigation*

Students shift their focus from classes of shapes to individual shapes by focusing on shape attributes. Analysis students evaluate all shapes in a collection of several shapes rather than just one shape. Instead of discussing this specific rectangle, they might discuss the properties of all rectangles. Students can think about what makes a rectangle a rectangle by focusing in form class (it has four sides, two pairs of parallel sides, opposing sides the

same length, four right angles, and so on).

#### *Level 2: informal deduction*

Students progress from considering shape properties to investigating the connections between geometric object properties. Level 2 students, such as level 1, are able to think about the properties that exist in a collection of forms and build relationships between these properties across forms. Students, for example, can deduce that "if a shape with four right angles is called a rectangle, and a square also has four right angles, then a square is also called a rectangle." After students have mastered "if-then" reasoning, they can classify forms just by being provided the bare minimum of attributes.

#### *Level 3: deduction*

Students progress from analyzing the relationships between geometric object attributes to building deductive axiomatic systems for geometry. Students at this level are typically in high school and are able to make abstract claims regarding geometric properties and draw logical implications. At this level, students analyze informal arguments based on entire system structures with axioms, definitions, theorems, implications, and postulates that are beginning to evolve and can be utilized to establish geometric truths.

#### *Level 4: rigor*

Students progress from analyzing deductive axiomatic systems for geometry to comparing and contrasting various geometry axiomatic systems. The axiomatic system is the focus of attention at this greatest level. So contrast and compare the axioms of various geometries. This is the level of college where students major in mathematics and study geometry as a field of mathematics.

## **Method**

This study is a category of quantitative research using a quasi-experimental approach. This study uses two classes: the experimental class, which learns through ethnomathematics utilizing the Worked Example technique, and the control class, which learns through the direct learning model. In this study, all seventh-graders at MTs Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta were separated into six classes of 210. This study's sample included 30 students taken from six different classes. Researchers employed simple random sampling as a sampling technique. The researcher uses this strategy to pick participants for the sample so that each individual has the same chance of being chosen from the population (Creswell, 2015).

The geometric thinking skill is a skill to be measured in this study. The instrument employed is a posttest multiple choice style of questions. This study adopted a geometric thinking test instrument developed by



(Usiskin, 1982).

## Results

### Description of geometric thinking skills in the experimental class

The data to be discussed are the results of the experimental class geometric thinking skills pretest and posttest. The results of the experimental class's pretest and posttest geometric reasoning skills are provided in the table below.

Table 1. Experiment Class Statistical Description

	Statistical Description	
	Experiment Class Pretest	Experiment Class Posttest
The number of students	15	15
Minimum Score	27	33
Maximum Score	67	73
Average	44,40	53,60
Standar Deviation	12,357	12,911

Based on the image above, a pretest score on the geometric thinking skill can be generated, specifically a minimum score of 27, a maximum score of 67, an average score of 44.40, and a standard deviation of 12.357. In terms of posttest findings, the minimum is 33, the highest is 73, the average is 53.60, and the standard deviation is 12.911.

### *Description of the geometric thinking ability of the control class*

Accurate data pretest and posttest control class geometric thinking skill is described. The pretest and posttest geometric thinking skills of the control class are provided in the table below.

Table 2. Description of Control Class Statistics

	Statistical Description	
	Control Class Pretest	Control Class Posttest
The number of students	15	15
Minimum Score	20	33
Maximum Score	60	73
Average	37,8667	51,0667
Standar Deviation	13,42634	11,75018

Based on the table above (see Table 2), a pretest score on the capacity to geometric thinking skill can be

obtained, with a minimum score of 20, a maximum score of 60, an average score of 37.8667, and a standard deviation of 13.42634. The posttest results show a minimum score of 33, a maximum score of 73, an average score of 51.0667, and a standard deviation of 11.75018.

#### *Test the Average Difference*

After the normality and homogeneity tests of variance have been fulfilled, the average similarity test will be performed in the experimental and control classes prior to the treatment. Independent Sample T Test with a significance level of 0.05 is used for testing. The following is the formulation of the average difference hypothesis test.

$H_0: \mu_E = \mu_K$ , There is no significant difference in pretest geometric thinking skills between students who learn using an ethnomathematics approach with a worked example strategy and those who learn using direct learning models.

$H_1: \mu_E \neq \mu_K$ , There is a significant difference in pretest geometric thinking skills between students who learn using an ethnomathematics approach with a worked example strategy and those who learn using direct learning models.

Table 3. Average Difference Test Result

Average Difference Test Result	
Pretest score	0,176

The table above (see Table 3) shows that the signature (2 tailed) is  $0,176 > 0,05$ , which is then  $H_0$  approved. Thus, there is no average difference in pre-test geometric thinking skills between students who learned using an ethnomathematics approach with a worked example technique and students who learned using direct learning models.

#### *Paired Sample T Test*

Hypothesis testing begins with a pretest and posttest score difference test utilizing test statistics, Paired Sample T Test. The purpose of this test was to determine whether the direct learning model and the ethnomathematics approach with worked examples have a positive impact on students' geometric thinking skills.

#### *Influence of ethnomathematics approach with worked example strategy*

Hypothesis formulation:

$H_0$ : An ethnomathematics approach with worked example strategy has no influence on students geometric thinking skill.

$H_1$ : An ethnomathematics approach with a worked example strategy has an influence on students' geometric thinking skill.

Table 4. Paired Sample T Test Worked Example Strategy Result

Paired Sample T Test	
Pretest and Posttest	0,0000

The value of Sig. (2 tailed) was  $0,000 < 0,05$  then  $H_0$  rejected based on the table above (see Table 2). This suggests that an ethnomathematics approach with worked examples may assist students improve their geometric thinking skills.

#### *The influence of the direct learning model*

Hypothesis formulation:

$H_0$ : Direct learning model has no influence on students' geometric thinking skill.

$H_1$ : Direct learning model has influence on students' geometric thinking skill.

Table 5. Paired Sample T Test Direct Learning Model Result

Paired Sample T Test	
Pretest and Posttest	0,003

Based on the table above (see Table 3), the value of Sig. (2 tailed) is  $0,003 < 0,05$  then  $H_0$  rejected. This gives the meaning that the direct learning model has an influence on students' geometric thinking skill.

#### *Independent Sample T Test*

The purpose of this test is to determine which effect differences are better between learning using an ethnomathematics approach and learning with the direct learning model. This test involves comparing the data from the two models. The formulation of the hypothesis is as follows:

$H_0$ : There is no difference between the experimental and control classes in terms of posttest score-pretest score.

$H_1$ : There is a difference between the experimental and control classes in terms of posttest score-pretest score.

Table 6. Hasil Uji Independent Sample T Test

Independent Sample T Test	
Pretest and Posttest	0,279

Based on the table above (see Table 4), the sig was  $0,279 > 0,05$  then  $H_0$  accepted. This means that

learning with direct learning models or ethnomathematics approaches with worked example strategy had no significant impact on students' geometrical thinking skill. Because the data show that the ethnomathematics approach to worked example method has no significant effect, there is no need to perform effect size estimations.

## Discussion

Based on earlier studies, it was discovered that the two treatments had an influence on students' geometric thinking skills. To determine whether model has the greatest influence on students' geometric thinking skills, a pretest-posttest test for differences in data differences is performed in both treatments, in this case using the Independent Sample T Test. Based on the significance value derived by the Independent Sample T Test, it can be stated that learning through direct learning models or ethnomathematics approaches with worked examples strategy had no significant difference in influence on students' geometric thinking skill.

However, both of these treatments, both in the control class that received learning through direct learning models and in the experimental group that received learning through an ethnomathematics approach using a worked example strategy, reveal that both had an influence. This is demonstrated by the Paired Sample T Test, which shows an increase in pretest and posttest scores. This is also demonstrated by a rise in the two classes' average. It has an average pretest score of 37.8667 and an average control score of 51.0667 in the control class. As a result, the average value of 13.2 rises in the control group. The same thing happened in the experimental class as well. The experimental class likewise had an increase in pretest score, which was initially as high as 44.40 and increased to 53.60 posttest. It can be seen that the average value of pretest to posttest increased 9.2 score in the experimental class.

The findings formed by students in the experimental class appear better and more complete when seen through the results of the students' conclusions on square or rectangular shapes. Meanwhile, the control class is more straightforward and provides short responses. Here are a few examples of student work.

However, there is no significant difference in effect when the Independent Sample T Test is used to determine whether difference in effect is better between learning that occurs in the control and experimental classes. This is because the core concepts of the learning stages in the direct learning model and the worked example method are comparable. Both stress the ease with which students absorb the topic. The scientific approach consists of five stages, each of which focuses on students and is capable of improving students' critical and creative thinking.

Where the two thinking abilities are associated indirectly or where there is a need to improve geometric thinking skills. When the average difference between pretest and posttest was calculated for both classes, the control

class had a larger average rise. In other words, classes with scientific learning have a greater influence on enhancing geometric thinking skill than classes with an direct learning model.

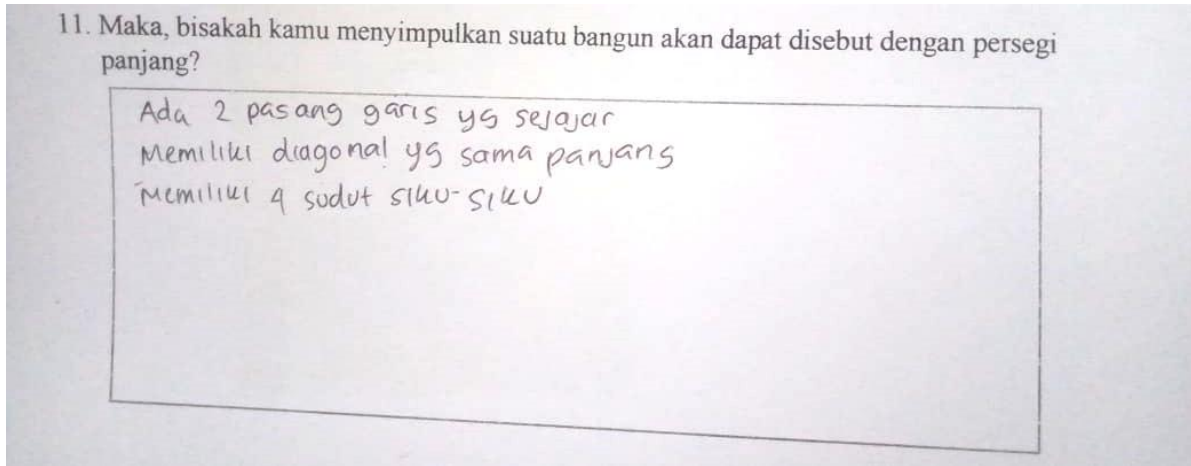


Figure 1. The results of the control class students' work

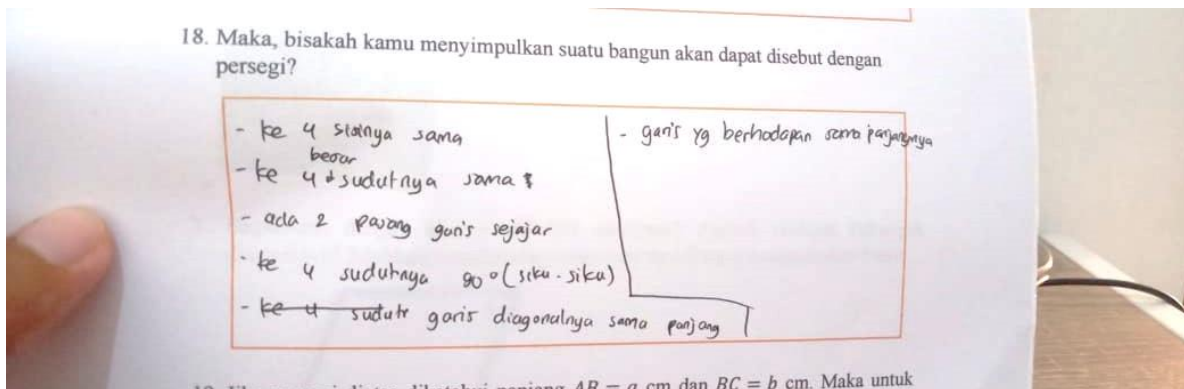


Figure 2. Results of experimental class students' work

The cultural context used during learning had a minor influence on the experimental class, namely the context contained in the student worksheet, which was Javanese culture, such as the Surakarta palace construction, diamond treats, and so on. Meanwhile, the majority of the students in the experimental class came from outside of Java and felt unfamiliar in these settings. This decreases students motivation in the learning process. As a result, there is a slight rise as compared to the control class.

However, as measured by increasing the level of geometric thinking, the experimental class outperforms the control class. According to the value attachment pretest and posttest results, four students in the experimental class reached to level 1 from level 0. And there were two students who advanced from level 1 to level 2. In the control class, the increase was four students who were previously at level 0 who were becoming at level 1. And there was one student who advanced from level 2 after previously being at level 0. However, there was 1 student who experienced a decrease, that is, who was originally at level 1 to level 0.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the data analysis and discussion, it is possible to infer that 1) direct learning models and ethnomathematics approaches with worked examples strategy have an impact on the geometric thinking skills of seventh grade students. 2) There is no significant difference in the geometric thinking skills of seventh-grade students between the direct learning model and the ethnomathematics approach with worked example strategy.

## Recommendation

### For Teachers

Teachers can use the working example strategy to assist students develop their geometric thinking skills. This strategy aims at reducing students' cognitive load, but students' active participation should not be overlooked. So, if you want to use this strategy, it is preferable if you can employ student worksheet, which can pique the curiosity of students.

### *For School*

It is hoped that the worked example strategy, combined with the Indonesian cultural perspective, might be extended to other areas than mathematics.

### *For Other Researchers*

If other researchers want to perform ethnomathematics research, they must consider the cultural background that will be presented. The greater context is most effective if it is close to students.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the organization that provided financial support for this research, Indonesia Endowment Funds for Education (LPDP).

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## The Effect of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Model to Improve Students' Critical Thinking Skills: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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**Abstract:** Students need critical thinking skills to develop their ideas in mathematics learning situations at school, and they can apply mathematical concepts in solving contextual problems. Junior high school students have unique characteristics and are highly curious about new knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial to apply the learning models that support the development of critical thinking skills. Problem-based learning is a student-centered learning model that familiarizes students with finding solutions to a problem. This study aims to see how applying the Problem-Based Learning model affects students' critical thinking skills. This type of research is a quasi-experimental conducted at one of the junior high schools in Yogyakarta in odd semesters of the 2022/2023 academic year using 2 subjects: a control class and an experimental class. The pretest and post-test were analyzed using the SPSS-assisted. The result shows that the N-gain score of students in the experimental class is 0,703 which is categorized as the high level, and the N-gain score of students in the control class is 0,417 which is in the medium level. This means that the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model influences students' critical thinking skills more effectively than the conventional learning method.

**Keywords:** Critical Thinking, Problem-Based Learning, Quasi-Experiment

**Citation:** Sari, L. W. & Dhoruri, A. (2024). The Effect of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Model to Improve Students' Critical Thinking Skills: A Quasi-Experimental Study. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (46-55), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Educational problems are endless issues to be discussed on various occasions. According to Law Number 20 of 2003, chapter II Article 3 “education has the function of educating the life of the nation by developing capabilities and forming dignified national character and civilization, to develop the potential of students”. The potential in question is faith and piety to God Almighty, having noble character, being healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and being a democratic and responsible citizen. However, achieving this goal is

very complex and not easy to achieve. There needs to be an effort to improve the various components involved in education.

Broadly speaking, the problems of education in Indonesia are divided into two, namely macro problems and micro problems. Macro problems are problems in education as a system and its relation to other broader systems. Meanwhile, micro problems include problems in the education component itself (Adrianto, 2019). According to (Kurniawati & Auliah, 2022), micro problems in education include inadequate facilities and infrastructure, monotonous learning methods and models, and low student achievement. The problem of curriculum complexity which is increasingly confusing, education is not evenly distributed, and problems with the quality and misplacement of teaching staff are part of the micro problems in national education.

Technical issues in the educational component such as the use of methods, models, approaches, and strategies are some of the most influential things because they involve students directly. This is in line with the opinion of (Gomes et al., 2023), who voiced the importance of considering the characteristics, behavior, and psychological conditions of students in determining the teaching style of an educator. There are many learning models and approaches currently developing, but their effectiveness is of course influenced by students, educators, and subjects in the learning itself. In other words, a learning model may be effective for certain class groups but not necessarily as effective for other classes. Even different subjects may affect the effectiveness of a learning model.

One of the most widely applied learning models today, especially in mathematics learning, is the problem-based learning model, better known as Problem Based-Learning (PBL). PBL is a model that focuses the learning process on students who are stimulated by clinical, social, and scientific problems and focuses on solving them (Barrows, 1986; Davis & Harden, 1999). The selection of the learning model greatly determines the achievement of the objectives of the learning itself.

Problem-Based Learning is a model that refers to the four pillars of universal education, namely learning to understand (learning to know), learning to do, learning to be oneself (learning to be), and learning to work together or live in togetherness. According to Isrok'atun & Rosmala (2018) Learning to understand is when students learn a lesson concept not using memorization techniques, but understanding the contents of the concept instead. In understanding this concept, students learn by directly carrying out learning activities in the classroom so that they can develop an attitude of cooperation and understanding together. According to Sukirwan et al., (2018), PBL is a teaching model characterized by real problems as contexts for students to learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills and acquire knowledge.

Isrok'atun & Rosmala (2018) in problem-based learning, "students are given the opportunities to solve the problem in a collaborative setting, create mental models for learning, and form self-directed learning habits through practice and reflection". In this case, students are seen to be active in learning activities by practicing collaboratively in solving the problems they face. Learning like this can accustom students to learning

independently and not relying on the teacher's explanation. Students have their way of solving problems. This is because students have initial knowledge that they get from their daily environment regarding the problems presented, not least regarding mathematical problems. Through the initial knowledge that students have, it can make it easier for them to solve mathematical problems. Problem-based learning has several stages, starting with a problem and ending with a solution to the problem. The stages of problem-based learning according to Suradika et al., (2023) are as follows.

Table 1. Problem-based learning syntax

Phases	Teachers Activities	Students Activities
Phase 1 Student orientation on the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain the learning objectives, explain the logistics needed</li> <li>Motivate students to be actively involved in solving selected problems</li> </ul>	Students record and prepare the needs needed in the learning process and are in predetermined groups.
Phase 2 Organizing students	Help students define and organize learning tasks related to these problems.	Students limit the problems to be studied.
Phase 3 Guide individual or group investigations	Encourage students to collect appropriate information, carry out experiments to get explanations and problem-solving	Students find out, investigate, and ask questions to get answers to the problems they face.
Phase 4 Develop and present the work	Assist students in planning and preparing appropriate work such as reports, models, and sharing assignments with friends	Students compile reports in groups present them in front of the class and discuss them in class.
Phase 5 Analyze and evaluate the problem-solving process	Evaluate learning outcomes about the material that has been studied or ask the group to present the work	Evaluate learning outcomes about the material that has been studied or ask the group to present the work.

Learning objectives as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 cover many things, including skills, in terms of learning mathematics, of course, what is meant is mathematical skills. Mathematical skills include 1) conceptual understanding; 2) procedural fluency; 3) strategic competence; 4) adaptive reasoning; and 5) productive disposition (Kilpatrick & Swafford, 2001). To achieve these mathematical skills, there are process standards that must be met such as problem-solving abilities, mathematical communication, mathematical connections, critical thinking skills, and so on.

Critical thinking ability is a series of thinking processes consisting of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as exposure to concepts, evidence, methodology, criteria, and contextual considerations which then become the basis for decision-making or concluding (Facione, 1991). According to (Setiana & Purwoko, 2020), a person's critical thinking ability is greatly influenced by his learning style because each learning style has different characteristics so it also influences the way of thinking. On this occasion, the author wants to see the effect of the learning model on students' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is needed by everyone to address problems in the unavoidable reality of life. By thinking critically, a person can organize, adjust, change, or improve his thoughts, so that he can make decisions to act more appropriately.

Mathematical critical thinking ability is a mathematical ability and disposition to include prior knowledge, mathematical reasoning, and cognitive strategies to generalize, prove, or evaluate unfamiliar mathematical situations reflectively. According to Glazer, an unfamiliar situation is a situation where individuals cannot directly understand mathematical concepts or know how to determine solutions to problems. Meanwhile, reflective thinking involves communicating solutions with full consideration, making meaning of answers or arguments that make sense, determining alternatives to explain concepts or solve problems, and or generating extensions for further studies.

Mathematical critical thinking is an intellectual ability possessed by a person to understand mathematical problems. They can analyze these problems and decide on appropriate solutions to these problems (Oktaviani et al., 2018). In line with that, mathematical critical thinking can also be defined as the ability to think logically and reflectively which focuses on how to make decisions that can be trusted (Isrok'atun & Rosmala, 2018; Oktaviani et al., 2018). Therefore, someone who can think critically and mathematically has the intellectual ability to think logically and reflectively in understanding mathematical problems, analyzing problems, and deciding on the right solutions.

According to Kowiyah in studying mathematics, you will learn how to formulate problems, plan solutions, study steps for completion, and make assumptions if the data presented is incomplete, so a skill called critical thinking is needed. This thinking activity is in line with the steps of Problem-Based Learning which can stimulate students' critical thinking skills. The indicators of critical thinking skills in the Problem-Based Learning model are as follows.

Table 2. Critical thinking ability indicator in PBL

Problem-Based Learning Model	Critical Thinking Ability Indicator
1. Orientation of students to problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• elementary clarification (give a simple explanation)</li> </ul>
2. Organizing students to study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Support (building skills)</li> <li>• Inference (conclude)</li> </ul>
3. Guiding individual and group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Support (building skills)</li> </ul>



investigations

4. Develop and present the work
  - inference (conclude)
  - Advance clarification (providing a further explanation)
5. Analyze and evaluate the problem-solving process
  - inference (conclude)
  - Strategy and tactics (set strategy and tactics)

## Method

This research is a type of quasi-experimental research that was conducted to test the hypothesis about whether there is an effect of an action. This research was conducted to determine students' critical thinking skills between the experimental class that applied the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) learning model and the control class that applied conventional learning methods.

The population of this study was all classes at one of the schools in Yogyakarta consisting of 3 classes, where each class consisted of 32 students. The sample for this study was class VIII B and class VIII C, respectively, the experimental class and the control class. The independent and dependent variables in this study are the Problem-Based Learning model and without the Problem-Based Learning model and students' critical thinking skills. The research design is in Table 3.

Table 3. Research design

Class		Learning Method	
Experimental	Pretest	Problem-Based Learning	
Control		Conventional Learning	
		Post-test	

This study uses quantitative analysis, which is an analytical technique in which the process is carried out by calculating the results of critical thinking skills tests given to students. The instrument used in this research is a test that measures students' critical thinking abilities in the form of an essay test, which has been adapted to indicators of critical thinking abilities. The test consists of four math questions related to circles. The pre-test and post-test questions are different but have the same level of difficulty to avoid bias in research. Both the pretest and posttest have gone through a validation process by experts and have been tested with the results that the instruments are valid and reliable. The analysis was carried out by comparing the test results of the experimental class and the control class.

Before the statistical test is carried out, a prerequisite test is first carried out, namely the normality test and homogeneity test. The normality test is carried out on a series of data to find out whether the data population is

normally distributed or not, if the data is known to be normally distributed then parametric statistics will be tested whereas if the data is not normally distributed then non-parametric statistical tests will be carried out. Testing the normality of the data in this study used SPSS software with the *Shapiro-Wilk* test. Homogeneity testing aims to find out whether the object under study has the same variant. The homogeneity test used in this study uses the SPSS software with the Levene test.

The hypothesis test was carried out after the prerequisite test to see the comparison of the average variable of the two samples. Hypothesis testing was carried out on pretest and posttest data. The hypothesis test on the pretest is to see whether students from both classes have the same level of initial critical thinking skills using the Compared Means Independent Sample T Test. The hypothesis test on the post-test data is used to see whether there is an effect of the Problem-Based Learning model and conventional learning method on students' critical thinking skills or not, which was tested using the Paired Sample T Test. In the next stage, the hypothesis was tested with the N-Gain Test which aims to see which model is the most influential on students' critical thinking skills. The criteria for the N-Gain Score test are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. N-Gain score criteria

N-Gain Score	Category
$g > 0,7$	High
$0,3 \leq g \leq 0,7$	Medium
$g < 0,3$	Low

## Results

The first thing that needs to be conveyed in the results of this research is a report on learning implementation. The research took place over eight meetings, the first meeting was the pre-test while the last meeting was the post-test. The second to seventh meetings were a learning process using the PBL model for the experimental class and conventional learning for the control class. The learning process using the PBL model was carried out well with an implementation percentage of 85% following the PBL phases listed in Table 1. Meanwhile, the conventional learning given in the control class was teacher-centered. In this process, the teacher explains the material and the students listen, then the students are allowed to ask and answer the teacher's questions regarding the learning material. This learning was carried out well with an implementation percentage reaching 90%.

The second thing is data description, to show the initial abilities and learning outcomes of the two classes descriptively. The result of descriptive statistics is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive statistic result

Descriptive Analysis	PBL Model	Conventional Method
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	Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test
Number of samples	36	36	36	36
Average	61	87	64	79
Median	67	85	66	73
Maximum score	73	95	75	88
Minimum score	51	72	51	68
Standard deviation	5,79	6,48	5,28	6,73

Table 5 above shows that the initial abilities of students from both classes tend to be the same, but the learning outcomes after treatment are quite different, which indicates the influence of the learning model applied in both classes. Then to see this influence in more detail, we carry out inferential analysis, but first it must be ensured that the data is normally distributed and homogeneous. The results of the normality test and homogeneity test are presented in Tables 6 and 7 below.

Table 6. Normality test results

	Experimental Class		Control Class	
	Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test
<i>p-value</i>	0,43	0,47	0,27	0,31

Based on Table 6, it can be seen that the normality test of the pretest and post-test from both classes obtained more p-value of 0,05. Thus, it can be interpreted that data are normally distributed and it can be used for the next stage.

Table 7. Homogeneity test results

	Experimental Class		Control Class	
	Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test
<i>p-value</i>	0,89	0,77	0,73	0,81

Table 7 shows that the statistical p-value of the data is higher than 0,05. So it can be concluded that the variance of students from the experimental class and the control class are the same. Thus, the data has met the prerequisite tests so that analysis can be continued at the next stage. The next step is to look at the average initial critical thinking ability of students in the two classes. If there is no difference in the average initial ability then the t-test can be continued.

Statistical hypothesis testing is as follows:

$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$  : There is no significant difference in the average critical thinking ability between students in the experimental class and the control class

$H_1: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$  : There is a significant difference in the average critical thinking ability between students in the experimental class and the sample class

The test criterion is that  $H_0$  is accepted if sig.  $\alpha > 0,05$ . Test results can be seen in Table 7.

Table 8. Average initial ability test result

Compared Means Independent Sample T Test	
sig.	0,913

Table 8 shows that  $H_0$  is approved due to the signature (two-tailed) value being greater than 0,05 which means there is no significant difference in critical thinking ability between the students of the two classes. Furthermore, to find out the treatment applied in each class, whether the Problem-Based Learning learning model and conventional learning method have an effect or not on students' critical thinking skills, a hypothesis test is carried out. Hypothesis testing was carried out on pretest and post-test data using the Paired Sample T Test. The hypothesis formulation is written below.

$H_0$  : The Problem-Based Learning model does not affect students' critical thinking abilities

$H_1$  : The Problem-Based Learning model affects students' critical thinking abilities

The same hypothesis formulation also applies to the conventional learning method. The criterion of the test,  $H_0$  is rejected if the sig. (two-tailed)  $< 0,05$ . The results of the Paired Sample T Test are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. PBL model and conventional learning method affect the test result

Paired Sample T Test	
Class	sig.
PBL model	0,000
Conventional learning method	0,002

The table above shows that both the PBL model and conventional learning method may affect students' critical thinking ability. This is indicated by the sig value both classes are smaller than 0,05, which means that  $H_0$  is rejected. Next, to see which effect is greater between the two learning methods, an N-gain test is carried out. The result is summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. N-Gain score results

Class	N-Gain Score	Category
Experimental Class (PBL Model)	0,703	High
Control Class (Conventional Learning)	0,417	Medium

Based on the results, there is a difference in scores between both classes. The N-Gain score of the class applying the Problem-Based Learning model shown in the table above (see Table 10) reaches 0,703 and is in the high category. This shows that the application of PBL in circle material has a big influence on helping students improve their critical thinking skills. While the conventional learning method shows an N-gain score of 0.417 which is in the medium category. This means that the conventional learning method also influences students' critical thinking abilities in learning mathematics, especially circle material, but the influence is not significant.

Overall, the Project-Based Learning model applied in the experimental class and the conventional learning method applied in the control class in learning about circles were proven to influence increasing students' critical thinking abilities. However, when compared to the Project-Based Learning model provides a more effective influence so the application of this model is highly recommended in the learning process.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between the application of the problem-based learning model and students' critical thinking skills which are very important abilities for students, especially in learning mathematics. However, this research is still limited to a small population and only considers learning in circle material, research with other materials and linking it to certain approaches might strengthen references in improving students' critical thinking skills. In general, problem-based learning can improve students' thinking skills because this learning model is more real and acceptable to students, rather than providing theory which tends to be abstract and less acceptable to students. Other learning models may have a positive influence on students' critical thinking skills in different ways.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the mathematical critical thinking ability of students who take part in Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is higher than that of students who take conventional learning. This shows that the Problem-Based model influences students' mathematical critical thinking skills.

## Acknowledgments

By participating in the 2024 Education, Social Sciences, and Humanities Research Conference, the authors would like to take this opportunity to thank the LPDP scholarship, the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education, which has facilitated and provided financial support.

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## **Efl Teachers and Students Enacting Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TMTBLT) in Indonesia Context: Challenges and Strategy**


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**Abstract:** During the past two decades, technology-mediated task-based language teaching (TMTBLT) has received great attention among scholars and practitioners in the EFL context. However, exploring the perceptions of teachers and students enacting TMTBLT in EFL teaching from the dimensions of various tasks and English skills remains under-explored. To fill this gap, this study aims to capture EFL teachers and students enacting TMTBLT in teaching reading, which focuses on challenges and strategy In the Indonesian context. Thirty-three EFL teachers and students were recruited as participants in this study. The data were derived from questionnaires and followed by semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers and students from Indonesian universities. The study revealed that technical issues, digital literacy challenges, language barriers, and limited access to technology are among the primary obstacles encountered in integrating technology into TBLT practices. These challenges underscore the multifaceted nature of technology integration in language teaching contexts and highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to address them effectively. This study implied that the policymakers should prioritize ongoing training and professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' and students' digital literacy skills and proficiency in integrating technology into TBLT practices.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers and students, technology-mediated task-based language teaching (TMTBLT), survey.

**Citation:** Nurhadi, K, Widiati, U., Suryati, N., & Muniroh, S. (2024). EFL Teachers and Students Enacting



Technology-mediated task-based language teaching (TMTBLT) in Indonesia Context: Challenges and Strategy. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 56-76), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

During the past three decades, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has garnered considerable attention from scholars in the realms of second language acquisition (SLA) and language instruction (Duong & Le Truong, 2022; Meniado, 2023; Robinson, 2011; Thi et al., 2022). Positioned as an extension of communicative language teaching ((Kumaravadivelu, 2006), TBLT represents a shift in the prevailing perspectives on language pedagogy, moving away from a focus solely on 'knowledge of language' towards a more practical and experiential emphasis on 'achieving communicative purposes' (Scarino, 2009, p. 45). TBLT views tasks as the central organizing element, or, as Bygate (2016, p. 386) describes them, a point of reference for both instruction and curriculum design.

Advocates of TBLT argue that learners of a target language (TL) develop their written and spoken language skills through participation in a sequence of meaning-oriented and context-driven communicative tasks (Bygate, 2016; Doughty & Long, 2003; Ziegler, 2016). Conversely, TBLT has sparked controversy due to its departure from conventional language teaching methodologies of the twentieth century, such as grammar, translation, and audio-lingualism. Ellis (2009) suggests that the core disparity between TBLT and these traditional synthetic approaches lies in TBLT's fundamental principle that 'language learning progresses more effectively when teaching aims to establish environments that nurture learners' innate language learning abilities' (p. 222). Notably, research over recent decades highlights the significant traction of TBLT in the Asia-Pacific region, including areas like Hong Kong, mainland China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand, where English is taught as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) (Butler, 2011; Carless, 2009; 2012; Yanto et al., 2022).

Similar to TBLT, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has experienced remarkable growth as a discipline, with an expanding body of research predominantly centered on second/foreign language (S/FL) education, documenting the utilization of various technological resources (such as word processors, presentation software, computer-mediated communication platforms, Web 2.0 tools, blogs, wikis, social networking platforms, interactive whiteboards, and more recently, digital games and augmented/virtual reality) by language instructors (Baralt & Gómez, 2017; Duman et al., 2015; Ziegler, 2016; Widiastuti. et al., 2022).

Despite the multitude of technologies integrated into language learning environments and their recognized developmental and sociocultural advantages, there is a call for exploring the integration of technology and task-based learning in EFL learning and crafting more pedagogically impactful computer-based learning activities (Ziegler, 2016, p. 137). Against this backdrop, this study aims to capture EFL students' and teachers' challenges and strategies for enacting technology-mediated task-based language teaching (TMTBLT) in EFL teaching

situated in the Indonesian landscape (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014). Ziegler's (2016). Drawing on the background of this study, we propose three research questions to be investigated:

1. What are the challenges faced by EFL students in Indonesia when teaching and enacting technology-mediated task-based language teaching?
2. How do EFL students and teachers offer strategies to cope with the challenges?
3. What is the future trend of technology-mediated task-based language teaching in the Indonesian context?

### **Technology mediated task-based language teaching: From theory to practice**

The integration of technology into pedagogical tasks is attractive to numerous researchers and practitioners of TBLT as a potential remedy for the challenges above (Thomas, 2013; Thomas & Reinders et al., 2010). Firstly, studies have shown that through the use of synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC), learners generate a greater amount of the target language (TL) due to reduced anxiety and heightened motivation. For instance, Levy and Stockwell (2006) have demonstrated how technology-mediated tasks expand language learning opportunities outside the classroom, fostering genuine interaction.

Additionally, besides facilitating TL usage, technology usage has been linked to increased engagement and second language (L2) interaction. Yamada (2009) notes that both the quantity of learner-produced utterances and the use of target expressions rose during online chats, while Tavakoli et al. (2019) illustrate how incorporating real-world texts into classroom tasks enhanced motivation in L2 reading. Moreover, Oskoz and Elola (2014) exhibited the impact of utilizing Web 2.0 tools on L2 writing. Reinders, Lakarnchua, and Pegrum (2015) also found heightened levels of engagement when learners were tasked with creating an augmented reality campus tour, which led to enhanced interest and involvement due to the tangible outcome of the project.

In addition, by liberating learners from the spatial confines of the classroom, technology-mediated TBLT practices (such as asynchronous CMC like forums, email, and blogs) afford learners more time to process their language output before sharing it, thereby encouraging the production of more grammatically accurate and intricate language (Reinders et al., 2015). The extended processing time allows learners to review and correct their language output autonomously, enhancing their awareness of various linguistic features in online communicative contexts, as observed in digital games (Reinders & Wattana, 2015). Previous studies have shown the complexity of integrating technology and TBLT.

In recent years, a plethora of studies in TMTBLT have been undertaken from a wide range of perspectives (Andrew-Todd, 2023; González-Lloret, 2022; Huang, 2022). Aubrey and Philpott (2023) report the use of face-to-face synchronous video-based computer-mediated communication modes in second-language engagement tasks. The study found that face-to-face (FTF) communication mode facilitated higher levels of engagement compared to synchronous video-based computer-mediated communication (SvCMC) mode in second language

tasks. FTF interactions resulted in significantly more turns, negotiated content, affiliative backchannels, and higher enjoyment levels. Learners perceived FTF mode as more advantageous due to factors like a supportive classroom atmosphere and ease of verbal interaction.

In contrast, SvCMC mode was hindered by the lack of non-verbal cues, difficulties with stimuli integration, and logistical concerns. Overall, the research suggests that communication mode plays a significant role in shaping learner engagement experiences during language tasks. Another relevant study by Fang (2021) investigates the effects of mobile-supported task-based language teaching (TBLT) on EFL students' linguistic achievement and conversational interaction. This study concluded that mobile-supported TBLT can lead to significant improvements in vocabulary learning and conversation comprehension in EFL classrooms.

While traditional TBLT may result in higher task completion rates, the mobile-supported approach showed better learning outcomes. The scaffolds provided by the mobile application facilitated student engagement and strategic language use during tasks, highlighting the potential of mobile technology in overcoming challenges in large EFL classrooms. In a similar vein, Aorny et al. (2022) investigated TMTBLT in the Bangladesh context from a student and teacher perspective. Drawing on the findings, this study highlights the complex interplay between technology, tasks, student engagement, and teacher proficiency in the context of language education, providing valuable insights for improving language teaching practices in private university settings in Bangladesh. The study suggested the importance of strong internet connections, skilled and trained language teachers, more practice opportunities, careful authority, a friendly environment, and adequate technological support in language classrooms to enhance the effectiveness of TBLT in private universities in Bangladesh.

Despite the previous studies providing insights into the enactment of technology and tasks, EFL students' and teachers' challenges and strategies in TMTBLT still need to be explored. Given the relative paucity of research on exploring challenges and strategies in TMTBLT, this study is aimed to capture EFL students' and teachers' challenges with limited access to technology, digital literacy, technical issues and language barrier perspective.

## Method

Anchored in qualitative research with the survey design, this study captures the challenges and strategies of EFL students and teachers for enacting TMTBLT in EFL teaching situated in the Indonesian context. Thirty-two participants were recruited voluntarily. The participants are undergraduate students, graduate students, doctoral students, English teachers and faculty members from a wide range of institutions in Indonesia. The participant's demography can be seen in the figures.

The data were derived from the questionnaires and followed by semi-structured interviews. In this study, we delivered ten questionnaires to all the participants. The participants filled out the questionnaire through a Google form that we sent via WhatsApp privately. Following the ethical protocols, before the participants fill out the

questionnaire, we explain the research purposes and the benefits for their future academic careers. We are also convinced that their data would be kept confidential only for research purposes, and their anonymity would be protected.

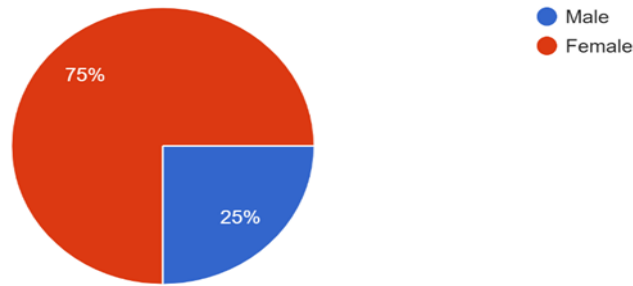


Figure 1. Participantss gender

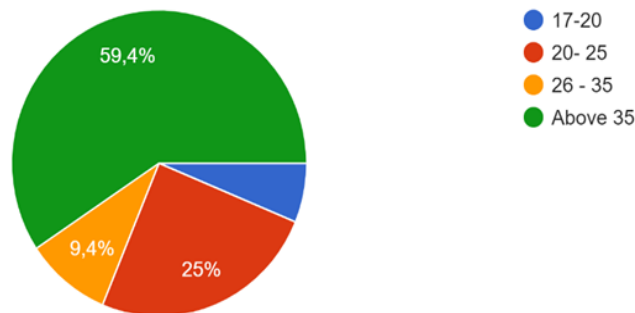


Figure 2. Participantss ages

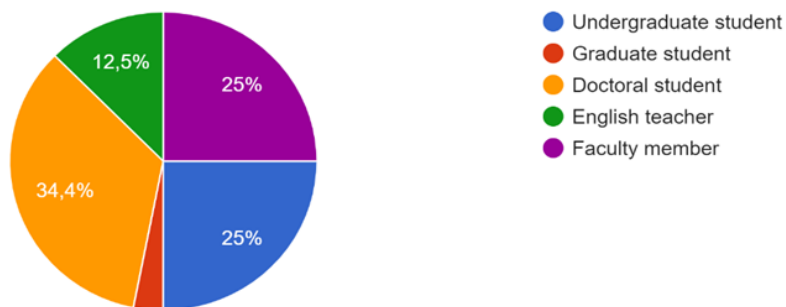


Figure 3. Participants' positions

Table 1 Questionnaire for participants

No	Questions
1	How often do you use technology in your EFL learning activities?
2	What types of technology tools do you frequently use in EFL learning tasks?
3	In your opinion, what are the main challenges faced by EFL students and teachers in enacting technology into task-based language teaching in the Indonesian context?
4	What strategies do you think can help to overcome the challenges associated with integrating technology into task-based language teaching in Indonesia?
5	What should the Indonesian government do to cope the challenges of integrating technology in EFL learning?
6	What are the technology tools that you frequently use for listening and speaking? Please mention.
7	Do you have any challenges apply technology tools in EFL listening and speaking? If yes, please mention
8	What are the technology tools that you frequently use for reading and writing? Please mention
9	Do you have any challenges apply technology tools in EFL reading and writing? If yes, please mention
10	In your opinion, what is the future of technology-mediated task-based language teaching in EFL Indonesian context? Please describe.

The analysis of the data involved two approaches: Likert-type analysis and examination of open-ended responses. Likert-type items, presented as a checklist with options like "rarely," "occasionally," "often," and "very often," aimed to gauge the extent to which participants experience enacting technology and TBLT in EFL learning. Meanwhile, open-ended items were designed to capture the range of challenges and strategies in TMTBLT.

## Results

Drawing on participants' answer, we focus on capturing participants regarding the frequency of using technology in EFL learning, types of technological tools, challenges and strategies and the future of technology in EFL learning.

### EFL students and teachers' frequency using technology in learning

This section presents how the participants voiced the frequency of technology in EFL learning. The results of participants frequency using technology in EFL learning can be shown in table 2

Table 2. Frequency of using technology in EFL learning

Frequency	N	Percentage (%)
Rarely	4	12.1
Occasionally	6	18.2
Often	11	33.3
Very Often	13	36.4

Table 2 offers a comprehensive overview of the frequency of technology utilization in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning among the participants, providing valuable insights into the adoption and integration of technology within this educational context.

Firstly, it's notable that a significant portion of participants, comprising 36.4%, reported very frequent use of technology in their EFL learning endeavors. This suggests a high level of comfort and familiarity with technology among this subgroup, indicating a strong adoption of technological tools as integral components of their language learning experiences. Very frequent use implies that these participants rely heavily on technology to support various aspects of their language learning process, such as accessing online resources, interactive exercises, language apps, and communication platforms.

Furthermore, 33.3% of participants reported frequent use of technology in EFL learning. Although slightly lower than the "very frequent use" category, this still indicates a substantial reliance on technology within language learning contexts. Frequent technology use suggests that these participants actively incorporate technological tools into their learning routines, albeit not to the same extent as those who reported very frequent use. Nevertheless, this group likely engages with technology regularly to access supplemental materials, practice language skills, and communicate with peers and instructors.

In contrast, 18.2% of participants reported occasional use of technology, indicating a more sporadic integration of technological tools into their EFL learning activities. Occasional users may utilize technology selectively or in specific instances where it complements their learning objectives but may only partially rely on it as a primary resource.

Technology plays a significant role in EFL learning among the surveyed participants. The majority of individuals demonstrate a high level of engagement with technology, suggesting a widespread adoption of digital tools and resources in the EFL learning environment. This adoption of technology reflects the increasing recognition of its potential benefits in enhancing language learning outcomes, such as providing access to authentic language materials, facilitating interactive learning experiences, and promoting autonomous learning. Moreover, understanding the frequency of technology use in EFL learning can inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers about the evolving needs and preferences of language learners, thereby guiding the design and implementation of effective technology-enhanced language learning strategies and interventions.

*Types of technology tools use in EFL learning tasks*

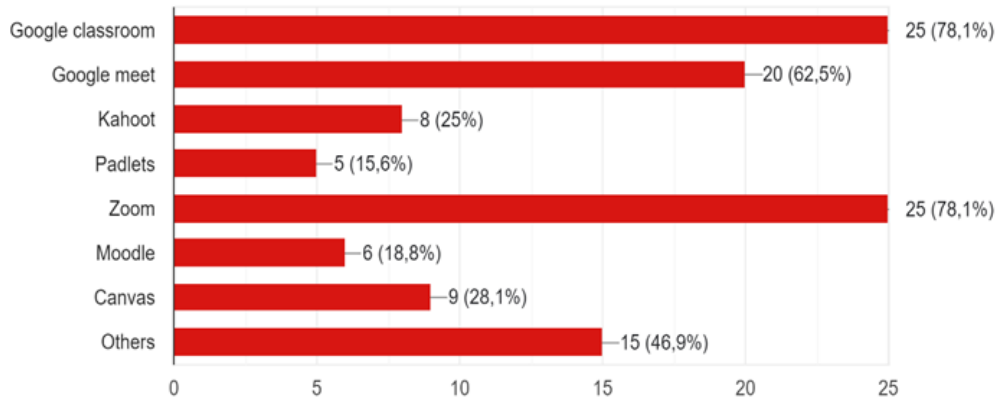


Figure 1. technology tools use in EFL learning tasks

Figure 1 shows the types of technology tools used by participants in EFL learning tasks. Among the total participants (33), 78.1% prefer Google Classroom and Zoom as their favorite technology tools, 62.5 % use Google Meet, followed by Canvas 28.1 %, Kahoot 25 % and only 15. % use Padlets, while 46.9 % prefer other technology tools. Understanding the types of technology tools enables us to explore the various technology tools for EFL learning.

Overall, the data highlights the prevalence of various technology tools in EFL learning, with a notable emphasis on platforms facilitating communication, collaboration, content delivery, and interactive learning experiences. By understanding the types of technology tools preferred by participants, educators and stakeholders can make informed decisions regarding the selection, integration, and utilization of digital resources to support effective and engaging EFL instruction. Additionally, exploring emerging technologies and innovative tools can further enrich the EFL learning experience, catering to the evolving needs and preferences of learners in an increasingly digitalized educational landscape.

*The main challenges of EFL students and teachers enacting technology into task-based language teaching*

Navigating the intersection of technology integration and task-based language teaching poses significant challenges for both EFL students and teachers alike. Table 3 provide the data of a wide range of main challenges faced by the participants.

Table 3 highlights the primary challenges associated with integrating technology into task-based language teaching (TBLT) and draws attention to the multifaceted nature of these challenges. With 51.5% of participants citing technical issues as the main challenge, it's evident that infrastructure-related problems such as slow internet connectivity, power outages, and malfunctioning devices significantly hinder the effective



implementation of technology in TBLT. These issues disrupt the flow of instruction, impede access to digital resources, and undermine the reliability of online learning platforms.

Table 3. The main challenges of technology and task-based language teaching

Challenges	N	Percentage (%)
Limited access to technology	2	6.1
Technical issues (e.g. slow internet connectivity, power outages, mal functioning devices)	17	51.5
Digital literacy (e.g. navigating learning platforms, using software applications, or troubleshooting technical issues)	11	33.3
Language barrier (e.g. English proficiency)	3	9.1

Approximately 33.3% of participants reported facing digital literacy challenges, indicating that many learners and educators struggle with using technology effectively for educational purposes. This lack of digital proficiency can manifest in difficulties navigating online platforms, utilizing digital tools, and critically evaluating digital content, ultimately hampering the integration of technology into language teaching practices. While a smaller percentage (9.1%) of participants identified language barriers as a challenge, it's crucial to acknowledge that language proficiency issues can still pose significant obstacles, particularly in language learning contexts. For EFL students, navigating digital resources and engaging in online communication activities may be daunting, especially if they lack confidence or proficiency in the target language.

Interestingly, only 6.1% of participants reported limited access to technology as the main challenge. While this may seem relatively low compared to other challenges, it still underscores the importance of ensuring equitable access to technology for all learners. Disparities in access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital resources can exacerbate existing inequalities in education and limit opportunities for marginalized learners.

The data highlights the diverse array of challenges that educators face when integrating technology into TBLT. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses technical support, digital literacy training, language support, and efforts to bridge the digital divide. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, educators can harness the potential of technology to enhance language learning outcomes and promote inclusivity in language teaching contexts.

In conclusion, the data underscores the importance of understanding and mitigating the multifaceted challenges associated with technology-mediated TBLT. By prioritizing efforts to address technical issues, promote digital literacy, overcome language barriers, and ensure equitable access to technology, educators can create more effective and inclusive learning environments that leverage the power of technology to support language acquisition and proficiency development.

*The strategies offered by EFL students and teachers to cope the challenges technology and TBLT*

Exploring the complex landscape of integrating technology into task-based language teaching (TBLT), EFL students and teachers alike have devised innovative strategies to effectively cope with the challenges posed by this dynamic educational approach.

Table 4. strategies given by participants to cope the challenges

Strategies	N	Percentage (%)
Teacher training, professional development and collaborative learning platforms For both students and teachers	17	51.5
Providing quality of internet connection and technology resources	11	33.3
Designing flexible tasks and media	3	9.2
Conducting need analysis on technology tools and tasks	2	6.1

The data presented in Table 4 provides valuable insights into the strategies proposed by participants to address the challenges encountered when integrating technology into task-based language teaching (TBLT) within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

Firstly, it is evident that a significant portion of participants, accounting for 51.5%, emphasized the importance of teacher training, professional development, and collaborative learning platforms as essential strategies. This highlights the recognition among participants of the crucial role that educator preparation and ongoing support play in effectively utilizing technology in language teaching. By investing in training and fostering collaboration among teachers, institutions can empower educators to leverage technology more effectively to enhance language learning outcomes.

Furthermore, 33.3% of participants highlighted the need for providing reliable internet connections and adequate technology resources. This underscores the fundamental infrastructure requirements necessary for successful technology integration in educational settings. Ensuring consistent access to high-speed internet and sufficient technological tools is essential for minimizing disruptions and maximizing the potential benefits of technology-enhanced language learning experiences.

Moreover, 9.2% of participants advocated for the design of flexible tasks and the use of multimedia resources. This suggests an acknowledgment of the importance of adapting instructional materials and activities to accommodate diverse learner needs and preferences. Incorporating multimedia elements into tasks can enhance engagement and cater to different learning styles, thereby promoting more effective language acquisition.

Interestingly, only 6.1% of participants suggested conducting needs analysis specifically focused on technology tools and tasks. While this strategy received less emphasis compared to others, it underscores the importance of

systematically assessing the technological requirements and preferences of both students and teachers. Conducting needs analysis can inform decision-making processes regarding the selection and implementation of appropriate technological solutions tailored to the unique needs and contexts of EFL learners.

In conclusion, the data from Table 4 highlights a range of strategies proposed by participants to address the challenges associated with integrating technology into TBLT in an EFL context. By prioritizing teacher training and professional development, ensuring access to necessary technological resources, designing flexible tasks, and conducting needs analysis, institutions can enhance their capacity to effectively leverage technology to support language learning and teaching initiatives.

Technology tools to teach listening and speaking

Table 5. technology tools to teach listening and speaking

Strategies	N	Percentage (%)
Zoom, google meet, google classroom and local LMS	17	51.5
YouTube, podcast, duolingo	11	33.3
Ted talks, spotify	3	9.2
Digital storytelling, Elsa talk, BBC	2	6.1

The data shows (51.5%) the majority of participants in the sample utilize popular online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom for their listening and speaking activities. These platforms offer features such as video conferencing, chat functions, and document sharing, which can facilitate real-time communication, collaborative learning, and access to multimedia resources. Their widespread use may be attributed to their user-friendly interfaces, availability across devices, and integration with other educational tools and materials.

YouTube, Podcasts, Duolingo (33.3%): A significant proportion of participants rely on multimedia platforms like YouTube and podcasting platforms, as well as language learning apps like Duolingo, for listening and speaking practice. These tools offer a diverse range of audiovisual content, including instructional videos, podcasts, language learning podcasts, and interactive exercises, which can enhance listening comprehension, pronunciation, and oral communication skills. The popularity of these tools may stem from their accessibility, flexibility, and the abundance of free educational content available.

Ted Talks, Spotify (9.2%): A smaller percentage of participants utilize platforms such as Ted Talks and Spotify for listening and speaking activities. Ted Talks provide engaging and informative speeches on various topics, while Spotify offers access to a wide range of audio content, including podcasts, music, and language learning materials. Although less commonly used compared to other platforms, these tools can still serve as valuable resources for language learners seeking authentic listening materials and opportunities for language practice.

Digital storytelling, Elsa Talks, BBC (6.1%): A minority of participants incorporate specific tools like digital

storytelling platforms, Elsa Talks (a pronunciation app), and BBC resources into their listening and speaking activities. These tools offer interactive storytelling experiences, pronunciation practice, and access to authentic audiovisual content from reputable sources like the BBC. While less prevalent among the sample, these tools may cater to specific learning preferences or objectives, such as improving pronunciation accuracy or cultural understanding.

It's evident that participants utilize a variety of technology tools to support their listening and speaking activities in EFL learning. The prevalence of platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom underscores the importance of real-time communication and collaborative learning experiences in language acquisition. Meanwhile, the diverse range of multimedia platforms, language learning apps, and specialized resources reflects the evolving landscape of digital tools available to language learners, offering flexibility and customization in language learning approaches. Understanding the types of technology tools used in listening and speaking activities can inform educators and learners alike in selecting appropriate resources and strategies to enhance language proficiency effectively.

#### *Technology tools to teach reading and writing*

Table 5. technology tools to teach reading and writing

Strategies	N	Percentage (%)
Padlets, canva, kahoot	3	9.3
Google docs, quizizz, web blogs,	17	51.5
Facebook, Instagram, whatsapp	11	33.2
Chat GPT, Quillbot, grammarly	2	6.1

Table 6 provides insights into the technology tools utilized by participants specifically for reading and writing activities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Understanding the distribution of technology tools in this context can offer valuable insights into the preferences and practices of language learners when engaging in these language skills.

The majority of participants (51.5 %) in the sample rely on widely accessible platforms such as Google Docs, Quizizz, and weblogs for their reading and writing activities. Google Docs offers collaborative document editing and sharing capabilities, while Quizizz provides interactive quizzes and assessments. Weblogs, or blogs, offer a platform for individuals to publish written content online. These tools facilitate writing practice, reading comprehension, and feedback exchange among peers, contributing to the development of language skills in a digital environment.

A significant proportion of participants (33.2%) utilize social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp for reading and writing activities. While primarily designed for social interaction, these platforms also serve as channels for accessing written content, engaging with texts, and communicating with others in

written form. Language learners may leverage these platforms to read articles, posts, and messages in English, as well as to practice writing through status updates, comments, and direct messaging.

A smaller percentage of participants (9.3 %) incorporate specific tools like Padlet, Canva, and Kahoot into their reading and writing activities. Padlet allows users to create digital bulletin boards for sharing and organizing information, while Canva offers graphic design tools for creating visual content. Kahoot provides interactive quiz-based learning activities. These tools offer opportunities for creative expression, visual literacy development, and interactive learning experiences, complementing traditional reading and writing practices with multimedia elements.

A minority of participants (6.1 %) utilize AI-powered writing tools like ChatGPT, Quillbot, and Grammarly for their reading and writing activities. These tools offer features such as text generation, paraphrasing, and grammar checking, aiming to enhance writing fluency, accuracy, and efficiency. While less commonly used compared to other platforms, these tools can support language learners in generating written content, improving language proficiency, and self-editing their work.

It's evident that participants employ a variety of technology tools to support their reading and writing activities in EFL learning. The prevalence of platforms like Google Docs, Quizizz, and social media platforms underscores the importance of digital collaboration, interactive learning, and authentic text engagement in language acquisition. Meanwhile, the diversity of tools ranging from blogging platforms to AI writing assistants reflects the evolving landscape of digital resources available to language learners, offering flexibility and innovation in language learning approaches. Understanding the types of technology tools used in reading and writing activities can inform educators and learners in selecting appropriate resources and strategies to enhance language proficiency effectively in these areas.

#### *The future of technology-mediated task-based language teaching in EFL learning*

Drawing on the interview, the participants express their idea for the future of TMTBLT in EFL context. As one of the participants note:

In my view, the future of technology-mediated task-based English teaching in the context of English as a foreign language in Indonesia is very bright and full of potential. The reason underlying this view is because, the very rapid development of technology in Indonesia will make it easier to integrate technology in English language learning. Smartphones and the internet are increasingly affordable and can be a gateway to learning digital English. (p.5, interview)

The participant acknowledges the rapid advancement of technology in Indonesia. This suggests that the infrastructure and technological ecosystem in the country are evolving rapidly, providing a solid foundation for the integration of technology into various sectors, including education. In addition, the accessibility of

technology, particularly smartphones and the internet, is highlighted. The affordability of smartphones and the widespread availability of internet connectivity indicate that a larger segment of the population can potentially access digital English learning resources. This increased accessibility lowers barriers to entry for learners who may not have had access to traditional language learning resources before.

Therefore, the participant emphasizes the potential for integrating technology into English language learning. With the proliferation of smartphones and internet connectivity, digital platforms and resources can serve as effective tools for language instruction. This integration can enhance the learning experience by providing interactive and engaging learning materials, opportunities for real-world language use, and access to a wide range of authentic language content.

Another important point, the participant also argues that task-based language teaching within the context of technology suggests that technology-mediated TBLT approaches hold promise for English language education in Indonesia. Task-based approaches focus on meaningful language use and communication, aligning well with the interactive and communicative affordances of digital platforms.

In summary, the participant suggests that the future of technology-mediated task-based English teaching in Indonesia's EFL context is indeed promising. The rapid development of technology, coupled with increased accessibility, creates an environment conducive to leveraging technology for English language learning. By harnessing the potential of digital resources and integrating them into task-based language teaching approaches, educators can enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of English language education in Indonesia.

Another participant said:

I think using technology is inevitable for teaching and learning activities since it can provide teachers with more teaching resources and media. It will be great if there are strategies that teachers can use to make all students be engaged in performing learning activities while using technology as their learning media. It will also be great if more teaching resources suitable for all levels of proficiency are available for free. (p.10, interview)

The participant underscores the inevitability of technology in education. She suggests a recognition of the pervasive influence of technology in modern society and its integration into educational practices. The acknowledgment of technology's inevitability implies an acceptance of its role as a fundamental component of contemporary teaching and learning environments. In addition, the participant emphasizes the potential of technology to provide teachers with a wealth of teaching resources and media. This includes digital tools, multimedia content, and interactive platforms that can enrich instructional materials and facilitate diverse learning experiences. By leveraging technology, educators can access a wide range of resources to enhance their teaching methods and cater to different learning styles and preferences.

The participant expresses the desire for strategies that can effectively engage all students in learning activities while utilizing technology as a learning medium. This highlights the importance of ensuring that technology integration goes beyond mere access to devices and resources. Effective pedagogical strategies are needed to actively involve students in the learning process, leveraging the interactive and collaborative features of technology to promote engagement and participation.

Another important thing, the data is also highlighting the importance of having a diverse range of teaching resources suitable for learners at all proficiency levels. Furthermore, the desire for these resources to be available for free underscores the importance of accessibility and equity in education. Access to free teaching resources can democratize education, ensuring that learners from diverse backgrounds have equal opportunities for learning and advancement.

Overall, the participant emphasizes the need for effective strategies to engage students in learning activities while leveraging technology, as well as the importance of ensuring the availability of diverse and accessible teaching resources. By addressing these concerns, educators can harness the full potential of technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences and promote inclusive education for all learners.

While other participant notes:

The future of technology-mediated task-based language teaching in the EFL Indonesian context likely involves increasingly personalized and adaptive learning experiences, supported by AI-driven platforms and mobile technologies, to enhance accessibility and engagement across diverse learner populations. (p.25, interview)

The data shows a shift towards more personalized and adaptive learning experiences facilitated by technology. This indicates a departure from traditional one-size-fits-all approaches towards more tailored learning experiences that cater to individual learner needs, preferences, and proficiency levels. Technology, particularly AI-driven platforms, can analyze learner data and provide customized learning pathways, activities, and feedback, thereby optimizing learning outcomes. In contrast with, the mention of AI-driven platforms and mobile technologies signifies the increasing role of artificial intelligence and mobile devices in language education. AI-powered systems can offer intelligent tutoring, language assessment, and automated feedback, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of language learning. Mobile technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, provide learners with flexible access to learning materials, fostering flexibility and convenience in language learning endeavors. However, AI-powered system should not prevent students critical thinking skills. In this context, the teachers are urged to remind their students in balancing the use of AI and technology in EFL learning.

The data is also indicating the integration of technology into TBLT aims to enhance accessibility and engagement across diverse learner populations. Technology can bridge geographical barriers, making language



learning more accessible to learners in remote or underserved areas. Furthermore, interactive and multimedia-rich digital resources can stimulate learner engagement, motivation, and participation, thereby fostering a more dynamic and immersive learning environment. The participant underscores the importance of considering diverse learner populations within the EFL context in Indonesia. Technology-mediated TBLT approaches should be inclusive and adaptable to accommodate learners with varying linguistic backgrounds, learning styles, and educational needs. By leveraging technology to provide personalized and adaptive learning experiences, educators can better address the diverse needs of learners and promote equitable access to quality language education.

In summary, the data suggests a future for technology-mediated TBLT in the EFL Indonesian context characterized by personalized, adaptive, and technologically-enhanced learning experiences. By harnessing the potential of AI-driven platforms and mobile technologies, educators can foster accessibility, engagement, and inclusivity in language education, ultimately empowering learners to achieve their language learning goals more effectively.

## Discussion

This study investigates three important issues, including the challenges of EFL students and teachers enacting TMTBLT in EFL learning, the strategies to cope with the challenges and the future trends of TMTBLT in Indonesia. Table 3 indicates the challenges such as technical issues (e.g., slow internet connectivity, power outages, malfunctioning devices), digital literacy (e.g., navigating learning platforms, using software applications, or troubleshooting technical issues), language barrier (e.g., English proficiency) and limited access to technology. The data shows a wide range of challenges that both students and teachers face when incorporating technology into TBLT. To minimize these hurdles effectively, a holistic approach is necessary, involving technical assistance, training in digital literacy, language support, and initiatives to bridge the digital gap. By acknowledging and tackling these challenges, educators can maximize technology's potential to improve language learning results and foster inclusivity in teaching settings.

In summary, the data emphasizes the significance of recognizing and mitigating the diverse challenges linked with technology-driven TBLT. Through prioritizing efforts to tackle technical issues, enhance digital skills, overcome language barriers, and ensure fair access to technology, educators can establish more efficient and inclusive learning environments that capitalize on technology's capabilities to facilitate language acquisition and proficiency growth. The findings correspond with the previous study that enacting TBLT has numerous challenges in many Asian countries, especially in Indonesia (Adams & Newton, 2009; Aorny et al., 2022; Butarbutar, 2021; Littlewood, 2007; Putri, 2023).

Secondly, to cope with the challenges, participants offer strategies, including teacher training. Professional development and collaborative learning for both students and teachers, providing quality internet connection and

technology resources, designing flexible tasks and conducting need analysis. Participants advocate for prioritizing teacher training and professional development initiatives. By equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize technology in TBLT, institutions can enhance teacher confidence, competence, and proficiency in integrating digital tools and resources into their teaching practices.

Another key strategy proposed is ensuring access to essential technological resources. This involves providing educators and learners with adequate hardware, software, internet connectivity, and digital learning materials required to facilitate technology-mediated language teaching and learning activities effectively. Another point is that participants emphasize the importance of designing flexible tasks that accommodate diverse learner needs, preferences, and proficiency levels. By creating adaptable and customizable tasks, educators can cater to individual learning styles, abilities, and interests, thereby fostering engagement, motivation, and active participation in language learning activities. Furthermore, conducting needs analysis emerges as a crucial strategy for institutions seeking to enhance their capacity to leverage technology in TBLT. By systematically assessing the specific needs, preferences, and challenges of learners and educators, institutions can tailor technology integration initiatives to address identified gaps and ensure alignment with institutional goals and learner outcomes.

Overall, the strategies proposed by participants underscore the importance of proactive and comprehensive approaches to technology integration in TBLT within EFL contexts. By prioritizing teacher training, ensuring access to technological resources, designing flexible tasks, and conducting needs analysis, institutions can strengthen their capacity to harness technology effectively to support language learning and teaching initiatives, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of language education programs.

Lastly, the participants also mention the future issue of TMTBLT in Indonesia. The data indicates a shift towards personalized and adaptive learning experiences, implying that educational technologies will be tailored to meet the individual needs, preferences, and learning styles of each student. This approach recognizes that learners have diverse backgrounds, abilities, and interests and aims to provide tailored instruction and support to optimize learning outcomes. The participants also emphasized that AI-driven platforms and mobile technologies will play a significant role in supporting personalized and adaptive learning experiences. These technologies can analyze learner data, track progress, and deliver targeted feedback and recommendations. Additionally, mobile technologies provide learners with on-the-go access to learning materials, enabling anytime, anywhere learning opportunities.

In this context, by leveraging personalized and adaptive learning experiences supported by AI-driven platforms and mobile technologies, the future of technology-mediated TBLT in the EFL Indonesian context aims to enhance accessibility and engagement across diverse learner populations. These advancements can help address barriers to learning, such as limited access to resources and varying levels of language proficiency, while also fostering greater student engagement and motivation.

Overall, the data suggests that the future of technology-mediated TBLT in the EFL Indonesian context will be characterized by a shift towards more personalized, adaptive, and technologically-driven learning experiences. By embracing these advancements, educators can enhance accessibility, engagement, and effectiveness in language teaching and learning, ultimately empowering learners to achieve their language learning goals more effectively.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the challenges faced by EFL teachers and students in Indonesia when enacting technology-mediated task-based language teaching (TMTBLT). Through the analysis of participant responses, it becomes evident that technical issues, digital literacy challenges, language barriers, and limited access to technology are among the primary obstacles encountered in integrating technology into TBLT practices. These challenges underscore the multifaceted nature of technology integration in language teaching contexts and highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to address them effectively.

Furthermore, the research identifies various strategies proposed by participants to cope with these challenges, including prioritizing teacher training and professional development, ensuring access to necessary technological resources, designing flexible tasks, and conducting needs analysis. These strategies provide valuable insights into the proactive measures that institutions and educators can undertake to enhance their capacity to leverage technology effectively in language teaching and learning. Even though this research has provided insightful findings to address the challenges and strategies enacting TMTBLT in the EFL context, it has a limitation in the limited participants and data collection. Therefore, further research should be undertaken to explore the challenges and strategies of TMTBLT in a broader context and with participants in order to get comprehensive data.

## **Recommendations**

Drawing on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made to support EFL teachers and students in enacting technology-mediated task-based language teaching in the Indonesian context. Policymakers and institutions are recommended to prioritize ongoing training and professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' digital literacy skills and proficiency in integrating technology into TBLT practices. In addition, efforts should be made to provide adequate access to essential technological resources, including hardware, software, and internet connectivity, to facilitate effective technology integration in language classrooms. Pedagogically, EFL teachers must design tasks that are flexible and adaptable to accommodate diverse learner needs, preferences, and proficiency levels, thereby fostering engagement and participation in language learning activities. Another crucial point is conducting regular needs analysis to identify the specific challenges, preferences, and learning goals of both teachers and students, informing the development of tailored technology integration initiatives. Practically, students and teachers can collaborate through online or offline

platforms in order to get effective teaching-learning using TMTBLT.

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank to Centre Funding for Higher Education (BPPT) and Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) from the Ministry of Finance Republic Indonesia for granting the scholarship and supporting this research. We also thanks to all the participants involved this study.

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## Trend Augmented Reality in Education: Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract:** Augmented Reality has a positive impact in the world of education. Systematic review studies and article reviews have provided evidence of this positive impact. Augmented reality is an effective medium for learning, especially during a pandemic. The keyword used to find the articles on the Scopus database was “augmented AND reality AND in AND science AND education,” which discovered 1153 publications, then screening found 68 articles that met the criteria for analysis were obtained by following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review procedure. The bibliometric finding in this study is the increasing trend of augmented reality research. Research trends consist of distribution year, research type, keywords, author nationality, and international collaboration. The findings reveal that there has been an increase in research from 2018-2023 on the theme of augmented reality. The research employed several methods, i.e., qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and survey. The author publishes the theme of augmented reality from 28 countries, especially the Malaysia, China, romanisa, Spain, Turkey. Furthermore, it was found that the number of collaborating publications (universities or countries) was higher than those not collaborating. The AR trend in education has benefits for students and teachers. The conclusions from the analysis of the article show that the theme of augmented reality is becoming a trend in education.

**Keywords:** Student, literature review, education, augmented reality

**Citation:** Arinda Eka, L., Suwono, S., Sueb, S. & Sulisetijono, S. (2024). Trend Augmented Reality in Education: Systematic Literature Review. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 77-93), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.



## Introduction

Technology is increasingly into every aspect of life, education is also undergoing a significant transformation. One of the technological innovations that has changed the way we learn and teach is Augmented Reality (AR). AR combines the real world with interactive digital elements, creating immersive and engaging learning experiences. In an educational context, AR has opened the door to more immersive, visual and practical learning, helping students to understand complex concepts in ways that were previously difficult to access (K. Lee, 2012).

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the use of Augmented Reality (AR) technology in education (Garzón, 2021; Jayamaha, 2024; Johnson & Westbrooks, 2021). AR has changed the way we view learning and is having a powerful impact on the way students learn and teachers teach. With the increasing sophistication of technological devices and the development of digital content, AR has become an increasingly popular and enthusiastic tool in various educational settings (H. Lee & Cho, 2020).

This increase is not surprising considering the huge potential that AR has to offer. With the ability to blend the physical world with interactive digital elements, AR creates evocative and memorable learning experiences. Currently, students can explore abstract concepts in an attractive visual form, as well as face real-world situations that are enriched with additional information from the digital world.

In this article, we will investigate how the increased use of AR has affected education. We will explore the reasons behind its increased popularity, as well as the impact it has seen in terms of quality of learning, student engagement and teaching effectiveness. Some examples of successful AR use cases will provide insight into the different ways in which this technology has been integrated in a variety of educational contexts, from elementary to tertiary levels. By looking at this trend, it is clear that AR has taken a significant role in changing the learning paradigm. This is an exciting time in which technology has not only been used as an auxiliary tool, but has become an integral part of the educational experience. With the continuous development of technology and emerging innovations, AR has great potential to bring education into a new era full of possibilities and opportunities.

## Method

The acquired information was synchronized into Mendeley's Reference Manager as \*CSV and \*RIS files. The data were visualized using the software VOSviewer to make them more clear and communicative. The researchers uncovered 1153 articles using the keywords. Inclusion and exclusion models were utilized as preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analysis (PRISMA) (Gallagher et al., 2016). The researchers' order of inclusion and exclusion is shown in Figure 1.

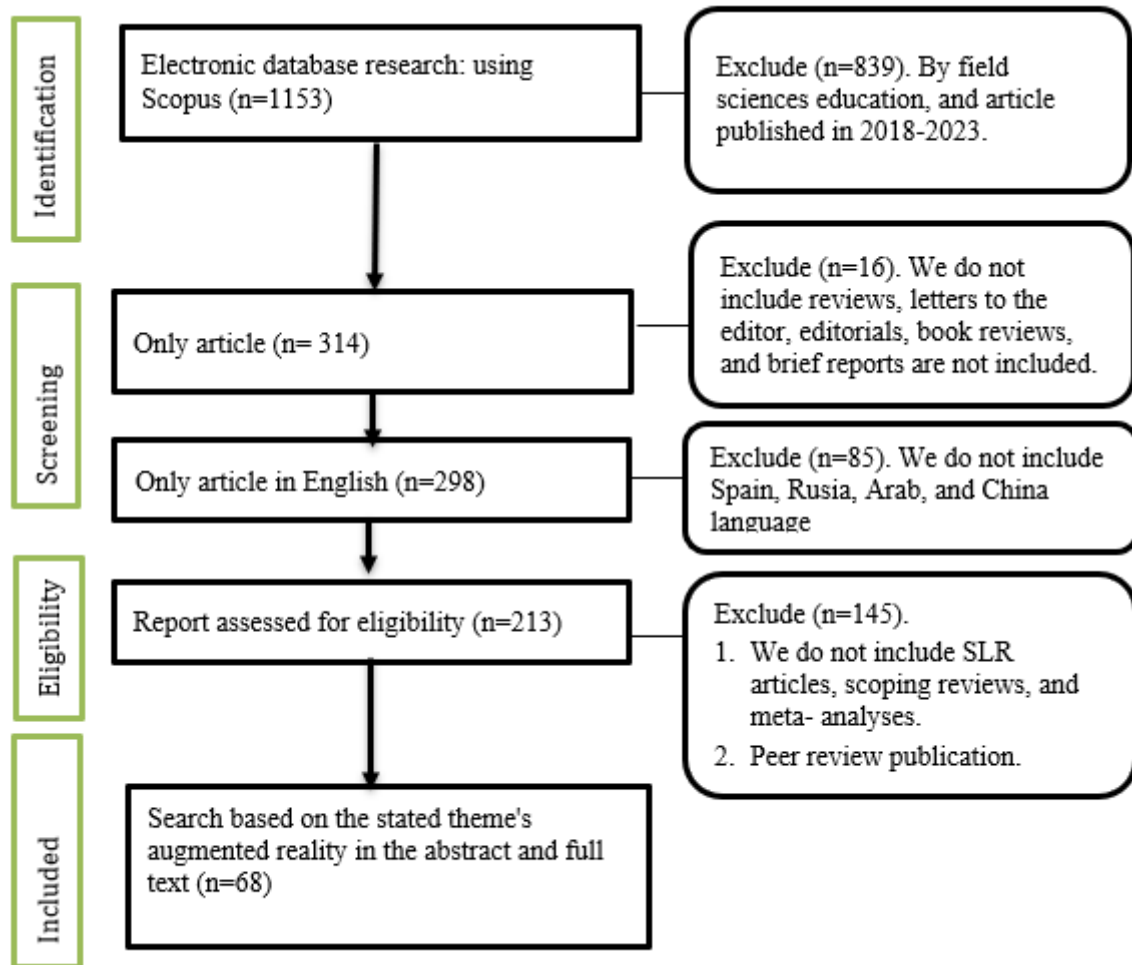


Figure 1. Method for SLR

## Results

### Distribution Year

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that the highest number of publications was in 2022, n=23 articles at which time the COVID-19 pandemic was ending. In 2023 only 7 articles were found, but we did not include them considering that 2023 will continue to experience developments in article publication. Figure 2 shows the number of articles published annually from 2018 to 2023.

### Research Type/Method

The trend of types of research related to augmented reality in education themes is presented in Figure 3. Augmented reality in education research is more dominantly carried out using a quantitative approach (32 articles). Qualitative research is also relatively large in number, reaching 20 articles. This shows that the issue of AR in education (science education) can be approached through both quantitative and qualitative means.

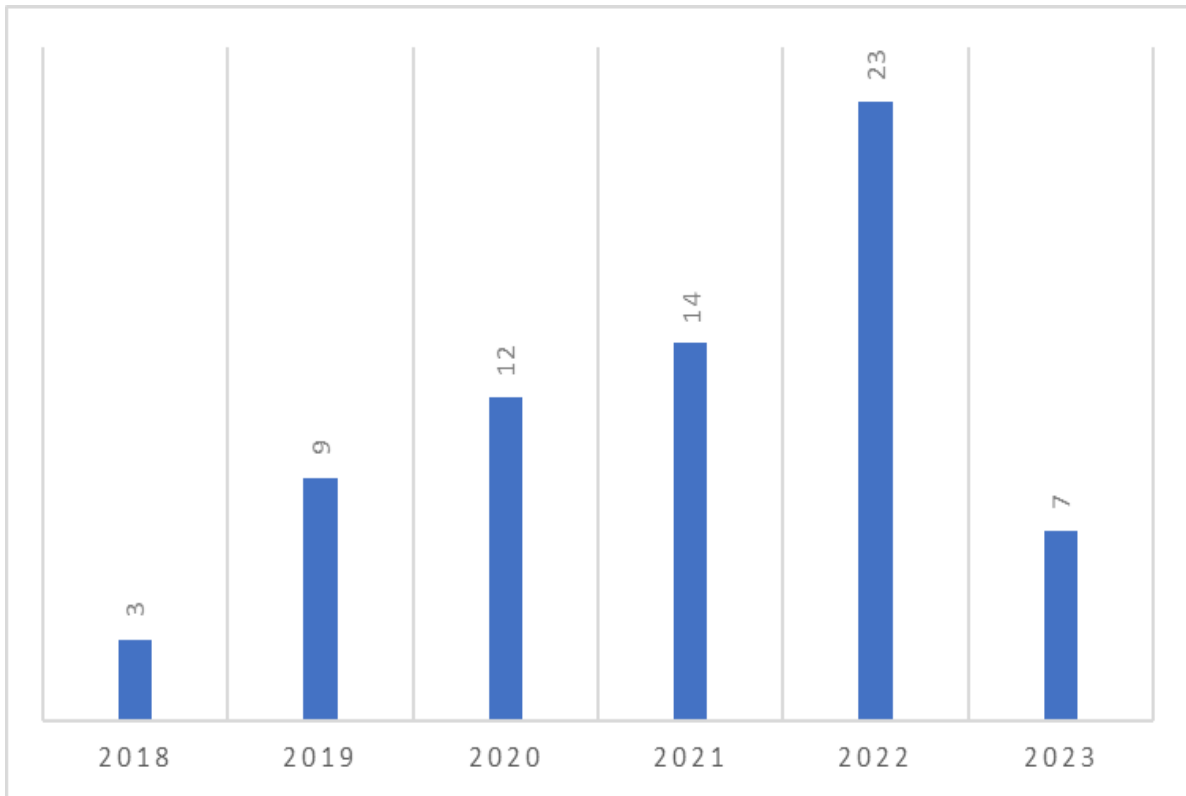


Figure 2. Distribution of Year

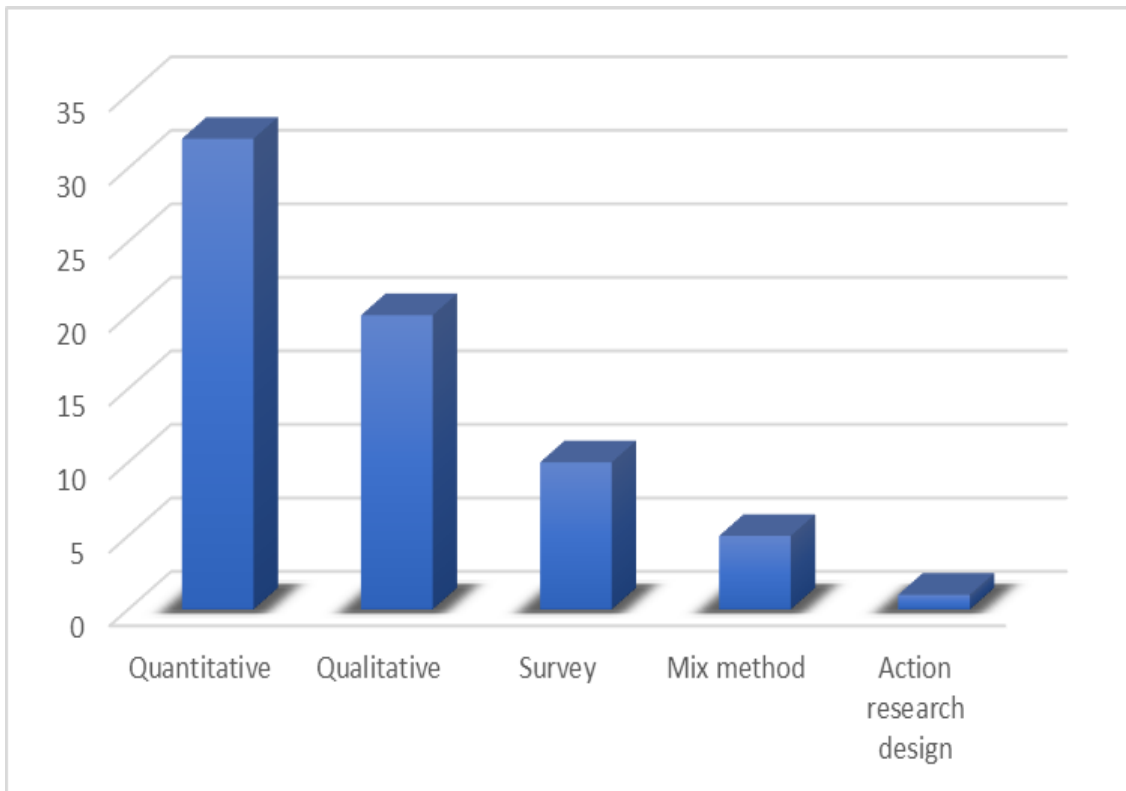


Figure 3. Research Type

*Keyword*

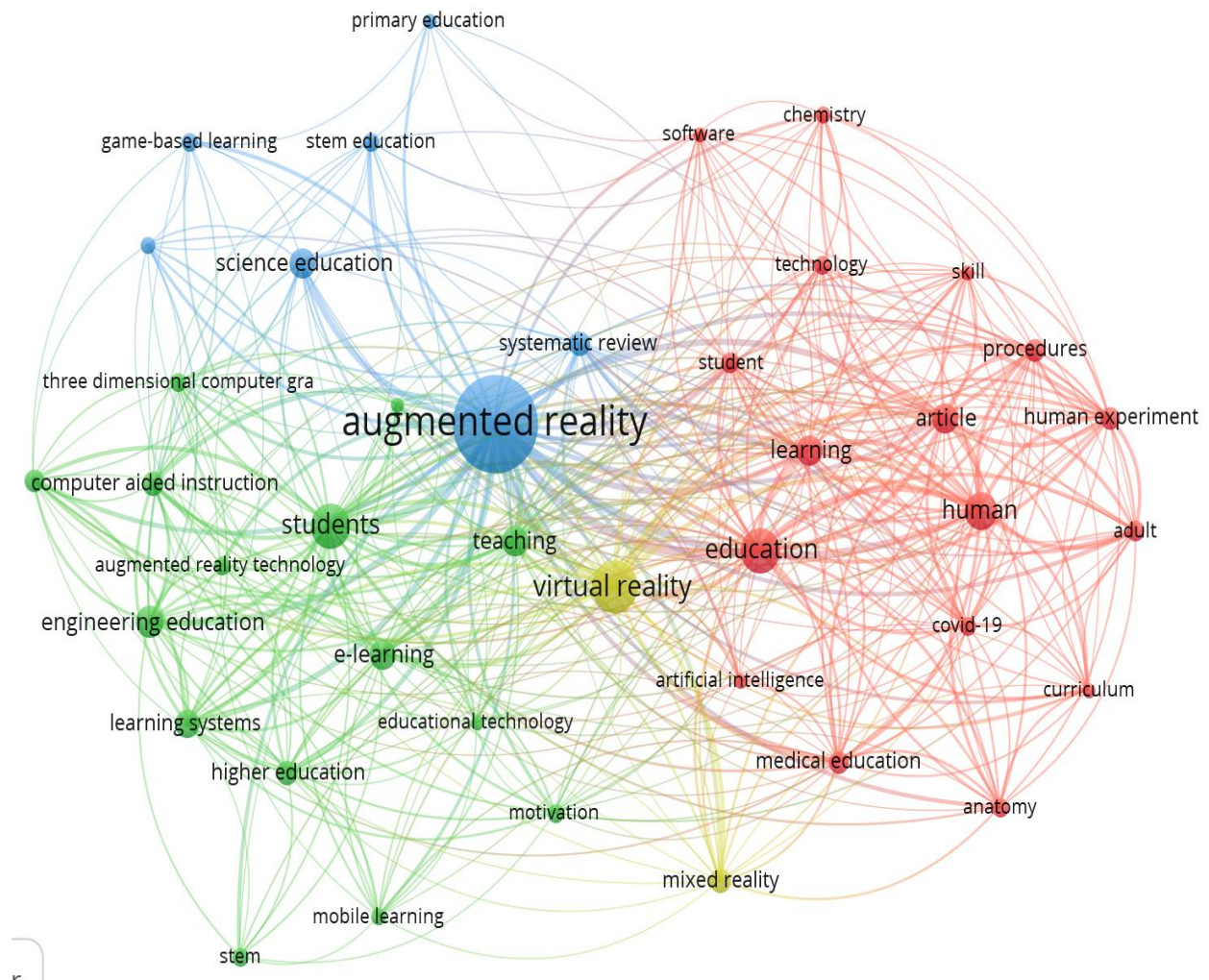


Figure 4. Keyword of vosViewer

Based on Figure 4, the different colours (yellow, purple, red, green, blue) indicate the relationship clusters between different topics. It can be seen that there is a main keyword that appears, namely augmented reality. The strength of the topic area or keyword pairs was indicated by the thickness of the connecting line.

*Author Nationallity*

The trend of author's nationality of research related to "AR in science education" themes are presented in Table 1. Based on Table 2, it can be seen that there are 28 nations of origin for the author. The nine countries with the most AR in science education themes are Malaysia (6 articles), China (5 articles), Romania (5 articles), Spain (5 articles), Turkey (5 articles), next are Germany, Taiwan, Australia, Austria, and UK. Based on continents, Europe contributes the most authors who publish about AR in education.

Table 1. Author's nationality and continental

No	Nations	Continent	Amount
1	Malaysia	Asia	6
2	China	Asia	5
3	Romania	Europe	5
4	Spain	Europe	5
5	Turkey	Europe	5
6	Germany	Europe	4
7	Taiwan	Asia	4
8	Australia	Australia	3
9	Austria	Europe	3
10	UK	Europe	3
11	USA	America	3
12	Egypt	Africa	2
13	Findland	Europe	2
14	Greece	Europe	2
15	India	Asia	2
16	Indonesia	Asia	2
17	Brazil	America	1
18	Canada	America	1
19	Chille	America	1
20	Cyprus	Europe	1
21	Iran	Asia	1
22	Kazakhstan	Asia	1
23	Korea	Asia	1
24	Kuwait	Asia	1
25	New Zealand	Oceania	1
26	Rusia	Europe	1
27	Saudia Arabia	Asia	1
28	Serbia	Europe	1

### *International Collaboration*

Based on Figure 5 it can be stated that there are more articles published with collaboration status in one country (69%), then international collaboration (21%). It can be said that most of the articles were written and published in a collaboration system both country and internationally.

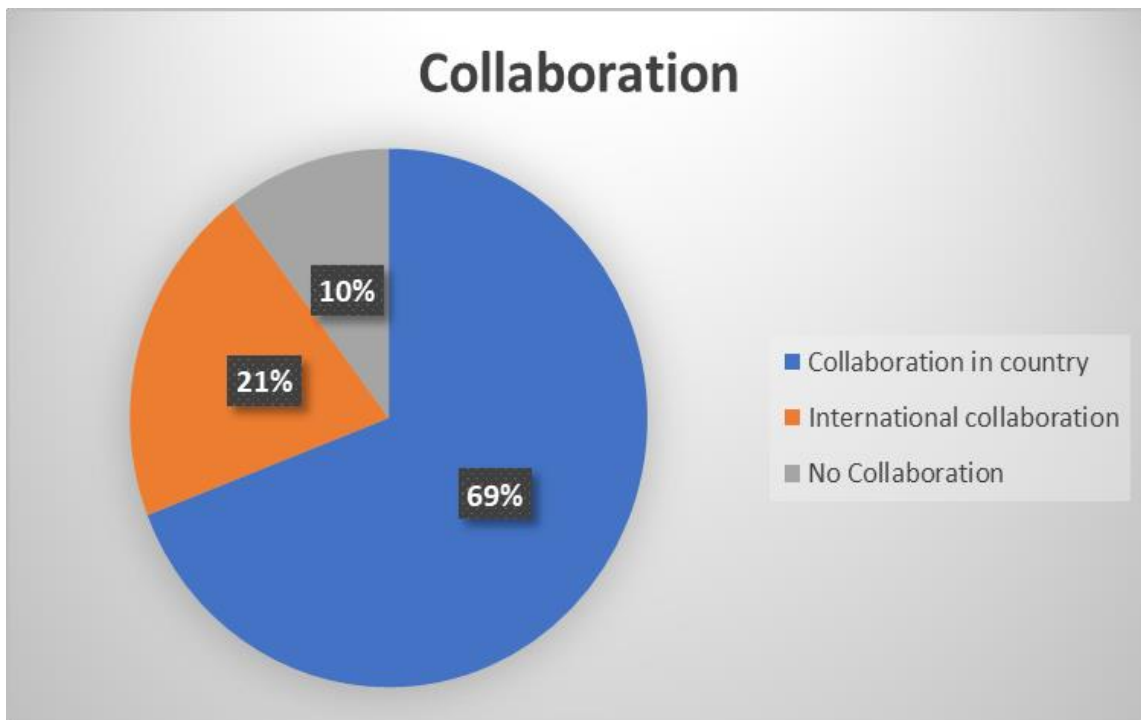


Figure 5. International Collaboration

*Contribution AR in Education*

Table 2. Contribution AR in Education

Contribution	Description	Contribution of Articles
<b>For teacher</b>	Design AR educational concepts that support learning, help to solve the problem, innovation teaching using AR make a meaningfull learning, AR is greater media for teaching, experimentation with AR promoted a slight increase in student motivation	(Schaffernak et al., 2020), (Bedewy et al., 2022), (Kee & Zhang, 2022), (Buchner & Hofmann, 2022), (Sural, 2018), (Marín-Díaz, 2023), (Asino et al., 2022), (Nechita & Rezeanu, 2019), (Castaño-Calle et al., 2022), (Gómez-García et al., 2021).
<b>For studets</b>	AR can help their connecting people more easy and interest, increase self-efficacy, interesting and easy to use, increase self assessment, ease of use, usefulness, and attitude toward using, understand lessons better	(Fleischer et al., 2023), (Elford et al., 2022), (Lampropoulos et al., 2022), (Çetin & Türkan, 2022), (Yang & Wang, 2023), (Hashim et al., 2022), (Minty et al., 2022), (Sinfield, 2018), (Su Cai, 2019), (Karagozlu, 2021), (Tuli et al., 2022), (Schoeb et al., 2020), (Sofianidis, 2022), (Abd Majid, 2019), (Lo et al., 2021),



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through the AR

(Zainuddin et al., 2022), (Atta et al., 2022), (Mayilyan, 2019), (Lin et al., 2021), (Nordin et al., 2022), (Badilla-Quintana et al., 2020), (Bucea-Manea-Țoniș et al., 2020), (Kang et al., 2020), (Khodabandeh, 2022), (Stylianidou et al., 2020), (Kuleto et al., 2021), (Oberdörfer et al., 2021), (Nadeem et al., 2020), (Mei & Yang, 2019), (Alahmadi et al., 2021), (Eldokhny & Drwish, 2021), (Keshav et al., 2018), (Jalaluddin et al., 2020), (Elmira et al., 2022), (Opriș et al., 2020), (Poçan et al., 2023), (Reeves et al., 2021), (Södervik et al., 2021), (Kapp et al., 2022), (Ghobadi et al., 2023), (Opriș et al., 2022), (Marks & Thomas, 2022), (Fernandes et al., 2020), (Özerbaş, 2019), (Vázquez-cano, 2020), (Huh et al., 2020), (McCord et al., 2022), (Putra et al., 2021), (Cabero-Almenara, 2019), (Syskowski & Huwer, 2023), (Ropawandi et al., 2022), (Chen et al., 2021), (Kaliyaperumal et al., 2020), (Cojocarui et al., 2022), (Methods et al., 2021), (Veer et al., 2022), (Widodo et al., 2019), (Lee & Hsu, 2021).

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## Discussion

There was an increase in publications from 2018 to 2023, an increase in publications starting from 2018 to 2022. There was an increase in articles in 2022, considering that in that year learning during the pandemic was carried out online (Cortés-Álvarez et al., 2022). The world of education has made enormous changes in learning, from in-class learning to online learning. Teachers and students adapted quickly to do online learning. However, there are many difficulties faced by students and teachers at the beginning of online learning (Kamal & Illiyan, 2021), starting from students feeling bored so they have no motivation to learn (Chowkase et al., 2022; Kaya & Akgül, 2022), until the teacher is not ready in technical terms. In 2021, publications related to the AR in education theme will increase in their use in online learning (Mystakidis et al., 2022; Ropawandi et al., 2022; Weng et al., 2019), so that in 2022 there will be an increase in publications on the AR in education theme experienced an increase with reports that AR learning can increase knowledge (Oberdörfer et al., 2021b; Poçan et al., 2023b), motivation (Carbonell-Carrera & Saorin, 2018; Jalaluddin et al., 2020b), attitude toward science (Karagozlu, 2018).



Based on the keyword we analyzed using VOSviewer described AR as the biggest node. That means AR field research is becoming popular. The unique thing we found suggests AR research is often related to the field of education. One article revealed that AR is a transformative technology that significantly alters the location and timing of education (Lee, 2012). In addition to AR education, there is also a line that connects to mobile phones and mobile applications. Results show that in the world of AR education, a lot is made in the form of mobile applications. Modern mobile devices today already have sensors and extensive computing capabilities to leverage augmented reality technology (Mota et al., 2018). Nowadays, smartphones are an integral part of everybody's life (Rashid et al., 2020). Therefore, smartphones are extensively employed for the implementation of augmented reality in education.

Article authors come from 28 different nations, with the majority being from America and Europe, followed by Asia. Interest in AR in America is high, according to [arriscomposite.com](http://arriscomposite.com) the use of AR in America is used in many fields and even more people (71%) believe AR will also become part of everyday life over the next few years. It is estimated that in 2025 America will use AR in everyday life (Jovan, 2022). Based on the European Commission (2020) announced the AR/VR industry coalition aims to inform policy makers, encourage investment, identify the main challenges and opportunities of the VR/AR sector in Europe. AR in Europe is a project program by Erasmus+ which aims to market virtual classrooms for innovation and add value to education. The use of AR/VR can help students in learning in an interesting experience. Adding AR/VR to learning can improve and broaden the way students learn and develop.

AR in Europe is becoming a trend in learning (Luna et al., 2019), so this has caused publications in the field of AR in education to be number one compared to publications from other countries. The most publication after USA, America followed by Asia in Malaysia. Malaysia is a developing country trying to compete in the eyes of the world. Various achievements were recorded from aspects of sports, education, economics, politics, social and so on (Syafiq Yusof et al., 2022). The government in Malaysia is making new investments in the information and communication industry to use ICT (Kamarulzaman Ab Aziz, 2012). Support from the government is a factor in the development of ICT in Malaysia, so it is only natural that the theme AR in science education in Malaysia is the third most published after the USA and Europe.

Publications written by authors around the world indicate that the theme of AR in science education is an important thing to study. AR is a technology that has been widely used in education because it has good benefits (Mystakidis et al., 2022; Sofianidis, 2022b). Three-dimensional virtual objects from the virtual world are incorporated into the actual world using augmented reality (AR). The use of augmented reality (AR) in educational systems is a creative and effective teaching tool that enhances the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Most publications related to AR in science in education are written in collaboration (collaboration in country and international collaboration). Collaborative writing demonstrates the strengthening of global scientific networks (Fernandes et al., 2020b).

Good publication writing is written in collaboration (Frassl et al., 2018). Collaborative publication writing has

benefits, including increasing visibility, sharing project costs, easy access to expensive physical resources, gaining wider influence by sharing data, and increasing creativity by exchanging ideas (K. R. W. Matthews et al., 2020). From the results of the literature review there were only six single authors, while 43 other articles were written in collaboration. Some collaborations were found between researchers from Sweden, US, Morocco besides that there were collaborations with authors from Colombia, Spain, USA. In order to solve the complex research subjects and challenges that call for the integration of information from multiple disciplines, scientific collaboration in research and publication is crucial (Eberle et al., 2021). Collaborative imperatives have strengthened in many research fields over the last few decades, reflecting the higher impact of collaborative research, the need to share research resources, and new technological opportunities (Doreian & Kronegger, 2017).

We divide AR's contribution to education into two, namely contributions to teachers and students. Contributions for teachers reveal that AR in learning is one of the contemporary media in providing good understanding for students. AR's contribution to students has proven many improvements from various sides. AR in education provides many benefits that must be utilized as a medium for learning.

## Conclusion

The trend of publications with the theme of augmented reality has shown an increase. The results of the analysis show that augmented reality in education has a positive impact on learning. In addition, the writing of reports related to augmented reality is generally proven to be written in collaboration. Collaboration is very important to share knowledge and opinions related to this theme.

The trend of publications with the theme of AR has increased. We can provide recommendations to be able to analyze how the learning situation uses augmented reality, in order to inspire learning using augmented reality from various levels of educations.

## Acknowledgements

The author thanks to the Centre for Education Funding Services (PUSLAPDIK), Centre Funding for Higher Education (BPPT), Ministry of Education Culture, Research and Technology (KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK), Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) from the ministry of finance Republic Indonesia for granting the scholarship and supporting this research.

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## Perceptions of Campus Climate and Academic Engagement Among International Students in the USA

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**Abstract:** This study examined learning engagement among a sample ( $n = 2,478$ ) of international students who studied at institutions of higher education in the US. Using survey data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), I ran six regression analyses to study relationships among responding international students' reported ages, genders, races, degree aspirations, fields of study, residences, and their learning engagement. I found that international students who reported strong degree aspirations were more likely to display higher levels of learning engagement; furthermore, residence on campus was found to relate to learning engagement. I conclude that U.S. institutions of higher education had facilitated integration of international students with varied demographic characteristics. My findings addressed an evident research gap and showed that the critical race theory might be not applicable to an analysis of international students' learning engagement at U.S. institutions of higher education. My recommendations are for development of effective strategies to increase international students' learning engagement.

**Citation:** Al Muoaeweed, O. (2024). Perceptions of Campus Climate and Academic Engagement Among International Students in the USA. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 94-112), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The presence of international students on campuses of many institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the United States has encouraged researchers to investigate the integration of these students into the institutions' academic and social lives. Researchers agree that international students add diversity to IHEs and their communities, thus enriching their experiences (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). There is also a consensus in the academic literature that in a multicultural society, the treatment of people in institutional settings is the product of deeply rooted social perceptions that determine how people view themselves and those around them across the globe (Bleich, MacWilliams, & Schmidt, 2015). For international students, the institutional dimensions of race play a critical role in the social-psychological dimensions of how these individuals view themselves and how they act. The majority of U.S. institutions of higher education admit international students, including both foreign students and resident aliens, from 42 countries, including India, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia, and many others (Perry, 2016). In this situation, it is becoming increasingly topical to explore the experiences of these learners and their integration into IHEs.

To build relationships and a sense of belonging, colleges are tasked with the creation of a positive academic and

social engagement for their students. However, the concept of “belonging” might be controversial in case of international students due to the fact that they arrive from a foreign country and, thus, are naturally inclined towards experiencing problems with developing their sense of belonging in the USA. It is the responsibility of an institution to create an inclusive climate to help international students adjust socially (Cabrera, 2017). A social adjustment for international students involves the building of friendships with US students and fostering academic success through inclusive classroom contexts (Gummadam, Pittman, & Ioffe, 2016). While these practices have long been in place, they have failed to capture what is exactly meant when discussing “belonging” for international students. There is a popular opinion that international students might not feel as a part of an institution even if they find friends among classmates and participate in inclusive educational experiences (Perry, 2016). In this situation, the establishment and maintenance of an inclusive climate on the campus might be considered as a strong driver of facilitating the integration of international students into the educational environment.

The promotion of social connections strongly affects educational engagement. Prior research found that feeling socially connected to peers at college is positively correlated with students’ feelings of belonging at institutions of higher education (Batterton & Horner, 2016, p. 472). Likewise, students’ perceptions of a campus climate that is supportive of diversity have been linked to higher performance (Gummadam et al., 2016; Ma & Guo, 2023; Walter et al., 2021). Previous studies on a relationship between campus climates and belonging typically focus on one ethnic group rather than comparing associations for different types of students within the same college environment. Cabrera (2017) reported that there was no consensus in the literature regarding the potential of demographic factors, such as ethnicity and family income, to moderate the association between predictor variables and the sense of belonging (p. 89). At the same time, there is still a premise to believe that some of these factors, primarily race, can strongly affect the integration of students into the campuses’ environment and, as a result, affect their academic engagement in a learning institution (Gummadam et al., 2016, p. 292). The maintenance of a diverse campus climate enhances academic engagement of international students as noted by researchers (Batterton & Horner, 2016) who study student engagement.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore international students’ reported learning engagement in U.S. IHEs. I had the following research objectives:

- To evaluate international students’ feeling of belonging in US IHEs;
- To analyze the influence of international students’ ages on their learning engagement in US IHEs;
- To explore the impact of international students’ genders on their learning engagement in US IHEs;
- To investigate the effect of international students’ races on their learning engagement in US IHEs;
- To analyze the impact of international students’ degree aspirations on their learning engagement in US IHEs;
- To explore the impact of international students’ fields of study on their learning engagement in US

IHEs.

- To determine whether international students' residences affect their learning engagement in US IHEs.

### *Research Question*

This study was guided by the following research question: does learning engagement of international students in U.S. IHEs depend on their reports of demographic characteristics, degree aspirations, fields of study, and residence on campus?

### *Theoretical Framework*

In this study, I was based on two valid theoretical frameworks: first, Tinto's (1993) concept of student engagement in higher education and, second, critical race theory (Batterton & Horner, 2016). The model designed by Tinto (1993) highlights students' needs to make connections both inside and outside classrooms to increase their retention. This theory explains that pre-entry factors, such as family background, skills, and prior schooling, may strongly affect students' intentions, objectives, commitments, and goals (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). Students' experiences at IHEs encompass a variety of formal and informal academic and social experiences. In turn, they determine students' level of integration into the institution and affect their interaction with other students.

This model includes two forms of integration. First, the theory offered by Tinto (1993) underlines social integration, which explains students' daily interactions with other students inside and outside classrooms. Social integration can be informal and occur through conversations with peers. Alternatively, students may also engage in formal interactions, such as those that occur in student organizations. The model also includes academic integration that refers to students' interaction with academic staff during office hours or in the classroom (Batterton & Horner, 2016, p. 480). According to Tinto (1993), students must have some degree of social integration, academic integration, and persistence (p. 46). These three aspects help them integrate into the institution, which then strengthens their goals and objectives, and a commitment to the institution. Tinto (1993) claimed that the model is interactive and longitudinal because it interacts with other concepts and models over a given range of time. Students, according to this model, ought to have a community within the campus and help all its members integrate into an institution and to facilitate their sense of belonging (Howard & Navarro, 2016). The maintenance of an inclusive climate within such community is supposed to ensure an increase in retention rates across students from all the demographic groups.

Tinto's model might help explain the sense of belonging on campus and investigate its connection with social integration into an institution. This study departs from Tinto's (1993) theory with its focus on students' perspectives of social and learning integration. Some students might break off the ties with external communities and only consider relationships with other students rather than community and family

relationships. The lack of social inclusion or association is likely to lead to low dedication, engagement, satisfaction, and accomplishments. Furthermore, the scholarly literature illustrates that this factor might result in depression and elevated stress levels (Bond, Buntins, Bedenlier, Zawacki-Richter, & Kerres, 2020). This emphasis illustrates that belonging is a fundamental need among students that acts as a crucial requirement and a reason for acting (Bleich et al., 2015, p. 90). A failure to satisfy this need might lead to devastating implications.

Tinto's (1993) model is relevant to the study as it describes student engagements through academic, institution, and peer dimensions. The attachment of students to the academic life translates into institutional engagement; in turn, institutional engagement depends on students-faculty relationships (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015, p. 350). The model holds that both formal and informal relationships are affected by institutional rules and guidelines to enhance positive engagement. Moreover, it also draws an avenue for investigating the impact of students' interactions on campus on their engagement.

Critical race theory (CRT) is the second model used in this study. For the past two decades, many scholars have studied CRT. According to Batterton and Horner (2016), it has "theorized, examined, and challenged how race and racism shape schooling structures, practices and discourses" (p. 479). In the past, educators used to be interested primarily in critical race research and sought to describe negative experiences of students of color in educational settings (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2015). However, some versions of CRT shift to the areas of pedagogy, epistemology, and policy (American Educational Research Association, 2006). CRT challenges the perception of White persons' experience in a society as a yardstick to which the experiences of all the demographic groups should be measured. It seeks to examine distinctive experiences of students of color instead of exploring them through the prism of White persons' perceptions. The CRT framework was used in this study to enrich an understanding of barriers encountered by international students and ensure the comprehension of international students' academic engagement.

### *Significance of the Study*

The engagement of international students and their sense of belonging are important drivers of their academic achievements as well as many other important outcomes. IHEs must ensure adequate integration of international students into their environments because campus climate affects both quality of education and popularity among both students. Existing literature does not offer sufficient evidence of relationships among students' characteristics and perceptions of their engagement, and it remains unknown whether U.S. IHEs have been successful in establishing and maintaining inclusive campuses and communities that would promote international students' sense of belonging. This study was valuable both from theoretical and practical perspectives because in addition to closing an evident research gap, I sought to provide empirical data learning engagement among international students in U.S. IHEs.

### *Summary*



A high number of international students in U.S. IHEs call for increasing amounts of attention to their integration into the learning environment. My study sought to explore the learning engagement of international students by examining such variables as age, gender, race, degree aspirations, and fields of study. The theoretical frameworks of this study were Tinto's (1993) model of retention and critical race theory as stated by the American Educational Research Association (2006). My findings provide insights into ways to foster international students' learning engagement.

## **Literature review**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the learning engagement of international students. This literature review comprises two sections, as follows: experiences of international students in U.S. IHEs, and the concept of learning engagement.

### **International Students in the USA**

In rural and urban centers, millions of international students are transforming American learning institutions into world-class universities. With over a million international students making their way to class in America every day, their American college experience needs to create room for diverse backgrounds and ethnicities (Cole & Zhou, 2014). The prospect of studying at U.S. universities is now open for representatives of many nationalities (Glass, Wongtrirat, Buus, & Aw, 2015). This process leads to increased diversity in homogenous campuses where international students have to overcome barriers to their full integration into the learning environment (Lambert et al., 2013). Although the influx of international students promotes intercultural learning in the United States, challenges faced by international students indicate that the development of intercultural learning in the country is still insufficient (Barnett III, 2016). Research on international student engagement and culturally diverse campus environments has been of importance not only to U.S. campuses but also to a broad range of local and international stakeholders.

Experiences of international students on campuses have attracted the attention of many scholars. Ashwin and McVitty (2015) recommended implementing strategies to enhance the experiences of international students in colleges through the creation of inclusive and connected campus environments where international students are empowered to excel in all types of education institutions (p. 349). Glass et al. (2015) advocated for the adoption of a comprehensive approach to the creation of an inclusive campus climate through culturally sensitive strategies that recognize the needs of international students as they struggle to integrate into the American culture (p. 578). Likewise, Bleich et al. (2015) indicated that international students require extra care before they can adapt to U.S. IHEs' rules, programs, and practices because they are completely removed from their culturally diverse backgrounds (p. 85). Batterton and Horner (2016) concluded that international students have been forced to deal with barriers to integration, and most of them are forced to struggle with feelings of powerlessness and isolation (p. 482). All these studies illustrate that international students experience substantial



challenges that inhibit their integration into the learning environment and complicate their academic engagement.

### *Student Engagement*

One study defined student engagement as involvement in curricular and extracurricular activities in learning institutions (Korobova & Starobin, 2015, p. 78). These activities determine how well a student performs in the classroom and integrates with an IHE. The learning experiences of students in an educational institution are more successful if they are involved in academically beneficial activities. Korobova and Starobin (2015) stated that definitions of student engagement vary greatly. Bleich et al. (2015) noted that engagement is a valid indicator of excellence in a learning institution that deviates from traditional measurable characteristics (p. 90). Cole and Zhou (2014) emphasized that the concept of student engagement applies to educational outcome indicators that extend beyond the classroom (p. 114). All these arguments illustrate the importance of student engagement in educational settings.

The available evidence provides a reason to believe that engagement indicators may be even more important for international students. A study by Nguyen, Nguyen, and Teranishi (2018) found that international students' engagement could predict whether they graduate (p. 385). Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005) found that researching engagement among international students is critical in understanding the experiences of international students who are a significant source of diversity in American college campuses. They found that students arriving in the country reported disorientation associated with stress, anxiety, and a feeling of loss (p. 230). Batterton and Horner (2016) explained that international students often fail to integrate fully into the American community (p. 467). Korobova and Starobin (2015) said that in attempts to satisfy their need to belong, they create support structures involving students from their home country or other nations when studying in the United States (p. 84). Gummadam et al. (2016) found that social structures that cultivate and sustain relationships between international students and their American counterparts could ease adjustments and improve learning outcomes (p. 302). Such options are preferable over support structures created by international students because it facilitates students' engagement and integration into the learning environment.

The absence of consistent student engagement strategies might lead to disturbing consequences. Barnett III (2016) reported that international students complaining about the lack of engagement reportedly felt lonely and isolated (p. 89). In another study, Griffin, Cunningham, Mwangi, and Chrystal (2016) found that feelings of isolation halts learning processes because students experience withdrawal from participating in learning processes and other activities (p. 34). Nguyen et al. (2018) suggested that lack of student engagement led international students to rarely interact with peers (p. 487). Museus, Yi, and Saelua (2017) said that the establishment of specific support structures and the conduct of targeted interventions could address this problem and, as a result, improve the extent of international students' engagement in educational practices and enhance the learning process (p. 187). An increase in student engagement among international students, therefore, is highly desirable for any IHE.

The task of ensuring high student engagement rates is challenging due to the existence of many intermediary variables, such as early academic readiness, academic achievements, family income, and other demographic factors. If particular students have low marks in mathematics and reading, their chances of completing a secondary school degree are relatively low; however, according to the results of one recent study, students' grades also strongly affect their engagement (Bond et al., 2020). In addition to students' grades, their learning habits and other characteristics of their behavior have been found to affect their achievements at IHEs (Hughes, 2010). Such intermediary variables influence the ability of IHEs' interventions not only to ensure that students complete their degree programs but also to increase their academic engagement.

The website of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides recent data on student engagement in U.S. IHEs. It investigated international students' experiences in different dimensions (Bleich et al., 2015, p. 91). Its data ranged from students' willingness to engage with in-class and out-of-class activities to their take on reading and writing, which all mirror their perceptions of their learning environments (Strayhorn, Bie, Dorime-Williams, & Williams, 2016, p. 72). Ashwin and McVitty (2015) found that, with a culture already in place, college engagement activities fostered the creation of a climate capable of handling diverse international populations (p. 347). Glass et al. (2015) found that student engagement enhanced tolerance for international students and created welcoming environments (p. 489). Through engagement programs, campuses can help international students living alone to attain a semblance of some sort and face the challenges in a supportive social structure.

Counseling has been found to be an effective mechanism to increase student engagement. Koborova (2015) found that counseling could enhance international students' engagement in IHEs. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2018) determined that the provision of advice on how to navigate life in a new country, which could occur in the form of counseling, might ease the adjustment and adaptation of international students to their new environments (p. 383). Eventually, the implementation of counseling sessions can improve international students' engagement and, as a result, enhance their learning outcomes (Museus et al., 2017, p. 213). Thus, counseling could be considered as a part of support structures to promote the sense of belonging among international students.

Engagement of international students has been found to change over time. Zhao et al. (2005) found that groups of international students indicated varying degrees of engagement from time of enrolment to the end of studies (p. 214). Ashwin and McVitty (2015) found that, without appropriate measures to enhance student-faculty interaction, students in the first semester spent more time on electronic gadgets than they did on interacting with their counterparts (p. 346). Museus et al. (2017) reported that over time, international students channeled their energies toward interaction with other students or productive academic areas that improved their academic outcomes and facilitated personal development (p. 183). To improve the outcome process, research advocates for fostering productive relationships between academic departments and international students and the close monitoring of individual international students using counselors and advisors who share a background with international students.

The promotion of cultural awareness is also an important requirement in this sphere. Comprehensive teaching techniques that accommodate the need of each nationality could be an effective instrument of achieving this goal (Batterton & Horner, 2016, p. 477). Cultural sensitivity provided by such techniques at the institutional level could promote student engagement among international students (Strayhorn et al., 2016, p. 50). To help international students integrate, IHEs should introduce practical approaches towards cultivating awareness and sensitivity and help faculty understand specific needs of international students (Bleich et al., 2015, p. 92). Although it is hardly possible to address the needs of every nationality, sensitivity and cultural awareness increase stakeholders' awareness of diverse cultures represented in learning institutions and inform the development of culturally sensitive approaches towards facilitating the integration of international students into the learning environment.

### *Summary*

This review of studies on international students attending colleges and universities in the USA showed the importance of student engagement in extracurricular activities and development of inclusive diverse communities of support. Studies reviewed showed that counseling and advising services were effective in developing cultural awareness and learning engagement.

## **Method**

This study sought to explore the concept of learning engagement among international students of U.S. institutions of higher education. Specifically, the study tried to answer the research question: does learning engagement of international students in U.S. IHEs depend on their reports of demographic characteristics, degree aspirations, fields of study, and residence on campus.

The focus of the study was placed on examining the students' feeling of belonging and its drivers. I was interested in investigating the impact of students' perceptions of campus climate and their demographic characteristics on their engagement. It was decided on the chose the research philosophy of critical realism for this study. This research philosophy allows analyzing research objects through the examination of humans' experiences, sensations, and perceptions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). This paradigm was selected because unlike positivism, pragmatism, and interpretivism, the philosophy of critical realism could be suitable for scrutinizing international students' perceptions of their engagement in the learning environment.

My study has an explanatory research design. I sought to measure a causal relationship between different variables and relied on both deductive and inductive research approaches. I used the former in applying results of the literature review to discuss empirical data and used the latter to analyze data collected from the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

I analyzed NCES (2020) data to draw conclusions regarding the learning engagement of international students in U.S. IHEs. I conducted all data collection and data within the cross-sectional time horizon. This study used a quantitative method to explore the concept of international students' engagement by determining whether engagement was affected by specific parameters. Quantitative methods measured the impact of those parameters on learning engagement.

## Hypothesis

Hypotheses form a crucial steppingstone toward a yet-to-be-proven phenomenon. Castillo (2013) notes that a hypothesis is a prediction of what is likely to be observed. However, it is more than a product of pure guesswork since it has to be based on background research. My study aims to investigate the learning engagement of international students by examining multiple variables, including age, gender, race, degree aspirations, and fields of study. Given that preliminary studies show that a lack of learning engagement can have negative implications for foreign students (Barnett III, 2016; Griffin et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2018), I hypothesize that there is a robust correlation between students' learning engagement and such variables as their ages, genders, residences, racial identities, bachelor's-degree aspirations, and fields of study.

## Data Source

The dataset (NCES, 2020) included data on all responding students. I was interested exclusively in exploring the experiences of international students, the filter "foreign or international students" was chosen to select the population ( $N = 2,478$ ). I have used a purposive sample (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Table 1 shows the strata of the sample in this study.

Table 3. Sample

Variable	Parameter	<i>n</i>	%
Engagement	Feel as a part of an IHE	2,193	89%
	Do not feel as a part of an IHE	285	12%
Gender	male	1,063	43%
	female	1,415	57%
Race	White	1,393	56%
	non-White	1,085	44%
Major field of study	STEM*	1,797	73%
	Social or behavioral sciences	681	28%
Age**	17-18	1,229	50%
	19-21	823	33%
	22+	426	17%
Degree Intention	Bachelor's degree intention***	1,925	78%

Variable	Parameter	<i>n</i>	%
	No Bachelor's degree intention***	553	22%
Residence	On campus	751	30%
	Off campus	1,727	70%

\* Math, computer, sciences, engineering, technologies

\*\*as of 12/31/2011

\*\*\* within five years of 2012.

The study's sample consisted of 67% of the population. The official website of NCES indicates that the sample includes 2,478 students. Apparently, NCES used a purposive sampling method to include students from a list of selected education institutions. The stratified sample does not represent the population across all the parameters.

The percentage of foreign and international students with low levels of learning engagement is 12% of the stratified sample, while such levels are displayed by only 10% of the sample. At the same time, respondents' age and gender characteristics as well as their major fields of study and degree aspirations display similar patterns both for the stratified sample and for the population. Moreover, the percentage of the population and the stratified sample who live on campus constitutes 31% and 30% respectively.

#### *Data Collection*

I used data from international students pertaining to their learning engagement, age, gender, race, degree aspirations, fields of study, and residence—I chose to use an existing dataset that was available on the NCES website as its *Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study*. The dataset (NCES ,2020) included information about beginning students at the end of their first years and three and six years after starting tertiary education. The use of robust methodologies in NCES's surveys provides a premise to believe that the data collected by the organization display high reliability and validity. I retrieved data on responses by international students who identified their races, ages, genders, fields of study, learning engagement, degree aspirations, and residences.

#### *Data Analysis*

Reported learning engagement that was tabulated by NCES as responding students' feeling of belonging, was utilized as the dependent variable; the other six parameters were independent variables. I sought to determine whether independent variables could predict the variation in learning engagement among international students. I decided to use a linear regression analysis to estimate relationships among variables (Lavrakas, 2008); furthermore, the use of a linear regression is available on the website of NCES. I ran seven linear regressions to compute *P*-values for each regression; a *P*-value below the confidence level of 0.05 would indicate the existence of a statistically significant relationship between variables.

### Summary

This study used an explanatory research design, a cross-sectional time-horizon, and a combination of deductive and inductive approaches in its empirical part. I formed a hypothesis and collected quantitative data from *Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study*, a large-scale dataset (NCES, 2020). After retrieving data on seven variables that pertain to my research question, I ran six regression analyses to examine relationships among six independent variables with a dependent variable of learning engagement as reported by self-identified international students.

### Results

My main goal was to explore international students' reported learning engagement in U.S. IHEs. I sought to evaluate international students' feeling of belonging in U.S. IHEs and analyze the dependence of learning engagement on reported ages, genders, races, degree aspirations, fields of study, and residence. Learning engagement is critical for all students in IHEs, and especially for international students in the U.S. Inclusive diverse communities could embrace, welcome, and support international students, but they face many obstacles.

In particular, my literature review showed that international students sometimes find difficulty engaging with members of their cohort which in turn affected their learning engagement. I analyzed datasets from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2020). I used PowerStats tools that were integrated into their website. It allowed me to manually choose variables from datasets and combining them into categories that could be later utilized in regression analysis. It also has an option of inserting specific filters so that all the variables would be retrieved exclusively for international students.

I retrieved data on the following seven variables:

- Student engagement;
- Gender, race;
- Major fields of study;
- Age;
- Bachelor's degree aspirations; and
- Residence.

Learning engagement served as the dependent variable, while the other six parameters were used as independent variables. The fact that the data were collected by NCES made it impossible for me to analyze its normality through the measures of skewness and kurtosis. NCES does not allow users to download students' responses; therefore, it is impossible to access raw data. Users are only permitted to download the results of regression analyses, correlation matrixes, or other operations conducted in PowerStats. I ran six regression analyses to measure relationships among one dependent and six independent variables, as follows.

## Race

Considering that the literature review showed that racism remains a common problem in many U.S. universities, colleges, and campuses (Gummadam et al., 2016; Batterton & Horner, 2016), I analyzed whether identified races of students could predict their feelings of belonging.

Table 2 shows that students representing a majority of respondents' reported racial identifications were unlikely to display any patterns of learning engagement that could be explained by their racial identification.

Table 4. Regression Results for Race on Learning Engagement

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
White	0.88	0.04	23.45	0	0.81	0.96
Non-White	-0.02	0.05	-0.30	0.76	-0.12	0.09

The reported races did not predict participants' learning engagement. The probability (76%) was significantly higher than the confidence level, indicating the absence of a statistically significant relationship between these variables.

## Gender

My analyses also did not confirm the existence of a statistically significant relationship between reporting students' gender and reported learning engagement.

Table 5. Regression Results for Gender on Learning Engagement

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Male	0.88	0.05	16.08	0	0.77	0.97
Female	-0.01	0.09	-0.13	0.90	-0.18	0.16

The probable relation ( $p = 0.9$ ) was substantially higher than the confidence level. The variable of gender, therefore, did not predict learning engagement

## Fields of Study

A major field of study with a focus on STEM fields was another independent variable chosen for this analysis. I found that reported choices of a field of study did not have a statistically significant effect on responding students' reported learning engagement. I found that the variation in learning engagement was not be predicted by responding students' reported fields of study (Table 4). There was no statistically significant relationship between the variables ( $p = 0.58$ ).



Table 6. Regression Results for Fields of Study on Learning Engagement

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
STEM*	0.90	0.05	19.20	0.00	0.81	0.10
Social sciences	-0.06	0.11	-0.56	0.58	-0.29	0.16

### Age

Responding international students' ages also did not relate to their reported learning engagement.

Table 7. Regression Results for Age on Learning Engagement

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	0.74	0.63	1.16	0.25	-0.51	1.99
Ages*	0.01	0.03	0.21	0.84	-0.06	0.07

\* as of 12/31/2011

Probability ( $p = 0.84$ ) was significantly higher than the confidence level.

### Degree Aspirations

In accordance with my initial expectations, responding students' reported degree aspirations was a strong predictor of their sense of belonging. The results of the regression analysis supported my expectation (Table 6).

Table 8. Regression Results for Degree Aspirations on Learning Engagement

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
No intention	0.94	0.04	0	0	0.86	1.02
Yes intentions*	-0.12	0.06	-2.07	0.04	-0.24	-0.01

\* within five years of 2012

I found that responding students' reported degree aspirations (i.e., their intention of completing a bachelor's degree or not) had a strong relationship with their reported learning engagement, ( $p = 0.04$ ).

### Residence

I analyzed the variable of learning engagement in relation to the reported residences of responding students (Table 7).

Table 9. Regression Results for Residences on Learning Engagement

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
On campus	0.95	0.01	160.1	0	0.94	0.97

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www.icres.net	April 27-30, 2024	Antalya, Turkiye	www.istes.org
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Off campus	-0.05	0.01	-3.89	0	-0.07	-0.02
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I found a  $p$ -value of zero that indicated a strong relationship among variables.

### *Summary*

I ran six regression analyses to investigate the dependence of responding students' reported learning engagement on such independent variables as their ages, genders, residences, racial identities, Bachelor's-degree aspirations, and fields of study. A majority of regression analyses showed the absence of statistically significant relationships among variables, but I found that data from responding students with high degree aspirations was related to higher learning engagement. Moreover, I found that reported residences of responding students was a predictor of their reported learning engagement, as respondents who reported living on campus showed significantly higher learning engagement rates than those who reported living off campus. A detailed discussion of these findings is provided in the next chapter of the dissertation.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to investigate international students' learning engagement at U.S. IHEs. A high number of international students in U.S. IHEs require stakeholders to explore the perceptions of these individuals in order to facilitate their integration into learning environments and maximize the value that they could gain from educational services. This study used secondary data collected and published by NCES (2020). Using regression analyses, I examined the dependence of responding students' reported learning engagement on such variables as age, gender, field of study, residence, racial identity, and degree aspirations. I found no statistically significant relationships with responding students' reported learning engagement among their reported racial identities, genders, fields of study, and ages. I found that responding students' reported degree aspirations were significantly related to their reported learning engagement. Furthermore, I found a strong relationship between responding students' residence and learning engagement. In particular, I found that data from responding students who reportedly lived on campus showed high learning engagement than data from those living off campus.

### **Discussion**

This study contradicts the academic literature in reporting no statistically significant relationship between students' demographic characteristics and their reported learning engagement. Ultimately, race and racism continue to elicit contentious debates in the realm of education, and other institutions in the society. For instance, the critical race theory indicates that racism significantly affects social constructions (Batterton & Horner, 2016) and calls for studies that would narrate distinctive stories of students of color (Taylor et al., 2015). I found no confirmation of this effect.

In my study, responding students' reported races as well as ages and genders had no effects on their reported learning engagement. One possible explanation of this regularity is the presence of some compounding variables, such as responding students' reported living on campus; however, further research is needed to confirm or reject this explanation. Despite efforts by theoretical frameworks, such as the CRT to steer away from exploring the issue of race through the prism of White persons' perspectives, it can be argued most of the existing statistical data remains deeply rooted in this approach. For example, the calculation of the race variable in this context was based on responses from participants who identified as non-White. This approach creates a glaring omission because it negates the experiences of White international students. Notably, IHEs also enroll white students from other countries. Therefore, their perspectives on the rate of student engagement may be remarkably different from other racial groups such as Arab, Asian, or African.

My study's results are consistent with Tinto's (1993) model in highlighting the importance of peer dimensions for student engagements. Responding students' reported residences on campus was a variable related to their reported feelings of belonging implies that interaction with other students on campus might boost learning engagement. More studies are needed to unravel relationships among these variables.

## Conclusions

I conclude that the findings of this study were valuable because they extend the existing literature while also challenging the findings of some studies. The fact that reported racial identifications of responding students did not relate with their reported learning engagement contradicts the results of some other studies (Gummadam et al., 2016; Batterton & Horner, 2016). Such a finding could be connected with a plethora of possible explanations, such as the traditional diversity of U.S. IHEs hosting international students or the continuous progress in their development of inclusive environments. In this study, my findings that respondents' reported racial identities were covariant with their learning engagement lead me to suggest that IHEs are progressing toward eradication of racism.

Many studies on discrimination on IHE campuses and effects of students' negative perceptions of their learning engagement focus on racial and cultural considerations rather than gender ones (Bleich et al., 2015; Gummadam et al., 2016; Batterton & Horner, 2016). My findings in this study are consistent with studies stating that gender does not predict an individual's learning engagement in an IHE. I also expected that respondents' reported fields of study and age would not be covariant with learning engagement. A person's decision to pursue a certain field of study was not indicative of character, temperament, and behavior; and did not predict learning engagement. Likewise, variations in respondents' reported ages also did not predict their reported learning engagement. Although a student who is older than traditional ones might experience problems with integrating into the learning community, slight age differences were not found to affect respondents' reported learning engagement.

My finding that respondents' reported degree aspirations predicted their learning engagement seems natural because such aspirations strongly affect students' behavior and their interactions with faculty and other students. Unfortunately, even though degree aspirations are crucial for boosting learning engagement, most IHEs do not have an established framework to play an impactful role in this aspect. This situation has prompted researchers to recommend that institutions and departments assume a more proactive role in student engagement. For instance, Wang and Brckalorenz (2017) suggested that faculty support for international students should be regarded as an essential parameter in promotion. Thus, it can be concluded that IHEs lack a coordinated approach to foster international students' sense of belonging.

I conclude that my most important finding was a statistically significant relationship between respondents' reporting living on campus and high learning engagement. Apparently, students who live on campus are exposed to the continuous impact of other members of the learning community that facilitates their integration into the learning environment. From this perspective, the study illustrates that efforts of U.S. educational institutions to create an inclusive environment in campuses have achieved significant progress (Gummadam et al., 2016; Cabrera, 2017). In light of the current study's findings, ethnicity and race of students do not predict students' feeling of belonging. Thus, it is plausible that living on campus plays a significant role in fostering student integration. On the other hand, there is overwhelming evidence that proves an intricate relationship between racial identity and the sense of belonging of international students (Aggarwal & Çiftçi, 2020; Singh, 2018). Besides, Mitchell et al. (2017) urge that more focus should be dedicated to race and racism as international students join US postsecondary education institutions. This recommendation comes at the backdrop of the researchers' acknowledgement that there is a paucity of studies focusing on the salience of racism among students who transition to the U.S. (Mitchell et al., 2017). Consequently, while the current study demonstrates a lack of prediction between race and sense of belonging, further research would be required to verify this finding.

## **Recommendations**

I recommend that living on an IHE's campus could be an effective way for an international student to develop learning engagement and a feeling of belonging. IHEs should take measures to facilitate the integration of international students into campuses by refraining from considering the racial and ethnic factors as relevant criteria for planning students' accommodations. Living on campus seems more beneficial for learning engagement than living off campus. Although IHEs have achieved significant progress in ensuring inclusiveness of their learning environments, I recommend that administrators and instructions eradicate any signs of racism and other kinds of discrimination, by celebrating diversity among students and staff. I agree with Cabrera (2017) in recognizing the difficulty of clearly understanding predictors of belonging, and recommend that more research is needed to address this gap in the literature. Scholars should consider temperament, culture, personal preferences, and marital status, among variables that might be relevant to learning engagement. I also recommend scientists to explore a relationship between students' reported on campus residence and their

reported learning engagement in more detail to identify specific variables related to campus that positively affect the feeling of belonging.

## Limitations

This study did not have substantial limitations because the robust methodology of NCES surveys ensured high validity and reliability. Because these data were from only U.S. IHEs, my findings might be limited for discussing other countries. While the researcher strived to ensure statistical integrity of all the calculations, the fact that racial identity was only classified as non-White could also limit the applicability of the findings on describing student engagement for White international students.

## Summary

This study investigated learning engagement of international students at U.S. IHEs. I found that learning engagement was positively associated with living on campus. Variables of gender, racial identity, fields of study, and age were not covariant. I recommend that all IHEs continue investing in development of inclusive learning environments for all students, especially international students, to leverage their on-campus experiences to develop feelings of belonging.

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## Using Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters Through Visual Media to Assess Language Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence

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**Abstract:** Situated within the context of EFL learning, which aims to foster the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) among language learners, this research constitutes a segment of a doctoral dissertation exploring the advantages of utilizing the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through the Visual Media (AIEVM) to assess the ICC progress of student teachers studying Intercultural Communication at a private university in West Java, Indonesia. The data was the particular encounter that the learners had experienced with individuals from different cultures through the visual image. Within our study, the AIEVM was then employed within the framework of the SFL appraisal to evaluate intercultural attitudes. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of current literature and research, we believe that AIEVM can be employed as a pedagogical tool to assess language learners' ICC for various reasons. Firstly, AIEVM offers a systematic reflection or self-evaluation of intercultural encounters, which is the foundation for ICC growth. Secondly, the questions provided in AIEVM are derived from scientific research, fostering intercultural awareness among learners. Thirdly, AIEVM is accompanied by guidance for facilitators to aid in analyzing intercultural encounters. Lastly, while this article primarily focuses on attitudes, other aspects of ICC can also be addressed, thereby highlighting potential avenues for further research.

**Keywords:** Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media (AIEVM), Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Intercultural Communication.

**Citation:** Mahaputri, R.A, Kurniawan, E. & Emilia, E. (2024). Using Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters Through Visual Media to Assess Language Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 113-130), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

For the last ten years, there has been much interest in investigating students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a means to support language learners as a part of global citizenship (Byram, 2020; Eren, 2021; Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2020; Jaidev, 2014; Kiss & Weninger, 2017; Lourenço, 2018; Mahaputri et al., 2024; Porto, 2019; Simpson & Dervin, 2019). In the educational context, it is widely believed that intercultural competence enables language learners to have a critical awareness of global citizenship to mediate, relate, and interpret various cultural backgrounds from both the school and society (Byram, 2008). In this regard, in Indonesia's context of the school curriculum, mastering intercultural competence has recently been mentioned as one of the mandatory aspects of English language learning outcomes to prepare students with the ability to communicate interculturally in the multicultural context and Global era.

In today's multicultural society and Global era, where intercultural encounters are frequent, the notion of ICC has long been discussed in various contexts related to the development (Cancino, 2023; Deardorff, 2019; Susilo et al., 2023; Zhang, 2020), theories (Byram et al., 2013; Coulby, 2006; Moeller & Osborn, 2014; Tiurikova, 2021), definition (Byram et al., 1995; Schiffrin et al., 2001), and models of intercultural competence (Khan et al., 2023). In the context of language teaching and intercultural education, scholars defined ICC as effectively managing interactions between people with varying emotional, cognitive, and behavioral perspectives, who are affiliated with different cultural groups or characteristics, constituting an intercultural process. Therefore, it is important to understand how individuals are influenced by their cultural affiliations to manage these interactions appropriately. A distinguished scholar in intercultural education whose model is arguably considered the most influential, Byram (2009) argued that ICC relates to the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language.

Previous studies have promoted various instruments to measure ICC development which covers cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of language learners. Arasaratnam (2006) developed and tested a new instrument encompassing these elements of ICC among participants from diverse cultural backgrounds and validated the tool using factor, regression, and correlational analyses. In addition, Byram (2020) argued that assessing ICC the specific and general aspects of culture, including knowledge, skills, and attitude, to effectively and appropriately communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Regardless of the idea that ICC is a life-long process in which no end-point to mastering this competence (Deardorff, 2006), the Education Department of the Council of Europe has launched the autobiography of intercultural encounters, which is claimed to help in assessing and enhancing intercultural competence. It can facilitate structured and critical reflection on encounters with people from different cultural backgrounds (Lindner & Méndez Garcia, 2014). Objectively, an Autobiography of intercultural encounters is an educational tool that encourages reflection on intercultural encounters that can help the user develop values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding that constitute intercultural competence (Barrett & Byram, 2022; Soong et al., 2015).

The fact that globalization and internalization are brought massively through the internet connection, hence, intercultural encounters become part of the learners' everyday lives either on a face-to-face basis or often mediated through the internet, and social media, sometimes in visual form and sometimes as text. Liddicoat and Scarino, (2013) mentioned that intercultural encounters can be experienced directly or indirectly. This study focuses on the implementation of indirect intercultural encounters, particularly through the Visual Image. Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media (henceforth AIEVM) has been piloted in language teaching practice in many countries (Barret & Byram, 2022). This provides opportunities for people from different cultures to connect, share experiences, and learn from each other by observing the visual image. One of the key benefits of AIEVM is the opportunity it provides for individuals to learn about different cultures and perspectives (Lindner & Méndez, 2014).

People can better understand different cultural practices, beliefs, and values by observing the cultural elements that can reflect their identity and culture. This can help to break down stereotypes and prejudices and promote greater tolerance and respect for diversity. As the internet provides people with access to global spaces, language learners can interact with others from different cultures and access various cultural content in the visual image. This exposure to diverse content has the potential to shape their attitudes and beliefs (Barrett & Byram, 2022). Despite many advantages of experiencing intercultural encounters through the visual media from the Internet, few studies reported in what ways the use of AIEVM can effectively help instructors assess learners' ICC development. To fill this gap, this research discusses the affordances of using AIEVM in the EFL context informed by the principle of Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) namely appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005) in assessing intercultural attitude as one aspect of ICC.

### **The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through the Visual Media (AIEVM)**

AIEVM is one of the learning outcome products of an intercultural communication course using the SFL Genre-based approach. AIEVM has been designed to help learners analyze a specific image that they have encountered in the media (e.g. on television, in a book, or on the internet) that shows someone (or several people) from another culture (Barrett & Byram, 2022). In this study, the learners created AIEVM at the end of the learning process of the intercultural communication course as their ICC self-assessment. Intercultural scholars in Europe claim that the AIEVM is one instrument for promoting and enhancing intercultural competence. Besides, it can facilitate structured and critical reflection on encounters with people from different cultural backgrounds. Objectively, AIEVM is an educational tool that encourages reflection on intercultural encounters that can help the user develop values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding that constitute intercultural competence (Barrett & Byram, 2022).

By creating AIEVM, the learners were encouraged to analyze a specific intercultural encounter they have experienced in the teaching-learning cycle of GBA by reflecting critically on their responses and attitudes to experiences of other cultures. The study by Sandell and Bersh (2022) revealed that autobiography can capture

hidden or invisible voices. In line with this, Fairclough (2013) also acknowledged that autobiography's significance can make people increasingly reflective about their social life. Since culture is constructed from visible and invisible forms such as the way of life, belief, way of thinking, etc. (Kramsch & Hua, n.d.), thus, AIEVM is considered appropriate to mediate and assess ICC development. The learners created their AIEVM by answering the guided questions about various aspects of intercultural encounters during the learning program using SFL GBA mediated by the visual image they chose themselves. However, to understand AIEVM better, the concept of intercultural encounters must be highlighted first. According to Barrett and Byram (2022), an intercultural encounter is:

*“An encounter with another person (or group of people) who is perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself. Such encounters may take place either face-to-face or virtually through, for example, social or communications media. They may involve people from different countries, people from different regional, linguistic, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, or people who differ from each other because of their lifestyle, gender, social class, sexual orientation, age or generation, level of religious observance, etc. An interpersonal encounter becomes an intercultural encounter when cultural differences are an individual’s orientation and perceived and made salient by the situation or attitudes”. (p. 7)*

Respecting this, AIEVM in this present research is used to assess language learners’ ICC by helping them to analyze and reflect on their participation in intercultural encounters, and to foster relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the process. In doing so, the learners gained not only the inclusion of reflection on personal development through an intercultural experience but also know the values, beliefs, and behaviors of all involved as the crucial element of the AIEVM. In addition, this concept aligns with the principle of SFL genre-based that was used as a teaching approach. This approach views teaching language as assistance to help learners understand the world better by understanding the text and context (Emilia, 2014). In this sense, the learners were assisted in critically analyzing online encounters that present a person or people in a specific image, such as in a newspaper, magazine, television program, or film that they chose as the most interesting one.

Meanwhile, situated under the teaching framework of SFL Genre-based pedagogy, (Halliday & Hasan, 1989) claim that the term text refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language. With this in mind, texts-mediated intercultural encounters in this research are the visual image that the learners easily find in their daily lives as the medium of authentic intercultural encounters. In this regard, the present study focuses on interpersonal metafunctions according to the SFL theory depicted in the visual image as the data. It was then analyzed through the appraisal system to reveal the learner's ICC. Focusing on the participants' attitudinal lexis in the level of discourse semantics that deals with Byram’s model of ICC (1997; 2020), identified appraisals will be synthesized to interpret the overall interpersonal stance of the learners’ ICC. Accordingly, how the language choices contribute to their positioning in their AIEVM can be identified.

### *Assessing ICC in the EFL Context*

Reviewing intercultural communication in the EFL context, previous studies have mentioned that the goal of teaching foreign languages has evolved over the years to develop ICC (Butarbutar et al., 2024; Byram, 2008; Cancino, 2023; Khan et al., 2023; María & Vallejo, 2018; Misdi & Mahaputri, 2022). Furthermore, the rapid development of technology to enhance language learning makes communicative language teaching focus on sociolinguistic appropriateness (Mahaputri et al., 2024) and politeness etiquette (Mahaputri et al., 2021) in teaching communication in this globalization era. This perspective is one of the reasons why the use of AIEVM has the potential to assist in assessing the aspect of ICC. This was because the visual media was inherent to the living experiences of individuals in a society and culture (Kiss & Weninger, 2017). In this sense, language learners understand that language and context are intertwined. In turn, scholars in the field of intercultural communication (e.g. Byram, 2020; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liu, 2016) have contended that intercultural competence is essential in constructing this new goal.

There are many kinds of instruments to use in assessment for ICC, such as portfolios, journaling, and learning diaries (Deardorff, 2004, 2006, 2009; Lazarević, 2018; Owczarek, 2017). Assessment can also be conducted by teachers, learners, and their peers. In this research, assessing ICC means that EFL learners must know how to react and respond to intercultural encounters appropriately to avoid misunderstanding, prejudice, stereotyping, etc. (Azarnoosh et al., 2018; Byram, 2020; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Gu, 2016; Owczarek, 2017). With this in mind, teaching intercultural communication is challenging because of linguistic and sociolinguistic barriers and the consequence of intergroup perception and interaction (Byram, 2020; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liu, 2016; Risager, 2011). For this reason, as mentioned in the research background, teaching ICC in the EFL context needs to investigate the potential of AIEVM as a teaching instrument to help instructors assess ICC development. While ICC is seen as a skill to mediate intercultural communication among users and English learners in different social and cultural settings (Baker, 2015; Byram, 2020; Mahaputri et al., 2024), assessing learners' ICC can be attempted through reflection and experience toward intercultural encounters. Regarding this, AIEVM contained guided questions that can help the learners to critically reflect on their experiences of intercultural encounters.

## **Method**

This classroom-based study was conducted by one of the authors who acted as the teacher-researcher of an intercultural communication course at the English education program at a private university in West Java, Indonesia. A key objective of the study was to promote students' intercultural awareness regarding their interest in new experiences, and other people's ideas, cultures, and nations. The learners in the course were encouraged to observe and compare cultures, as well as explore social interactions based on intercultural pedagogical task principles informed by visual media. Using Byram's Byram (2020) ICC perspective, the tasks were designed to engage learners in genuine and natural social interactions that reflected the communicative event (Newton et al.,

2015). Specifically, learners needed to elaborate on the experience of their intercultural encounter, followed by reflections on them, written on AIEVM.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were 15 student teachers from a total population of about 75 students in the English language department of a private university in Cirebon. The participants were ensured that they were voluntarily registered to participate in the study upon the researcher's giving information on the nature of the study, their expected contribution, and filing the form of consent. As Rose (2020) suggested, in terms of ethical procedure, to create responsive communication with the participants, all the participants were gathered in a WhatsApp group that the authors administered. Regarding the sampling technique, the participants were selected using convenience samplings as the principle considered to get the participants, such as eagerness to volunteer, time, and accessibility to choose the population (Dörnyei, 2007). The participants' recruitment process was on an ethical protocol basis regarding their autonomy to participate in this study. All participants were between the ages of 21 and 22, consisting of 11 female and 4 male student teachers.

### *Data collection and analysis*

The AIEVM is essentially a series of questions about a memorable intercultural experience that has been particularly important. The questions will reflect on the learners' best experience(s) in intercultural encounters through a visual media regarding their response, their perception towards people they encounter, and a reflection of their assumption and feelings now and then to finally help draw the findings of intercultural learning mediated by SFL GBA. At the beginning of writing AIEVM, the learners must complete the "Who I am" task, asking them to reflect on how they define their identity. The intention behind this initial use of the "Who I am" task is to encourage users to focus their gaze on themselves and their cultural positioning as a preliminary to completing the AIEVM. However, the learners would be given time to return to it and possibly revise their original "Who I am" text after they have responded to the questions to complete their AIEVM.

As seen in Table 1, this kind of data collection objectively will lead learners to evaluate an encounter with someone from a different social group critically as part of an intercultural experience (Barrett et al., 2013). In doing so, the learners' works of making AIEVM provided reliable evidence of their ICC development. To implement this guidance of AIEVM, the lecturer, who acts as the facilitator and researcher, has learned comprehensively the notes given by the authors and publisher for the facilitator.

In analyzing the data, the appraisal system was deployed to assess the learners' ICC as reflected in their AIEVM, which realized the interpersonal resource in the level of discourse semantics rather than the level of lexicogrammar. Martin and White (2005) argued that a text is prosodically organized, which means that the meaning of the schematic structure from an interpersonal perspective, or interpersonal structure, spreads over the constituent structure with repetition. Furthermore, anchoring to the metafunction (ideational, interpersonal,



and textual) in SFL proposed by (Halliday & Hasan, 1989), the appraisal system used as an integrative framework focuses on addressing the interpersonal components of the genre produced (AIEVM). In this study, the appraisal system depicted how the participants negotiate cultural information in the visual media (function/interpersonally oriented features) through the AIEVM.

Table 10. AIEVM aspects for intercultural learning (taken from Lindner & Méndez, 2014. p. 235)

- 
- [1] The parts where you write about yourself, then you answer the questions – and then you are asked to think about yourself again – in connection with the raised questions/thoughts. And questions where you are asked to think about your reaction – why did you react in that way, what influenced you, etc. This triggers critical thinking, which is very important nowadays, since we are constantly confronted with influential and manipulative images. (S.R.1)
  - [2] *Same and Different* [ ... ] made me think of all the things I might have in common with the woman on my picture. It is important for the students to learn that they have something in common with people they don't know (living standard, character traits, clothing, hobby...). (S.R.8)
  - [3] *Same and different*. It makes the user compare the image to his/her own community and put things into perspective.  
*Thinking back and looking forward*. It summarises many of the questions spread over previous parts. (S.R.3)
  - [4] *The feelings of other people* and *Your feelings*. You can find out more about yourself and you become aware of what makes you to be the human you are and in which way your cultural and ethnic background influences your way of thinking and your subconscious mind. (S.R.5)
  - [5] *The feelings of other people*. I tried to stay away from my mind and my views and attempt to be as open-minded as possible. It is a great effort to make, but very worthy and tolerant. (S.R.2)
  - [6] The part where you have to image being the person on the photo is very useful for intercultural reflection since you have to empathize with the person on the photo. (S.R.8)
  - [7] I became aware of why I am the way I am, because through working with the *AIEVM*, one had to automatically reflect about this and so one can reach a state of understanding in how far the cultural background influences one's way of thinking and acting. (S.R.5)
  - [8] The *AIEVM* not only made me think about the image, but also about myself and my relation to the culture I was raised in. Thinking about a striking image is something that probably everybody does. However, the difference between doing it on your own and going through the *AIEVM* is the extent to which you do it. Being confronted with all those questions makes you connect your direct impressions with issues seemingly far away from the image. (T.D.9)
  - [9] If you know how to define yourself, you are able to define other people. A definition always needs another which is different to one self. I also think that the *AIEVM* contains the self-reflective part due to that reason, because it is much easier to define others if you have a clear definition of yourself. Some might think that I'm referring to the process of Othering, but in my opinion, having self-awareness that helps to define other cultures can also have a positive connotation. You should appreciate otherness and differences like flavours in meal :) (T.D.7)
  - [10] Through empathizing myself with the people in the image, I got a better understanding of their situation. (S.R.9)
  - [11] The *AIEVM* and other methods that promote intercultural relations might be the perfect 'weapon' to break up with racist perceptions that just harm our society. (S.R.2)
- 

According to Martin and White (2005), the appraisal framework proposes three general systems of meanings. 1) **Attitude**, which includes feelings, assessments of people's attitudes, behaviors, and actions as well as an understanding of events; 2) **Engagement**, which enables the presentation of propositions that are more or less debatable; and 3) **Graduation**, which provides for adjusting the force or focus of an expression. However, this study focuses on how attitudinal meanings function to negotiate the participants' ICC from the perspective of the interpersonally oriented features of writing AIEVM from the appraisal perspective. Martin and White (2005)



referred to the three subsystems of attitude as AFFECT, JUDGEMENT, and APPRECIATION. This is a comprehensive system that deals with human emotions, perceptions, cognitions (**affect**), aesthetic evaluation of things or entities appreciation), and moral or legal judgment (**judgment**) of individuals and their behaviors or characters. There are further divisions among the three attitude systems. The four affect components are unhappiness, dissatisfaction, insecurity, and disinclination. While reaction, composition, and valuation are other subcategories of **appreciation**. Five sub-values make up judgment: capacity, tenacity, normality, veracity, and propriety. All attitude-related items connote positive (+) or negative (-) values. The following is a data analysis example for learner’s AIEVM (see Figure 3) using an appraisal system focused on participants' attitudinal evaluation.



Indians Culture: Weaving as Women’s Empowerment

I’m Fatmah, I live in Cirebon as a college student at Swadaya Gunung Djati University. I’m currently majoring in English education. I still live with my parents, meanwhile my older sister who already got married, lives with her husband. So, yes, I live like the only daughter in this family since my sister moved with her husband. Economically, I’m Indonesian middle-class where in my environment most women are working as a maid, seller, farmer, tailor, etc. I Rarely find people with higher profession or job, even the highest position is being a teacher. Somehow, I think I am affected by this environment. Back then, I thought that a job or a profession that led to success is to become a doctor, teacher, office worker, etc.

Recently, I have found an image in an article in google arts and culture, the image represents Indians women as hardworking women who empower themselves through weaving. When I saw this image and the title of the article, I felt curious because I have seen more than one post about “weaving” at the theme of India in google arts and culture, so I wondered why “weaving” is somehow a hot issue for Indian’s women. Besides that, as the same gender as women, I felt motivated from the image of being a hard worker woman. Basically, it is an image of a 2-woman worker who works in Nong luth Weaving Cooperation. In Indonesia, Weaving is also a culture or tradition in Indonesia inherited from our ancestors. In my own place there are also weaving production houses, but they are not as well-known or skilled as there are in several regions in Indonesia, such as Bali, Lombok, Watubalpi and Sumba. From the image above, the workers wear a shirt, Indians scarf, and some jewellery, so I assumed that the workers belong to the lower or middle class from what they wear. From that I thought that weaving is a majority job for middle-class Indians women. It is the same for Indonesians but there are some women who wear traditional clothes while weaving.

There are some things that I noticed from the image that have similarities and differences with me as Indonesian. Indian women have the same skin and hair colour as me and also the people of the image looked like they have the same level of society, namely middle class. Meanwhile the most significant difference is the way they dressed and their community. From the way they dressed, the thing that made it different is they used a scarf and they used something like a wrapper that was identical with Indians style. Meanwhile, in my daily life sometimes I just wear a shirt with long pants or a skirt with also a hijab because I’m Muslims. Another difference is from the community we belong to. The people in the image belong to factory employees, while I belong to English major students.

This image showed some stereotypes. As I have mentioned before, Indians still live an old-fashioned life and I think this image shows this stereotype through the way the people in the image are dressed. It also shows the gender stereotype where weaving can only be done by women, it can’t be done by men. The people of the image presented in a positive way because they show the workers while working which can represent their hard work. On the other hand, it also presents the people in a negative way where the photo gives the picture that these people live in a low or middle economic class.

If I was them, I would feel honoured to be an inspiration for other people, especially women. Because, maybe in this rough world, there are a lot of women who still feel insecure with themselves and haven’t found a way to empower themselves. I also think the people in the image felt proud or pleased with the way they captured the image. But, on the other side I think they would like to be shown as a more successful person with a higher position and better job, for example a boss or office worker. Someday, if I can meet them, I would like to show my appreciation for them.

After I saw and observed the image, something changed in my mind. Empowering women can be done in any way, if there is no forum, then we should start creating a forum for ourselves and all women in the world to empower their ability. I believe that every person has a different thought, so there can be some people who agree with me but some also can disagree with me. After this, I would like to search more about this and Indians culture to gain more knowledge and prevent stereotypes that I already have about Indians.

Figure 3. An example of learners' AIEVM

From the example of the data AIEVM, the appraisal system was then deployed to assess the learners’ ICC which realized the interpersonal resource in the level of discourse semantics rather than the level of lexicogrammar. Focusing on the attitudinal competence of ICC, thus the coding system was made based on lexes that referred to affect, judgment, and appreciation (see Table 2).

Table 11 Appraisal analysis

Appraiser	Appraising Items	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	Appraised
Fatmah	Indonesian middle-class		cap (+)		Economically, I am
	rarely find		prop (-)		people with higher profession
	even the highest		prop (-)		position

affected	sec (-)			this environment
led to success		Prop (+)		a job or a profession
hardworking women			val (+)	the image
felt curious	des (+)			the image and the title
wondered why	des (+)			weaving
a hot issue		norm (+)		weaving
felt motivated	des (+)			from the image
inherited		norm (+)		weaving in Indonesia
not as well-known or skilled as		cap (-)		weaving in my own place
assumed	sat (-)			the image
the lower or middle-class		cap (-)		the workers
thought that..			reac (+)	weaving
noticed			reac (+)	the image
similarities and differences			val (+)	the image
the same			comp (+)	Indian woman
the same		cap (+)		level of society
the most significant difference			comp (+)	the way they dressed and their community
identical		norm (+)		the way they dressed
showed some stereotypes			val (-)	this image
an old-fashioned life		cap (-)		Indians
Shows the stereotypes			val (-)	this image
can only be done		cap (-)		weaving
in a positive way			val (+)	The people on the image
On the other hand	sat (-)			the image
a negative way			val (-)	the picture
a low or middle economic class		cap (-)		these people
I would feel honored	hap (+)			to be an inspiration for other people
rough			reac (-)	world
feel insecure	sec (-)			rough world
haven't found		cap (-)		a way to empower
felt proud	sat (+)			the people in the image
pleased	hap (+)			the way they capture the image
But, on the other side			reac (-)	the image
a more successful person with a higher position			val (+)	the image
better job			val (+)	the image
show my appreciation	des (+)			for them (people in the image)
changed in my mind	sec (+)			after I saw and observed the image
in any way		cap (+)		Empowering women
should start creating a forum			reac (+)	if there is no forum
to empower	sec (+)			all women in the world
has different thought		norm (+)		every person
After this, I would like to search for more	des (+)			about this (image)
to gain more knowledge	sat (+)			about this (image)

	prevent stereotypes	sec (+)		about this (image)
<b>Key:</b>				
+	Positive attitude		prop	judgment: propriety
-	Negative attitude	reac		appreciation: reaction
des	affect: desire		comp	appreciation: composition
hap	affect: un/happiness		val	appreciation: valuation
sec	affect: in/security			
sat	affect: dis/satisfaction			
	normjudgment: normality			
cap	judgment: capacity			
ten	judgment: tenacity			
ver	judgment: veracity			

In more detail, the data from the table reveal that about 38% of the coded language in the AIEVM reflects an **appreciation for cultural differences**. This indicates that the learner frequently highlighted the positive aspects of cultural diversity, such as celebrating unique traditions, customs, and perspectives from different cultures. Approximately 34% of the coded language involves **judgment of cultural differences**. While this reveals some level of the learners' critical evaluation. It is essential to note that judgment here encompasses mostly positive assessments. It included reflections on the impact of cultural differences on their experiences and opinions about societal attitudes toward cultural diversity. Meanwhile, the least represented category is affect, which comprises around 28% of the coded language. In this sense, affect refers to **emotional responses** or attitudes towards cultural differences. While affect may not be as prominent in the AIEVM as appreciation or judgment, it still significantly shapes the learners' perceptions and interactions with cultural diversity.

## Findings

While ICC development is an ongoing and lifelong process, drawing from the critical review of the literature, the authors believe that the AIEVM-informed SFL appraisal framework can effectively be employed as a pedagogical tool to assess language learners' ICC development for the following reasons.

### A systematic reflection or self-evaluation of intercultural encounters in AIEVM

A systematic reflection or self-evaluation (table 3) of intercultural encounters in an AIEVM is crucial. In this regard, the learners chose one of the meaningful intercultural encounters through the visual media which showed someone from a different cultural background to reflect on. In this way, the assessment was focused on the personal level that led to the interpersonal meaning to reveal intercultural attitudes. Supporting this, Lindner and Méndez (2014) argued that when someone focuses on the personal level of interaction, they are more likely to see the other person as a complex individual with a unique cultural background. This can help prevent making generalizations or assumptions that can lead to harmful stereotypes. Barrett and Byram (2022) point out that reflecting on how the new knowledge relates to our self-understanding and values is important to analyzing intercultural encounters and exchanges. This reflective process is an essential part of the analysis.

By using AIEVM, the learners can reflect on their experiences and examine how they have grown and changed their perspective about a culture they did not know before as illustrated in these points:

Extract 1

*I noticed from the image that there are **similarities and differences** between me as an Indonesian and the people in the image.*

Extract 2

*I **assumed** that the workers belonged to the lower or middle class because of what they wore. **From that image**, I thought weaving was a standard job for middle-class Indian women. It is the same for Indonesians, but some women wear traditional clothes while weaving.*

Table 12. AIEVM orders and theoretical indicators (ICC) (adapted from Barrett & Byram (2022))


AIEVM orders	Theoretical Indicators (ICC)
1. The online encounter	Analytical and critical thinking skills; knowledge and critical understanding of the self; Openness
2. The other person or people	Skills of listening and observing; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures); respect
3. Your thoughts, feelings and actions	Knowledge and critical understanding of the self; respect; civic-mindedness
4. The thoughts and feelings of the other people involved	Empathy; tolerance of ambiguity
5. Same and different	Analytical and critical thinking skills; empathy; tolerance of ambiguity; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures); knowledge and critical understanding of the self
6. Thinking about communication	Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication; skills of listening and observation; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (media); empathy; linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
7. Thinking further about the content that was posted	Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (media); knowledge and critical understanding of language standing and communication.
8. Thinking further about the person who posted the online content and the people who saw it	Empathy; knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (media, culture and cultures)
9. Finding out more	Autonomous learning skills
10. Thinking back and looking forward	valuing human dignity and human rights; valuing cultural diversity; analytical and critical thinking skills Empathy; tolerance of ambiguity Civic-mindedness Flexibility and adaptability Civic-mindedness

These extracts show that the learner obtained cultural self-awareness. She argued that individuals need to have a deep understanding of their own cultural identity. This includes language, customs, traditions, and social norms that shape their worldview. Recognizing one's cultural biases and assumptions is essential for effective intercultural communication (Özdemir, 2017; Wang, 2018). Previously, she assumed that the workers in the picture were from the lower or middle class. Lately, she promoted intercultural awareness and acknowledged that waving was a standard job of middle-Indian women. Furthermore, her critical understanding is shown by

comparing the similarities and differences between her culture (Indonesia) and others. Hence, the systematic reflection represented in AIEVM orderly becomes a powerful tool for the learners' self-assessment of ICC.

This table shows a systematic reflection or self-evaluation of AIEVM is presented orderly to help learners develop a deeper understanding of themselves, others, and the intercultural encounters they have experienced. By reflecting and analyzing their behavior toward intercultural encounters, they at the same time can assess their competencies. This way can develop more respectful, accepting, and effective strategies for ICC development. (Barrett & Byram, (2022) claimed that the reflective process is to relate new understanding to one's values and beliefs that can help to clarify the concepts of "tolerance", "respect", and "intercultural dialogue". Ultimately, this can lead to greater intercultural awareness.

*The critical questions in AIEVM*



What sort of image have you chosen? For example, is it a photograph or poster, or in a music video, a television programme or a film that you have watched, or is it in a history, geography, religious studies or language textbook that you use at school?  
The image that I choose is a picture from an article in google arts and culture.

Why have you chosen this image?  
Is it because ... (please tick one or more of the following reasons, or add your own reason if it is different from the ones listed below):

- it made me think about something I had not thought about before?
- it was the first time I had seen this kind of image?
- it was the most recent image of this kind that I have seen?

I chose this image because I recently saw this kind of topic for several time while I'm exploring in Google Arts and Culture.

**2. The contents of the image**  
Who is shown in the image and what are they doing?  
The image shows two women workers in Nong Luth Weaving Cooperation who's weaving.

What was the first thing you noticed about them?  
The first thing I noticed from the image is their appearance. From their appearance, from what they wear, I assumed that both of those workers are belong to a lower or middle class.

Are they male/female, older/younger than you or do they belong to a different country, language group, religion or region from yourself? Is there any other thing which you think is important about them?  
**The people in the image are a two Indian female and I think they're older than me. Indian usually speak using Indian language or Indian English, from what I know, Indian religion is buddha so I think they have a different religion with me.**

**3. Your feelings**  
How did you feel when you first saw the image?  
The first time I saw the picture, I feel interested and curious.

What do you think caused these feelings?  
I felt curious because as I said before, I have saw more than one post about "weaving" at the theme of India in google arts and culture, so I wondered why "weaving" are somehow being a hot issue for Indian's women. Besides that, as the same gender, as women, I felt their spirit and motivated from the image.

If you were the person in this image, would you like people to feel this way about you? Please give your reasons.  
Yes, I would feel honorable to be an inspiration for other people, especially women. Because, maybe

**4. The feelings of other people**  
Do you think the person/people shown in the image would be pleased with this image of themselves? Please give your reasons.  
Maybe yes, maybe no. It depends on the person. Because every person has a different concern about people's opinion.

Do you think they would have preferred to be shown differently? Please explain your answer.  
Maybe yes. I think they would like to be shown as a more successful person with a higher position and better job, for example a boss or office worker.

How do you think other people from the same group or culture as them would feel about the image?  
I think they would feel proud that their culture is being known by people all around the world

**5. Thinking about communication**  
In the image, do the person/people shown use language or gestures to communicate with people in the image or viewers? If so, what language or gestures do they use?  
I think they don't use any language or gestures to communicate because they focused to do their job.

If you were to actually meet the person/people shown in the image, what would you do or say?  
First, I would like to ask them why they choose to work there and how they learn about the skill? I would like also to say that they are an amazing woman, they don't need to feel insecure about their job and their life.

Do you have any knowledge of their language and/or culture which could help you to understand and communicate with them? If so, what sort of things do you know?  
I only know that they can use English but it is a little bit different because they use Indian English.

**6. Same and different**  
Thinking about the person/people in the image and yourself, what do you think are the main similarities between them and yourself?  
Maybe our level of society and our skin color

What do you think are the main differences between them and yourself?  
The way they dressed and community

Are they like anyone that you know in your own life? If so, in what ways do they resemble them (for example, in the way they look, the way they behave, the way they think)?  
I don't think so

When looking at an image, people often compare things in other groups or cultures with similar things in their own groups or cultures. Did you do this?  
I do, berdasarkan foto, di beberapa daerah di Indonesia juga banyak Perempuan Perempuan hebat yang bekerja sebagai penunam.

Now you have answered the questions in this section, you could go back to the answers which you gave in the "Who I am" section of this AIEVM and see if you want to make any changes.

**7. Thinking further about the image**  
Is there anything about the person/people shown in the image that is exaggerated or emphasized? If so, what?  
No

Figure 4. Example of critical questions

The AIEVM essentially contained a series of critical questions about a visual image (Barret & Byram (2022)). Through the critical questions, the learners are helped to reflect on their experiences and gain insights into their



own cultural biases. These critical questions guided them to write about their experiences in which they can analyze their reactions and emotions, identify areas of improvement, and develop strategies for future intercultural interactions. Furthermore, the questions given promote the learners' competence in analyzing online exchanges and engaging with people from different cultural backgrounds. However, when reflecting on intercultural encounters, it is important to consider the context in which the encounter occurred. The context can include factors such as the location, the purpose of the encounter, and the cultural background of the individuals involved. Understanding the context can help individuals identify the underlying factors that may have influenced their reactions and behavior during the encounter.

Through the critical questions, the learners self-evaluated by analyzing intercultural encounters they have experienced scientifically. Barrett & Byram (2022) argued that "the order of these questions gives structure to the process of analysis, taking the user from description to interpretation and then to the evaluation of the encounter". This is also an essential element of reflecting on intercultural encounters. In the first section of the AIETI, the learners are asked to describe themselves. In describing themselves, they need to think about things that are especially important to them in how they think about themselves and how they like others to see them. They may also wish to include how they perceive themselves on the internet. The questions lead them to examine their own cultural biases and preconceptions to understand how they may have influenced their behavior during the encounter. By identifying these biases, the learners can work to overcome them and develop a more open and accepting attitude toward other cultures.

#### *The facilitators' guidance*

In the language learning process, the intercultural facilitator will assist the language learners in understanding the relationship between language and the broader context of culture while intercultural communications happen. In doing so, the learners' understanding of the language system developed within the context of a particular culture (including beliefs, values, behaviors, way of life, etc.,) enables them to meet that culture's context. In addition, teaching ICC needs to involve the dialogue that allows the negotiation of their language(s) and culture(s) about the additional language and culture. In response to this, AIEVM can raise awareness among users about the potential benefits and risks associated with intercultural communication on the Internet. Regarding this, the facilitators can assist learners by restating or rewording questions more simply or, interpreting the meaning of the questions, and providing explanations to help learners better understand the questions. Furthermore, the facilitators can modify the questions under a certain topic to better suit the age group, the previous experience of users, or the specific type of online content that is being discussed (Barret & Byram, 2022).

It can help instructors assess the learners' beliefs, values, and attitudes toward other cultures and gain a deeper understanding of oneself concerning the world. Regarding this, according to Barret & Byram (2022), AIEVM can be applied in varied teaching scenarios such as at different points during a student project group; in the course of a project developed by high school students; enhancing an online intercultural citizenship project;

Built into the explorations of the members of a high school literature circle; as an addition to a language portfolio; expanding the horizons of teacher education and In support of education professionals participating in an online community of practice.

## Discussion

Reviewing Byram (2020) suggests that instructors in the EFL classroom can facilitate the learners to gain ICC in three ways. 1) Providing the space for systematic and structured presentations of knowledge in the extension of the better traditions of language teaching. 2) Allowing for the acquisition of the skills needed for ICC under the guidance of a language educator. And 3) Offering space for reflection and guided discussion of the skills, knowledge, and experience collected beyond the classroom. Thus, AIEVM is one teaching instrument for promoting and fostering intercultural competence (Barret & Byram, 2022).

AIEVM helps learners reflect on their interactions with people from diverse cultural backgrounds in three main ways. First, systematic reflection or self-evaluation of intercultural encounters. In this regard, AIEVM allows individuals to depict their intercultural encounters in a tangible and often emotionally resonant way. Through photographs, drawings, or other visual mediums, individuals can capture moments, emotions, and nuances that might be difficult to express solely through words. This visual representation can then catalyze systematic reflection and self-evaluation. Through the analysis of appraisal (Martin & White, 2005) it was found that by looking at the images, learners can revisit their experiences, analyze their reactions, and consider the impact of cultural differences on their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This process helps to deepen their understanding of themselves and their intercultural interactions. a structured and analytical manner. Second, critical questions play a crucial role in guiding the analysis of autobiographical visual imagery of intercultural encounters. Third, the facilitator's guidance. It plays a key role in supporting learners as they navigate the process of using autobiographical visual imagery to explore intercultural encounters.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of AIEVM offers a rich and multifaceted approach to exploring intercultural encounters. Through systematic reflection and self-evaluation, the learners can delve into the complexities of their interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds. Critical questions serve as a guide, prompting deeper analysis and insight into the cultural dynamics at play. The teacher as facilitator plays a vital role in supporting and guiding learners through this process, providing frameworks, feedback, and a supportive environment for exploration. By using AIEVM as a medium for introspection and dialogue, learners can enhance their ICC, gaining a deeper understanding of themselves and others in an increasingly diverse world. Barret & Byram (2022) claim that the main concept conveyed in AIEVM is that an educational resource that promotes contemplation on cross-cultural experiences can assist the user in cultivating intercultural competence by developing values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding. However, it is important to be



mindful of the potential challenges and to approach indirect intercultural encounters with an open mind and a willingness to learn. Therefore, further investigations are suggested to provide more empirical evidence for the effectiveness of using AIEVM.

## Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP-PUSLAPDIK), decree letter number 0824/J5.2.3/BPI.06/10/2021.

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## **Crohn`s Disease and Bechterew`s Disease in Practice of Surgeon- Proctologist and Rheumatologist**

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**Abstract:** In work analyzed clinical manifestations and treatment program in patients with Crohn`s disease (CD - regional enteritis as part of inflammatory gastrointestinal tract) and Bechterew`s disease (BD - ankylosing spondylitis, AS) in practice of surgeon-proctologist and rheumatologist. Crohn's disease, also known as Crohn syndrome and regional enteritis, is a type of inflammatory bowel disease that may affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract from mouth to anus, causing a wide variety of symptoms. Ankylosing spondylitis (AS, from Greek ankylos, fused; spondylos, vertebrae; -itis, inflammation), previously known as Bechterew's disease (or syndrome) and Marie-Strümpell disease, is a chronic inflammatory disease of the axial skeleton with variable involvement of peripheral joints and nonarticular structures. An analysis of the examination and treatment of patients of these groups by the specified doctors and implementation of the results in the practical activities of the medical community and in the process of training new personnel was carried out. Received results underscore the increased objectivity in the control of knowledge on the part of teachers' interest and increasing of students and of medical interns' interest to master a subject, that allowed to prepare a general practitioner in surgery and surgeons, and integrate in the future in practical public health in worldwide. Training of general practitioners is a major task of medical higher educational institution, and therefore the proper teaching of surgery in a whole range of other disciplines will create conditions for quality medical practice doctor in the future, and should meet the requirements of the integration process of the educational systems of other countries. The main goal of any innovation – improving the quality in any sphere of life. A comparison in this work of these results application new pedagogical methods on ESTC in Medicine.

**Keywords:** Crohn`s disease, Bechterew`s disease, examination, treatment

**Citation:** Sulima, O., Sulyma, V., Duka, R., Yaroshenko, K., & Malinovskyj, S. (2024). Crohn`s Disease and Bechterew`s Disease in Practice of Surgeon-Proctologist and Rheumatologist. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 131-141), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Regional or granulomatous ileitis is a chronic bowel disease (Crohn's disease) that covers all the layers of the intestinal wall (transmural lesions), and sometimes spreads to the mesentery, regional lymph nodes affecting both the small and large intestines, but most often localized in the terminal section of a thin guts (regional, terminal ileitis). These diseases can be accompanied by damage to the peripheral joints, spine, or joints and spine (Ankylosing spondylitis or Bechterew`s disease). The clinical manifestations of the joint syndrome in both processes are the same. (*Braun J, Sieper J., 2007*).

The pathogenesis of the intestinal process and joint damage has not been fully established, but it is believed that many mechanisms participate in it, and in particular, toxic, immune, autoimmune. In the blood of patients, antibodies to the cells of the intestinal mucosa, lymphocytotoxin antibodies, circulating immune complexes, in which, possibly, antigenic components of intestinal microbes, etc., are also present.

In Crohn's disease, articular manifestations usually occur in childhood and adolescence. The development of peripheral arthritis in these diseases is usually not associated with the carriage of the histocompatibility antigen B27. Ankylosing spondylitis is more common in men than in women (3: 1). This disease usually develops in people who have HLA B27. Articular changes with regional ileitis occur more often in patients with other extraintestinal manifestations of the processes - with ulcers of the oral mucosa, exacerbate erythema nodosum, gangrenous pyoderma.

So too can the onset of symptoms. Although symptoms usually start to appear in late adolescence or early adulthood (ages 17 to 45), symptoms can occur in children or much later in life. The most common early symptoms of AS are frequent pain and stiffness in the lower back and buttocks, which comes on gradually over the course of a few weeks or months. At first, discomfort may only be felt on one side, or alternate sides. The pain is usually dull and diffuse, rather than localized. This pain and stiffness is usually worse in the mornings and during the night, but may be improved by a warm shower or light exercise.

Also, in the early stages of AS, there may be mild fever, loss of appetite, and general discomfort. It is important to note that back pain from AS is inflammatory in nature and not mechanical. The pain typically becomes persistent (chronic) and is felt on both sides, usually lasting for at least three months. Over the course of months



or years, the stiffness and pain can spread up the spine and into the neck. Pain and tenderness spreading to the ribs, shoulder blades, hips, thighs, and heels is possible as well.

Note that AS can present differently at onset in some people. This tends to be the case in women more than men. Quoting Dr. Elaine Adams, "Women often present in a little more atypical fashion so it's even harder to make the diagnosis in women." For example, we have heard anecdotally from some women with AS that their symptoms started in the neck rather than in the lower back.

Varying levels of fatigue may also result from the inflammation caused by AS. The body must expend energy to deal with the inflammation, thus causing fatigue. Also, mild to moderate anemia, which may also result from the inflammation, can contribute to an overall feeling of tiredness.

Chronic inflammatory arthritis, a hallmark of several inflammatory rheumatic diseases, and inflammatory bowel disease are both life-long conditions, with substantial morbidity and even mortality. These diseases are highly prevalent—for example, chronic arthritis has a frequency of approximately 2%–3% within a given population. Interestingly, the co-existence of gut and joint inflammation was found to be prominent in spondyloarthritis, a family of interrelated rheumatologic diseases. Number of typical clinical and genetic characteristics, including peripheral arthritis (particularly of lower limb joints) as well as inflammation of the axial skeleton (e.g., spine). Moreover, different forms of may also affect other organs, such as the skin (psoriasis) or the eye (anterioruveitis), demonstrating the systemic nature of these diseases. (*Jacques P, Elewaut D., 2008*).

Various subtypes have been described based upon clinical features, but any two may share important characteristics. The prototypical disorder of the family is ankylosing spondylitis (AS), which is characterized by prominent inflammation of the axial skeleton (spine, sacroiliac joints), although other joints may also be affected. Other diseases include infection-triggered reactive arthritis, some forms of juvenile idiopathic arthritis, arthritis in association with inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), and some forms of psoriatic arthritis.

## Method

The pathogenesis of the intestinal process and joint damage has not been fully established, but it is believed that many mechanisms participate in it, and in particular, toxic, immune, autoimmune. In the blood of patients, antibodies to the cells of the intestinal mucosa, lymphocytotoxin antibodies, circulate immune complexes, in which, possibly, antigenic components of intestinal microbes, etc., are also present.

A recent study found a strong association between increased levels of an inflammatory marker in the gut and the subsequent development of Crohn's disease in those with existing ankylosing spondylitis.



Patients participating in the study were asked to provide stool and blood samples, as well as to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of the study, (to establish their baseline scores) and once again five years later at the follow up visit. Of the patients with ankylosing spondylitis initially enrolled in the study, 80% completed the study by returning for the follow up examination.

Researchers found that an elevated level of gut inflammation at the start of the study – as evidenced by increased levels of a protein called calprotectin in the stool – was a strong predictor of the development of Crohn's disease within five years.

The striking relationship between Crohn's disease and AS has been recognized for many years: up to 10% of Crohn's Disease patients develop AS, and, vice versa, Crohn's disease commonly develops in patients primarily diagnosed with AS. As both have an important underlying genetic heritability, it has been suggested that the two diseases could have an overlapping set of predisposing genes. Strong evidence for this idea has been derived from the Icelandic genealogy database: it was shown that AS and Crohn's disease have a strong elevated cross-risk ratio in first- and second-degree relatives.

However, the precise nature of the predisposing genes remained unknown for some time. Nowadays, in the absence of a positive response in the treatment of refractory forms of Crohn's disease (CD) with articular manifestations with 5-aminosalicylic acid (5-ASA) drugs and steroids, reserve drugs are prescribed - immunosuppressants, which in some cases do not solve the problem. The development of refractoriness to treatment is observed in an average of 35-40% of patients and leads to severe complications, surgical interventions and disability of young people of working age. "Biological" drugs continue to be used in the complex treatment of this category of patients. Infliximab remains quite effective and safe in refractory clinical inflammatory bowel diseases.

In 2020-2023, a preliminary study of the complex use of 5-aminosalicylic acid (5-ASA), corticosteroids, immunosuppressants and biological therapy (infliximab) for the treatment of patients with inflammatory bowel diseases with joint manifestations was continued: 31 patients with CD with the cooperation of gastroenterologists, proctologists and rheumatologists.

Crohn's disease (CD) (regional enteritis, granulomatous ileitis) is an inflammatory disease involving all layers of the intestinal wall in the process; characterized by intermittent (segmental) nature of the lesion of various sections of the gastrointestinal tract. It is characterized by diarrhea mixed with mucus and blood, abdominal pain (often in the right iliac region), weight loss, and fever.

Extraintestinal manifestations of CD are noted to 25% of cases, including Bechterew's disease. This causes a systemic immuno-inflammatory process with damage to the vessels, the synovial membrane of the joints and the ligamentous apparatus of the spine. Peripheral arthritis in patients with CD develops more often with widespread colon damage. As a rule, its manifestation falls on the first year from the onset of bowel disease. In

70% of cases, arthritis develops with an exacerbation of intestinal pathology, but sometimes its symptoms may precede the symptoms of the underlying disease, especially in patients with Crohn's disease. In joint damage is observed in 10% of patients with CD. In 75% of cases, joint damage occurs in the form of peripheral arthritis, in 25% of spondylitis and sacroileitis.

The describes the medical history of a concomitant manifestation of classical Bechterew's disease (positive HLA B 27), which preceded the detection of Crohn's disease of the stomach, terminal ileum, and rectum by 10 years. Scientists discuss the relationship between the two diseases, in particular, in view of the probable definite extraintestinal manifestation of Crohn's disease. The simultaneous presence of two diseases causes difficulties in assessing humoral activity. 5-aminosalicylic acid is the drug of choice for ankylosing spondylitis with overt or silent bowel inflammation. Early detection of these two diseases is important for therapy and prognosis. (*Mielants H, et al., 1995*).

Bechterew`s disease (BD) and Crohn's disease (CD), especially when associated with spondylitis are interrelated conditions included within the categories of spondyloarthropathic disease entities. They share some common clinical, genetic, and microbiological findings. An extensive amount of studies which have been carried out by various independent groups throughout the world have shown that Klebsiella pneumoniae microorganisms could be suggested as the most likely etiopathogenetic triggers for BD and CD based on the molecular mimicry mechanism and the existence of the evidence for immunological, microbiological, and molecular link between Klebsiella and self antigens. (*Thjodleifsson B, Geirsson AJ, Bjornsson S, Bjarnason I., 2007*).

It is proposed that the use of low starch diet in conjunction with the currently used treatment might help in the eradication of Klebsiella microbes from the bowel and could result in the stoppage and alleviation of the disease process in patients with BD and/or CD.

Crohn's disease is an immune-mediated gastrointestinal inflammatory disease, which could arise from an interplay between genetic and environmental factors. Klebsiella microbes were suggested to have a vital role in the initiation and perpetuation of the disease through the mechanism of molecular mimicry. This proposition is based on the results of various studies where significantly elevated levels of antibodies against the whole bacteria or preparations from Klebsiella microbes and antibodies to collagen types I, III, IV, and V were detected in patients with CD and patients with BD. Molecular similarities were found between Klebsiella nitrogenase and HLA-B27 genetic markers and between Klebsiella pullulanase and collagen fibers types I, III, and IV. (*Danoy P, et al., 2010*).

Furthermore, significantly positive correlations and cross-reactivity binding activities were observed between anti-Klebsiella and anticollagen antibodies among patients with CD and BD. Early treatment of CD patients with anti-Klebsiella measures is proposed, which may involve the use of antibiotics and low starch diet together with other traditionally used immunomodulatory, immunosuppressive, or biologic agents.

Before to 10% of cases of Bechterew`s disease (BD) are associated with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), either Crohn's disease (CD). A much larger percentage of BD patients have subclinical gut inflammation manifested either by endoscopic findings or by histology. The association with HLA-B27 is less strong in IBD-associated BD than in idiopathic AS, and there is evidence for an association between gut inflammation in BD with the Crohn's-disease-related CARD15 mutations. Despite the different genetics, the immunopathology suggests common inflammatory pathways in gut and joint inflammation in AS, and in gut inflammation in BD and CD. (*Barrett JC, et al., 2008*).

Although this observation is of interest to unravel the pathophysiology of the disease, systematic screening of BD patients by ileocolonoscopy is not indicated in the absence of gut symptomatology as only a small proportion of BD patients with subclinical gut inflammation will develop overt CD over time. Treatment of AS associated with IBD with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) is problematic because of concerns of potential re-activation of IBD by NSAIDs. Major advances have been made in recent years with the establishment of anti-tumour necrosis factor (TNF) therapy in AS, the other spondyloarthritides and IBD. Anti-TNF agents are of particular relevance to BD patients with concomitant CD who are at risk of exacerbation of the underlying bowel disease when treated with NSAIDs. (*Burton PR, et al., 2007*).

In CD, infliximab, unlike etanercept, is effective in treating clinical symptoms, inducing and maintaining remission, and mucosal healing. Adalimumab appears to be effective in treating both BD and CD; however, official approval is pending. Currently, infliximab is the drug of choice for the treatment of patients with active BD associated with CD.

In the case of extraintestinal manifestations of Crohn's disease, active disease, if present, should be treated to induce remission, which can have a positive effect on the course of most accompanying extraintestinal manifestations. However, for some extraintestinal manifestations, special treatment should be instituted. This latter part of the management of the disease will be discussed in this chapter, particularly for pyoderma gangrenosum, uveitis, spondylarthropathy (axial arthropathy), and primary sclerosing cholangitis, which have also been described in quiescent Crohn's disease. In the past, several new drugs have been developed to treat extraintestinal manifestations of Crohn's disease, and only the role of infliximab has increased in extraintestinal manifestations associated with Crohn's disease. Drugs specifically targeted for this treatment, derived from several randomized controlled trials or case series, are sulfasalazine, 5-ASA, corticosteroids, azathioprine or 6-mercaptopurine, methotrexate, infliximab, adalimumab, etanercept, and cyclosporine or tacrolimus.

Collaboration between proctologic surgeons, gastroenterologists, and rheumatologists is recommended for the appropriate management of patients with Crohn's disease (CD) and associated Bechterew`s disease (BD). We aimed to establish the appropriateness of rapid referral to a specialist. A systematic review of the literature was conducted to describe the prevalence of concomitant CD-BD and diagnostic accuracy. A consensus was then reached between expert surgeons, gastroenterologists, and rheumatologists to confirm the appropriateness of

each patient referral to a specialist. A review of the literature confirmed a high prevalence of concomitant CD-BD.

Consensus among proctologists, gastroenterologists, and rheumatologists was used to confirm the appropriateness of each recommendation. The main criteria for referral of patients with BD to a proctologist or gastroenterologist were: rectal bleeding, chronic abdominal pain, perianal fistula or abscess, chronic diarrhea, and nocturnal symptoms. The main criteria for referring patients with Crohn's disease to a rheumatologist included: chronic low back pain, dactylitis, enthesitis, and peripheral joint pain/swelling. Several primary and secondary warning signs for the diagnosis of concomitant CD-BD have been identified. The use of these recommendations in routine clinical practice can avoid diagnostic delays and reduce clinic overload.

## Results

We analyzed the cooperation of proctological surgeons and rheumatologists in the examination and treatment of patients with Crohn's disease and Bechterew's disease on based Regional Proctological Center (Dnipro), Dnipro City Hospital and Department Surgery #1 of Dnipro State Medical University.

In each case of extraintestinal manifestations of Crohn's disease, active disease, if present, should be treated to induce remission, which may positively influence the course of most concomitant extraintestinal manifestations. For some extraintestinal manifestations, however, a specific treatment should be introduced. This latter part of disease management will be discussed in this chapter, in particular for pyoderma gangrenosum, uveitis, spondylarthropathy - axial arthropathy - and primary sclerosing cholangitis, which have also been described in quiescent Crohn's disease. (*Sulima, O., & Sulyma, V., 2020*).

Few new drugs for the treatment of extraintestinal manifestations of Crohn's disease have been developed in the past and only the role of infliximab has increased in Crohn's disease-related extraintestinal manifestations. Drugs specifically aimed at this treatment, stemming from a few randomized controlled studies or case series, are sulfasalazine, 5-ASA, corticosteroids, azathioprine or 6-mercaptopurine, methotrexate, infliximab, adalimumab, etanercept and cyclosporine or tacrolimus. Unfortunately, because of the paucity of data in this field, the best evidence presented and discussed in this article for the treatment of these extraintestinal manifestations is extrapolated from patients that for the most part did not suffer from Crohn's disease.

You might already see a rheumatologist for BD. A proctologist (gastroenterologist) diagnoses and treats Crohn's disease.

If you do have to take one of these medicines, your doctor will prescribe it with a proton pump inhibitor like omeprazole that prevents and treats gastric ulcers.

One TNF inhibitor, etanercept (Enbrel), works for BD but not for Crohn's disease. In fact, it might cause more IBD flares, or even trigger IBD in people who didn't have it before.

Corticosteroids, or steroids, act on your immune system to bring down inflammation. Examples of these medicines are:

- Budesonide
- Hydrocortisone
- Methylprednisolone
- Prednisone

Doctors may prescribe steroids for some cases of moderate to severe Crohn's disease. But over time, they can have serious side effects. Steroid injections or pills are a treatment for arthritis in your arms, legs, fingers, or toes. These injections aren't as helpful for arthritis in the spine.

Researchers are looking at other biologic drugs that might treat both Bechterew's disease and Crohn's disease.

## Discussion

### **Treatment Crohn's disease:**

#### *Mild to moderately severe:*

This category includes cases that can be observed on an outpatient basis, with the ability to eat normally, without signs of intoxication, abdominal pain, space-occupying formations, or obstruction. 5-ASA (mesalamine) is usually used as first-line therapy. Pentaza® is the drug of choice for lesions of the small intestine, and Asacol® if for lesions of the distal ileum and colon. However, the benefit of any 5-ASA drug in small bowel Crohn's disease is negligible, and many experts oppose its use in small bowel Crohn's disease.

Some experts view antibiotics as first-line treatment; they can also be used as reserve drugs in the absence of response to treatment with 5-ASA within 4 weeks; the choice of drugs is empirical. When using any antibiotic, the duration of treatment is 8–16 weeks.

If the response is good, maintenance therapy is prescribed.

#### *Moderately severe to severe:*

In the absence of fistulas and abscesses, but in the presence of severe pain, tenderness on palpation, fever, vomiting, as well as in the absence of response to treatment in a mild form of exacerbation, the administration of corticosteroids orally or parenterally helps to quickly relieve symptoms. Oral prednisolone usually gives a faster and more reliable effect than oral budesonide, but budesonide has less pronounced side effects and is considered in many treatment centers, especially European ones, as the drug of choice among corticosteroids.

If there is no rapid response to corticosteroids or if the dose of these drugs cannot be reduced within several weeks, these drugs should be discontinued and other therapy should be prescribed.

An antimetabolite (azathioprine, 6-mercaptopurine, or methotrexate), a tumor necrosis factor (TNF) inhibitor (infliximab, adalimumab, or certolizumab pegol), or a combination of both, may be used as second-line therapy after corticosteroids and even as first-line therapy as more preferable to corticosteroids. Prescribing these drugs based on measurements of drug and antibody levels resulted in clinical success in most cases. When these lines of treatment fail in patients for whom surgery is not possible or appropriate, newer biologics may be used, including anti-integrins (eg, vedolizumab) or anti-IL-12/23 (eg, ustekinumab). . In addition, other biological agents are rapidly emerging.

If obstruction develops, treatment is first carried out by aspiration through a nasogastric tube and intravenous administration of solutions. Intestinal obstruction in uncomplicated Crohn's disease should resolve within a few days, and therefore does not require specific anti-inflammatory therapy or parenteral nutrition; however, the absence of a rapid response is an indication of urgent surgical intervention and indicates complications or another etiology of the disease.

*Fulminant course or formation of abscesses:*

If there are signs of intoxication, high fever, ongoing vomiting, the phenomenon of rebound pain, or a painful palpable formation, hospitalization and intravenous administration of solutions and antibiotics are indicated. Abscesses must be drained via percutaneous or surgical access. Intravenous corticosteroids or biologic agents are given only when infection has been ruled out or effectively controlled. If there is no response to corticosteroids and antibiotics within 5-7 days, surgery is usually indicated.

*Treatment of Bechterew`s disease:*

It is not possible to completely cure the disease, but with the help of conservative therapy you can: reduce inflammation; relieve pain syndrome.

The basis for the treatment of ankylosing spondylitis in women and men is the following: non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs); glucocorticoids (they, like NSAIDs, also have an anti-inflammatory effect); immunosuppressants; drugs that are considered biological modifiers (correctors) of the immune response.

The use of non-drug treatment methods also gives good results: eliminating loads on the cervical, thoracic and lumbar spine; physiotherapy - it is used only during remission; Spa treatment.

In sanatoriums for patients with ankylosing spondylitis, mud therapy and balneotherapy are successfully

practiced; breathing exercises-in order to counteract the occurrence of chest immobility physiotherapy.

The patient should sleep on a hard bed. To prevent cervical lordosis from developing, the pillow or cushion that is placed under the neck should be removed.

## Conclusion

Crohn's disease and Bechterew's disease are unusual pathological conditions in medicine, which require a compatible cooperative approach to the examination and treatment of patients of these groups by proctologists, gastroenterologists and rheumatologists.

We recommend using the proposed technologies in the practices of surgeons-proctologists and rheumatologists for investigation and medicaments treatment or surgical operations of patients with Crohn`s disease and Bechterew`s disease.

## Acknowledgements

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the advice and support of representatives and staff Dnipro State Medical University, Regional Proctology Centre and Dnipro City Hospital (Dnipro, Ukraine) in the preparation of our work and this text.

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## **Counselor's Experience in Helping Adolescence with Social Anxiety: Predicting the Effectiveness of Self-Help Digital Bibliotherapy**

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**Abstract:** Social anxiety is common in adolescents and often persists into adulthood. Many previous studies have addressed this issue and its interventions in a general psychological context, but not much has focused on the educational sphere. This study aims to explore counsellor strategies for overcoming social anxiety in adolescents and to analyze whether digital self-help bibliotherapy can be an appropriate strategy for overcoming social anxiety in adolescents. The online survey method was conducted on school counsellors (N= 215). The results showed that school counsellors found many students experienced social anxiety, mostly caused by bullying behaviour, socioeconomic conditions, and difficulties in adapting. Counselling strategies to overcome social anxiety include relaxation, humour, self-talk, bibliocounseling and psychoeducation. Further discussions were held regarding the possibility of using self-help digital bibliocounseling. This research has implications for developing effective interventions to help adolescents with social anxiety. The results of this study can be used

to increase understanding of the counsellor's role in providing psychological assistance through digital technology.

**Keywords:** bibliotherapy, social anxiety, cognitive behavior therapy, self-help, adolescence.

**Citation:** Septiana, N. Z., Atmoko A., Muslihata, Hitipeuw, I., Laras, P.B., Novitasari, Z., Irani, L.C., & Setyorini (2024). Counselor's experience in helping adolescence with social anxiety: predicting the effectiveness of self-help digital bibliotherapy. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 142-155), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Social anxiety is the most common form of anxiety disorder experienced by adolescents (Krygsman & Vaillancourt, 2022), studies show that at the age of 17, the ability to cope with stress is at its lowest (Sagalakova et al., 2016), this relates to events that have been experienced in the past and present. Social anxiety is fear and worries about negative judgment from others (Fredrick & Luebbe, 2022) and this has an impact on avoiding oneself from social contexts and impression-management (Evans et al., 2021), it can also hinder normative development and adversely affect brain function (Smith et al., 2020). Social anxiety is related to shyness and judgment bias (Weeks et al., 2016), loneliness, and depressive symptoms which are internalization problems that are interrelated and often occur together in adolescence (Danneel et al., 2020), so as a preventive measure for something prone to psychological impacts on adolescents, a more in-depth study is needed.

Some of the causes of social anxiety disorder include parenting style, parental discipline, social competence, and self-esteem (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2016). Individual development in the past has had an impact on adolescent social anxiety at this time, interactive effects of infant temperament and parenting in early childhood particularly in the first 36 months influencing the developmental trajectory of social anxiety in children aged 9-15 years (Lorenzo et al., 2022). Furthermore, social anxiety disorder especially at the age of 15 years is also predicted by maternal inhibition and anxiety (Rapee, 2014). Social withdrawal also occurs when kindergarten age and environmental risk factors coexist such as parental monitoring and peer relationships may predict social anxiety in adolescence. (Buss et al., 2021). So, several factors in the past can predict social anxiety in adolescence.

Social anxiety is closely related to the dimensions of negative self-image and loneliness over time (Maes et al., 2019). Negative self-images such as emotional tone, social attitudes, educational and vocational goals, external mastery, family relationships, and psychological health (Di Blasi et al., 2015). In addition, the role of social media use in adolescents which causes comparisons of adolescent appearances to other people generally influences adolescent social anxiety (Rapee et al., 2022). The use of social media also has an impact on increasing depression and anxiety in both boys and girls (Mundy et al., 2021). Several things related to the role

of general interpersonal stressors, peer victimization, and family emotional abuse can also predict adolescent social anxiety, and adolescents who have more rapid depressogenic reactions are at greater risk of developing social anxiety disorder later in life. (Hamilton et al., 2016). Thus, internal and external dimensions can affect the symptoms of adolescent social anxiety.

One of the effects of social anxiety is suicide. The highest suicidal ideation was observed among adolescents who consistently experienced two or three symptoms simultaneously, such as loneliness and depression as well as anxiety (Liang et al., 2022). Furthermore, psychological insecurity shows a high level of psychological vulnerability in adolescents with a high possibility of impulsive reactions in the form of negative attitudes, self-aggression, and suicidal behavior (Sagalakova et al., 2016). Symptoms of social anxiety can also have an impact on feelings of loneliness and depression that appear in adolescence (Danneel et al., 2019). To reduce the negative impact, an appropriate intervention strategy is needed.

Coping strategies designed to overcome social anxiety. Self-compassion is related to coping strategies in stressful situations which contribute to reducing social anxiety, whereas coping with avoidance can reduce self-compassionate attitudes which can increase social anxiety symptoms (Ştefan, 2019). Social support is also needed regarding mental health problems during the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Scardera et al., 2020), social support will be able to prevent and help individuals with mental health disorders including social anxiety. School counselors are of the helpers who can provide preventive and curative efforts related to social anxiety experienced by students. In providing counseling services, counselors can use approaches and strategies that are appropriate to student problems.

The results of an initial study related to school counselor strategies for overcoming social anxiety are as follows, most school counselors have done cybercounseling, school counselors have used bibliocounseling techniques to deal with anxiety problems and this has been done offline and online using digital media.

The results of research studies on efforts to overcome social anxiety were carried out using the cognitive behavior therapy approach (CBT). Several studies have examine the effectiveness of CBT in overcoming social anxiety. Through randomized controlled trials, Group CBT can overcome the social anxiety of adolescents aged 12-17 years (Lassen et al., 2019). Furthermore, the use of brief cognitive behavior group therapy (bCBGT) and psychoeducational-supportive therapy (PST) in an experimental study showed that the bCBGT group conducted for 6 sessions can overcome social anxiety disorder among medical students. Cognitive models in CBT that are carried out using bibliotherapy guided by a therapist can also reduce avoidance behavior and social anxiety disorder (Santoft et al., 2019). In addition to social anxiety, online CBT-based skills courses can also address anxiety and depression disorders (Williams et al., 2022). Similar research regarding the use of internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy (iCBT) can also overcome social anxiety disorder (Stefanopoulou et al., 2019). Thus, both traditional and online CBT approaches that emphasize cognitive and behavioral aspects can be used as a treatment for anxiety and depression.

More specifically, we want to analyze one of the strategies in CBT that can be used by school counselors in providing counseling interventions. We also try to analyze the self-help digital bibliotherapy model to overcome adolescent social anxiety. Some of the research results related to this matter include randomized trial research on the use of self-help acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and traditional cognitive behavior therapy (tCBT) books that can overcome social anxiety in college students (Krafft et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies on Unguided self-help using bibliotherapy can also overcome social anxiety, general anxiety, depression and improve quality of life (Furmark et al., 2009).

Cognitive and affective bibliotherapy can also be used to treat general anxiety in children (Betzalel & Shechtman, 2010). In addition to overcoming anxiety, digital bibliotherapy can be used to overcome suicidal ideation and increase optimism in life (Franz et al., 2022). Studies on self-help digital bibliotherapy models have not been carried out much and can be a discourse for further model development, but interventions using bibliotherapy are noted to be used to treat various psychological problems including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

From the explanation of the study above, it can be concluded that social anxiety often occurs in adolescence and may start from childhood which continues into adulthood. An approach that can be used by counselors to overcome social anxiety is cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) with bibliotherapy techniques that emphasize cognitive aspects. Therefore, we tried to examine the possibility of a self-help digital bibliotherapy model as a form of school counselor treatment strategy in dealing with adolescent social anxiety.

The impacts that can arise from this treatment include high satisfaction, motivation, effectiveness, and efficiency. Nevertheless, many e-learning systems do not achieve the desired goals due to non-compliance and lacking knowledge related to the technique and method for online information system development (Clegg et al., 2003). So, this can be our consideration in designing an online self-help-based treatment.

According to Haron et al. (2019), the importance of digitalizing learning content and assessment is crucial. Consolidating e-learning into traditional teaching is a troublesome duty with many complexities and challenges (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020). Assessing e-learning is important (Al-Shagran, 2017). Further, according to (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020), it also suggested that online learning quality should be investigated in future studies. Therefore, before conducting an assessment, a need analysis of the indicators of the required assessment instrument should be performed first to get a relevant result (Novaliendy et al., 2015).

This study aimed to analyze the needs for online learning programs comprising the assessment instrument indicators, such as the dimension consisting of Stakeholders, Organization, Technology, Environment, pedagogical and curricular, and the e-learning system quality. The significance of this study was to analyze the required indicators for online learning to know the weaknesses and the strength levels of each required indicator and the accuracy of instruments for conducting online learning assessments later (Novaliendry et al., 2020).

## Method

We conducted a descriptive survey design among school counselors (N=215) in East Java using cluster random sampling. Data was collected in February-May 2023. The criterion for education level is Senior High School with students aged between 15-18 years. This report focuses on the efforts of school counselors to deal with social anxiety and examines self-help digital bibliotherapy as an appropriate form of treatment for social anxiety.

The survey for this study was structured to determine counselor strategies for overcoming social anxiety in adolescents. Data were collected online using Google Forms, which is a secured web-based survey. The survey link was distributed to school counselors through social media tools (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram). In addition, to increase survey participation by asking respondents to forward the survey link to their colleagues in the current area. In the questionnaire, we explain the purpose of the study, and participation is voluntary, there is no risk in filling out the survey. We asked the participants to include their contact information (i.e., name, workplace, phone number and email address). The confidentiality of their information was assured. The survey started with an online consent form followed by survey questions.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, and the mean  $\pm$  standard deviation of the continuous variables was utilized to illustrate the results. The statistical software SPSS (IBM corporation) was used for all statistical analyses. Data on the possibility of future treatment using self-help digital bibliotherapy will be discussed.

## Results and Discussion

### Participant

The characteristics of participants in this sample consisted of 215 high school counselors in East Java, with participants including 115 female counselors and 100 male counselors, the majority of whom were undergraduates in the field of guidance and counseling. Table 1 shows the characteristics of participants.

Table 1. characteristic of participant

Characteristic	N	%
<b>Work experience (years)</b>		
1-3	63	25,7
4-6	41	17,1
	34	13,9
>10	76	31
<b>Educational Background</b>		
Guidance and counseling	20	84,1
	6	

<b>Non-guidance and counseling</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3,7</b>
<b>Practice area</b>		
<b>Situbondo</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Malang</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17,1</b>
<b>Kediri</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>15,9</b>
<b>Bojonegoro</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>28,4</b>
<b>Bangkalan</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13,5</b>

*Counselor Strategies in Dealing with Social Anxiety*

The survey results show that school counselors (>90%) have found students experiencing anxiety, both general anxiety and social anxiety. Social anxiety causes overcome in diagram 1.1.

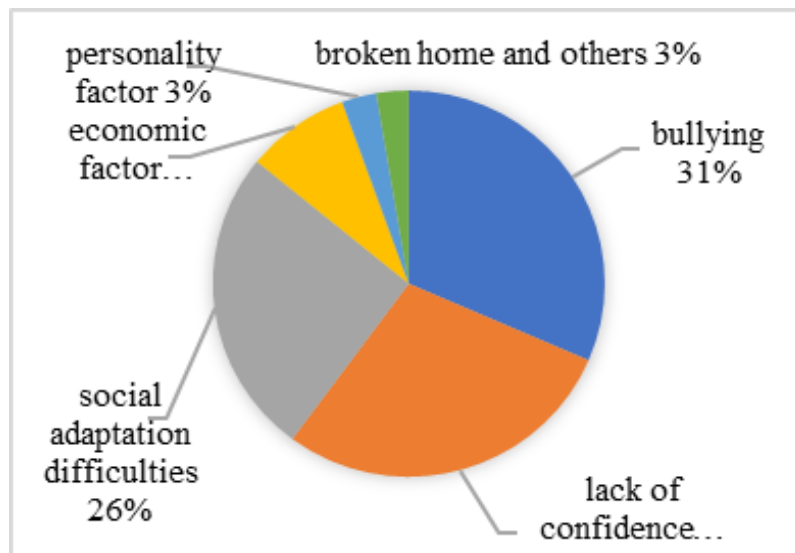


Diagram 1.1 causes of adolescent social anxiety

The causes of social anxiety experienced by adolescents include bullying (29,7%), lack of confidence (27%), difficulty adapting (24,3%), family economic conditions (8,1%), student personality (2,7), broken home and a combination of other causes (2,7%). Study results show that bullying can increase stress and anxiety that interfere with their ability to function (Albdour et al., 2017). Aspects that involve peers have a significant influence on reducing adolescent social anxiety, such as peer relations and positive self-confidence will make adolescents tend to be more satisfied with school and this can reduce social anxiety (Flick et al., 2022). In addition, self-confidence can also be increased by cognitive restructuring techniques and effective self-instruction in the CBT approach (Chandra et al., 2019).

The counselor’s strategy in dealing with adolescent social anxiety is using counseling (62,2%), guidance (27%), and dan combination (2,7%). The guidance strategy that is usually carried out is group guidance (63,9%),



classical (52,8%), role playing (19,4%), using media (16,7%), and others (2,8%).

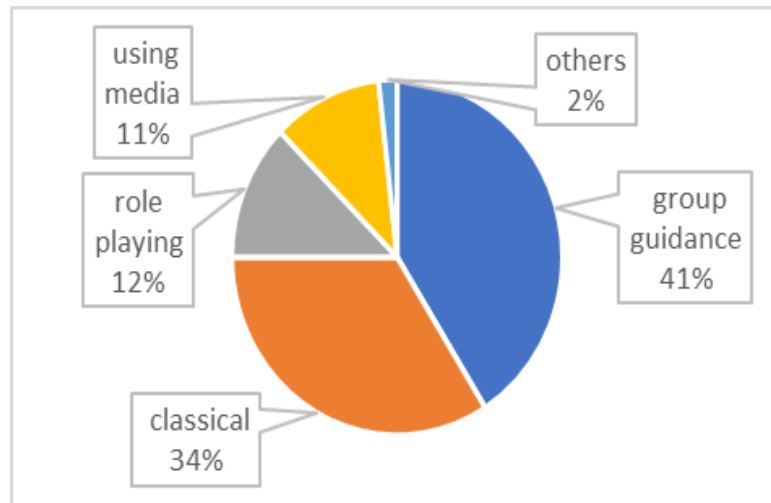


Diagram 1.2 guidance strategies

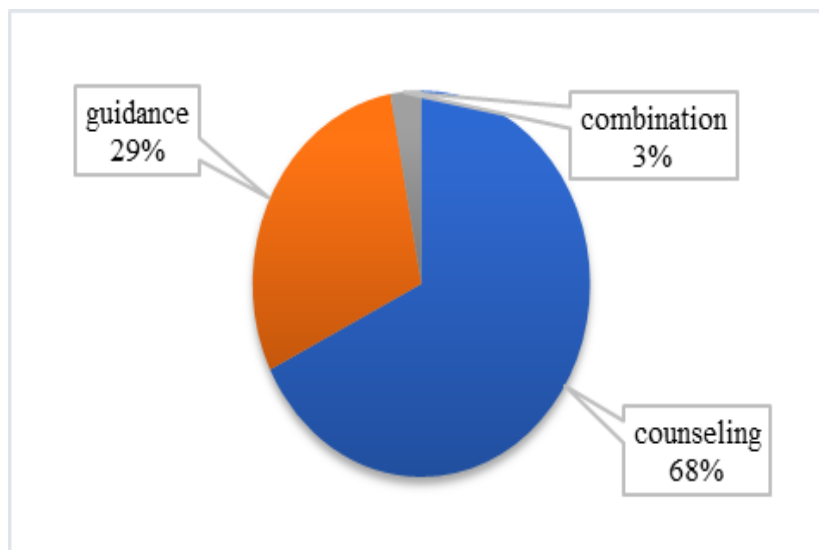


Diagram 1.3 counselor's strategies

The counseling approach taken to overcome adolescent social anxiety uses rational emotive behavior therapy/REBT (34,3%), person-centered therapy / PCT (25,7%), solution-focused brief therapy / SFBT (17,1%), cognitive behavior therapy / CBT (14,3%), psychoanalysis and eclectic (2,9%). The approaches used to overcome social anxiety are supported by the results of previous studies, namely REBT which can significantly reduce adolescent social anxiety. (Iyeke & Lawrence, 2022). Furthermore, digital storytelling in REBT can be used in online psychology services to reduce social anxiety and increase academic and social integration of adolescents (Pordelan et al., 2022).

Apart from REBT, a similar approach, namely CBT, is also effective in dealing with adolescent social anxiety

(Santoft et al., 2019), Likewise, brief cognitive behavior group therapy (bCBGT) is also effective for dealing with social anxiety (Samantaray et al., 2021). The person centered approach to addressing adolescent social anxiety is not widely practiced, but one study stated that PCT can contribute to client change but not substantially (Stephen et al., 2011). From several previous studies, the most widely used approach to overcome social anxiety is REBT and CBT.

Counseling techniques that are often used by school counselors in overcoming social anxiety include relaxation techniques (55,6%), self-talk (41,7%), humor (30,6%), psychoeducation dan role playing (16,7%), bibliocounseling and cinematherapy (11,1%), systematic desensitization (8,3%), eclectic (2,8%). The results of studies that support the findings include the development of relaxation techniques such as Computerized interpretation bias modification (IBM) programs with progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) which are useful for overcoming social anxiety. (Cogle et al., 2020).

Furthermore, self-talk techniques that reinforce themselves are negatively related to their anxiety (Shi et al., 2015), so positive self talk will contribute to reducing anxiety.. Humor coping can directly improve the Internal Health Locus of Control (HLoC) and indirectly reduce social dysfunction (anxiety & depression)(Sumantri et al., 2021). Eclectic interventions such as cognitive restructuring, role playing approaches and cognitive coping skills can be useful for increasing self-assertiveness and reducing social anxiety in students (Tavangar & Yazdkhasti, 2013). Furthermore, for bibliotherapy techniques will be discussed further in the following discussion.

#### *Self-help Digital Bibliotherapy in Dealing with Social Anxiety in Adolescence*

Based on the basic concepts explained above, social anxiety is fear and worry related to the social context. Past and present experiences influence the way individuals think about social situations that make them anxious. So a strategy is needed that is by the cognitive domain as a modality in overcoming social anxiety. Bibliotherapy is a technique that focuses on changing individual cognitive aspects through reading materials both offline and online and is suitable for overcoming social anxiety (Corey, 2015).

The survey results show that school counselors have used bibliotherapy to treat social anxiety (57,9%), and bibliotherapy has been done online (52,6%) dan offline (47,4%). Furthermore, school counselors have never developed media for bibliotherapy (73,7%). Thus bibliotherapy can be used as an alternative in overcoming adolescent social anxiety for school counselors.

Several studies related to the use of bibliotherapy in overcoming psychological problems including anxiety, among others, bibliotherapy is effective in reducing depression and anxiety in adolescents (Yuan et al., 2018). The use of affective and cognitive bibliotherapy can also reduce social anxiety in children (Betzael & Shechtman, 2010), including the child's anxiety and fear at night (Lewis et al., 2015). Furthermore, the combination of three strategies namely internet treatment (CBT), guided internet treatment (U-ICBT) and as

unguided bibliotherapy can significantly reduce social anxiety (Hedman et al., 2016). The book project can be used as a bibliotherapy tool for children with social anxiety (Sundman, 2020), and the combination of app use and bibliotherapy showed reductions in social fear after 6 weeks and social anxiety after 12 weeks (Carlbring et al., 2017), another development is that the use of podcasts serves as an evolution of the traditional practice of bibliotherapy and provides guidelines for selecting and effectively integrating podcasts into clinical practice (Casares & Binkley, 2021). Thus the bibliotherapy technique allows it to be used as a treatment in overcoming adolescent social anxiety.

In this study, bibliotherapy was assessed using a digital self-help model. Some research supports the use of this model in overcoming social anxiety disorder, including, Treatment through smartphone applications as an addition to internet-based unguided self-help is effective in overcoming social anxiety disorder (Boettcher et al., 2018). The ACT and CBT-based online Bibliotherapy self-help book model is effective for students with depression (Davis, 2021). The self-instruction module is effective for reducing the level of social anxiety in adolescents (Khandagale & Dumbray, 2017). Effective use of a mindfulness-based self-help approach and acceptance for social anxiety.

Significant changes were also observed in self-compassion, mindfulness, acceptance, and depression (Kocovski et al., 2019). Doing What Matters in Times of Stress (DWM) is a five-module transdiagnostic guide self-help (GSH) intervention developed by the World Health Organization. Guided self-help bibliotherapy is a transdiagnostic intervention that is freely available and appears to be efficacious for internalizing symptoms of disorders (Lorenzo-Luaces et al., n.d.). From the results of the research above, the use of bibliotherapy techniques on digital platforms and designed in the form of unguided self-help can be used as a guidance or counseling tool in overcoming social anxiety disorders in adolescents.

The limitation of this research is that the context of social anxiety in adolescents has not yet reached children and adults. This research also limits the discussion regarding predictions of future treatment which focuses on self-help digital bibliotherapy. Suggestions for future researchers are to develop a self-help digital bibliotherapy model and conduct related experiments.

## Conclusion

Social anxiety experienced by adolescents is a maladaptive belief such as a pervasive condition characterized by irrational thoughts and constant fear or worry about social performance, as well as the potential for social avoidance. The counselor's strategy is to provide counseling services with various techniques such as relaxation techniques, self-talk, humor, psychoeducation dan role-playing, bibliocounseling and cinematherapy, systematic desensitization, and eclectic. This study also examines the possibility of a self-help digital bibliotherapy model as a form of school counselor treatment strategy for overcoming adolescent social anxiety

## Recommendations

This study discusses the appropriate strategy to overcome social anxiety. Services provided by school counselors use a counseling approach, one of which is the cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) approach. This research is a foothold in the development of a CBT counseling model using self-help digital bilbiotherapy which will be developed in future research.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the contributions of the Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP), Universitas Negeri Malang and school counselors in East Java for their participation and support in this work.

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## **The Relationship of Body and Cosmetic Enhancements, Employability, and Career Development in the Context of Equal Opportunity**


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**Abstract:** In today's society, more people are conscious of and concerned with their physical appearance and body image. As a result, many people prefer to undergo body and cosmetic enhancements to match the desired standards and to address psychological and societal demands. Employability and career advancement are two of the reasons why a person wants to undergo body and cosmetic enhancement. The research aims to determine the relationship between body and cosmetic enhancements, employability, and career development through quantitative methods. The study focused on young adults ages 18 and above who underwent body and cosmetic enhancements, such as makeup, surgical and non-surgical enhancements, and other aesthetic practices, in the capital region of the Philippines. The data was treated using statistical tools such as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study's findings showed that confidence

and informed cosmetic choices significantly impact transformative insights, work experience, the creation of an impressive portfolio, appearance and professional opportunities, and self-presentation. A person's educational attainment significantly affects work preparedness, passion, diverse work experiences, good recommendations from management, work ethics, the acquisition of new skills, a solid personal brand, and positive feedback. The person's neat appearance greatly influences holistic approaches to career success and media beauty standards, physical appearance, length of service, societal pressure, media portrayal, peer opinions, and tight connection. The study also revealed that accepting the natural body greatly affects a person's perspective on career advancement.

**Keywords:** Body Enhancement, Career Development, Cosmetic Enhancement, Employability, Structural Equation Modeling

**Citation:** Bonagua, A.G.M., Camat R.D.A.S., Cruz, R.J.M.D., Ignacio, M.A.R.M., Magdamo, D.M.D.L., Sales, K.A.P., Navarro, M.M., & Tenerife, J.T. (2024). The relationship of body and cosmetic enhancements, employability, and career development in the context of equal opportunity. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 156-176), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

People today are becoming more aware of and concerned about their physical appearance and body image. Different cosmetics and body clinics have emerged, and the rise of their popularity appears to be emphasized and glamorized by the public. According to Sharp (2018), individuals may be mocked, discriminated against, and stigmatized when they do not satisfy societal norms for physical attractiveness. They may have heightened sensitivity to rejection based on physical appearance. As a result, many people prefer to undergo body and cosmetic enhancements to match desired standards or to address psychological and social demands.

Body enhancement is defined as the natural, artificial, or technological modification of humans to improve physical or mental capacities (Issah, 2022). Individuals have the empowering option to enhance or reconstruct their bodies as they see fit. Cosmetic procedures are a choice made by those seeking to improve their self-confidence by addressing concerns about the size, shape, color, or texture of specific body features (Sutter Health, 2018).

Various reasons influence a person's desire to undergo body and cosmetic enhancement to improve their appearance, one of which is employability. According to Pan (2021), a person's appearance may have a halo effect in the workplace, particularly in recruiting and employee potential appraisal. Also, most businesses would prefer to recruit individuals with a more appealing appearance. However, according to Antonellis (2019), people who have body modifications and enhancements have both negative and positive attitudes, and visible body alteration is a substantial barrier to employment.

Furthermore, in some cases, body and cosmetic enhancements were used for career advancement. Soergel (2021) claims that people deemed more attractive experience more positive reinforcement as they age, which may affect their confidence as adults. Career advancement may be impacted by confidence. In China, according to Wu, Mulken, and Alleva (2022), a more attractive appearance is associated with a higher work performance rating and better promotion prospects. As a result, women may seek to alter their appearance through cosmetic surgery to advance in their careers.

The main objective of this study is to investigate and understand the multifaceted relationship between body and cosmetic enhancements, employability, and career development among individuals in various industries and demographic groups. Specifically, the study aims to determine the impact of body and cosmetic enhancement on an individual's employment and career development, to learn about the predictors of employability and career advancement for people who undergo body and cosmetic enhancement and to assess the relationship of body and cosmetic enhancement to an individual's employment and career development, to develop a Structural Equation Model (SEM) that explains the models and has a good model fit.

## **Body and Cosmetic Enhancement**

According to the ISAPS 2021 Global Survey on Aesthetic/Cosmetic Treatments, plastic surgery treatments have increased significantly worldwide by 19.3%. 17.5 million non-surgical operations and over 12.8 million surgical ones were carried out. The surgical technique that has seen the highest increase is liposuction, which has overtaken procedures including breast augmentation, eyelid surgery, rhinoplasty, and abdominoplasty to become the most popular. Botulinum toxin, hyaluronic acid, hair removal, skin tightening, and fat reduction were the most popular non-surgical therapies. Women still prefer breast augmentation, although the number of breast lifts and implant removals has considerably increased. The number of facial and head procedures increased by 14.8%, with eyelid surgery being the most popular, particularly among men. The fastest-growing procedures were thigh lifts, buttock lifts, and augmentation, which have significantly increased since 2017.

Self-esteem can be briefly defined as a personality trait linked to one's emotional and mental well-being. It is also viewed as a multifaceted model encompassing global self-worth, physical self-esteem, physical condition, sports competence, physical strength, and attractiveness. The assessment of self-worth is categorized as either high (indicating positive self-esteem) or low (reflecting negative self-esteem). This distinction becomes especially critical during adolescence when physical appearance is essential, leading to increased peer scrutiny and ranking.

Consequently, an individual's acceptance in social circles is closely tied to their physical appearance. Experiencing rejection in these social contexts can give rise to doubts about one's appearance and self, detrimental to body perception and self-esteem. Thus, during adolescence, body perception and self-esteem evolve as psychological factors significantly influenced by social dynamics (Khalaf et al., 2021).

According to Amanda Sharp (2018), a person's self-esteem and confidence may increase depending on how satisfied they feel about themselves following a cosmetic operation. Preoccupation with physical appearance may occasionally get to the point where it starts interfering with a person's ability to function in social settings, work, and other areas of life. When one has this amount of anxiety, and there is no or very little perceived problem with their looks, it may be a sign of body dysmorphic disorder (BDD; Castle et al., 2004). As a result, people who seek cosmetic modifications may experience internal and external mental suffering as well as functional damage.

## **Employability**

According to Ali and Jalal (2018), higher education assists students in developing employability skills, which implies that they can find and stay a job, contribute improvements to the working environment, and improve their proficiency for development. Higher education is altering its goals to better prepare students for careers, chances, progressive employment, training for the working world, and a greater understanding of their capacities. Students benefit from higher education to improve employability skills now, which implies allowing students to find and hold a job, allowing them to bring about changes in the working world, and similar competencies for development.

People with noticeable bodily alterations have both negative and positive opinions, according to Antonellis (2019), and they represent a considerable impediment to work. However, in some cases where visible body modification is permitted, the type of employment, industry impact, and competency of the applicant with visible body modification were also considered decisive factors. The study has also shown that altering one's physical appearance may negatively impact one's employment prospects. These findings emphasize the importance of carefully considering the ramifications of wearing a visible body modification for both the individual and the organization.

The effect of one's appearance on their employment has recently come under more attention. Many people are using cosmetic operations and grooming techniques to improve their physical appearance as the popularity of beauty enhancements grows. The importance of personal branding and how one displays oneself in specific circumstances was underlined in Natasha Edge's 2019 article. She emphasized that these factors are crucial for fostering the appropriate mindset and increasing self-confidence, but they are also crucial for directing one's professional life in the right direction (Edge, 2019). A person's physical appearance can have a substantial impact on their ability to find employment, advance in their careers, and eventually raise their long-term earning potential.

It might be difficult to accept this truth, especially when taking into account the abilities and accomplishments one has amassed within their organization. It can be depressing to consider that, despite unshakable dedication

and determined efforts, one's physical appearance might be the only thing keeping them from reaching their goals. While it can be tempting to think that talent, perseverance, and knowledge are the only elements that determine work success, it's important to consider whether other factors, like one's appearance, also have a significant impact on one's chances for career progression.

## **Career Development**

In recent times, physical appearance has become a topic of significant debate, exerting influence across various aspects of individuals' lives. Research has demonstrated the existence of the attractiveness-induced halo effect, particularly within the workplace context. This effect is particularly evident in recruitment decisions and assessments of employee potential. A considerable number of businesses tend to favor the recruitment of individuals who possess a more aesthetically pleasing appearance, as they are often perceived as more competent by employers. Employers favor candidates who have facial attractiveness. Those with lovely and handsome faces are more likely to earn a raise not only when job hunting but also at work (Pan, 2021).

In terms of career development, physical attractiveness has developed into a valuable asset in the Chinese work market due to its productive qualities and marketing appeal (Wu et al. 2022). Many Chinese businesses, including government organizations, now require applicants seeking jobs to be attractive. Additionally, in China, having a more attractive appearance is associated with better performance reviews and more opportunities for job progression. Women may therefore think about cosmetic surgery as a way to improve their looks and possibly secure a more lucrative job path.

## **Method**

### Data Collection

According to Swaraj (2022), exploratory research can help us comprehend subjects or fields about which we know little or nothing, but it cannot answer research questions or offer definitive answers. This frequently happens when measuring a phenomenon is challenging. The study was exploratory research that used in-depth research into the relationship between body and cosmetic enhancements, employability, and career development. The research methodology employs quantitative techniques by gathering data through surveys. It is a research technique used to investigate how or why something occurs when there is little understanding of the issue.

Quantitative approaches entail the examination of numerical variables and data that may be measured and statistically examined. According to Mills (2021), a quantitative survey design is often used in large-scale research and depends heavily on closed questions to collect information that can be analyzed rapidly, such as multiple-choice or dichotomous response replies. The data collected in a quantitative survey is numerical and is typically analyzed using statistics.

Table 1. Demographics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Response Information N=222</i>
Age	18-25	44	19.8%
	26-30	58	26.1%
	31-35	67	30.2%
	36 above	53	23.9%
Gender	Male	81	36.5%
	Female	119	53.6%
	Prefer not to say	22	9.9%
Civil Status	Single	135	60.8%
	Married	55	24.8%
	Widowed	18	8.1%
	Separated	14	6.3%
Location	Quezon City	52	23.4%
	Makati City	35	15.8%
	Marikina City	31	14%
	Pasig City	25	11.3%
	Taguig City	24	10.8%
	Mandaluyong City	13	5.9%
	Others	42	18.8%
Profession	Manager/Supervisor	30	13.5%
	Entrepreneur	29	13.1%
	Model	23	10.4%
	Flight Attendant	21	9.5%
	Engineer	19	8.6%
	Receptionist	17	7.7%
	Others	83	37.2%
Industry	Fashion	34	15.3%
	Hotel and Restaurant	33	14.9%
	Retail	26	11.7%
	Commercial Aviation	23	10.4%
	Academe	21	9.5%
	BPO Industry	19	8.6%
	Others	66	29.6%
Educational Attainment	College Graduate	135	60.8%
	Undergraduate	52	23.4%
	Master's Degree Holder	23	10.4%
	Doctoral Degree Holder	7	3.2%



	Senior High School Graduate	3	1.4%
	High School Graduate	2	0.9%
Income	40,001 above	88	39.6%
	30,001-40,000	70	31.5%
	20,001-30,000	33	14.9%
	10,000 below	21	9.5%
	10,001-20,000	10	4.5%
Amount spend for enhancement	10,000 below	123	55.4%
	10,001-20,000	58	26.1%
	40,001 above	21	9.5%
	20,001-30,000	13	5.9%
	30,001-40,000	7	3.2%

The demographic profile of the study includes two hundred twenty-two people from the National Capital Region. It demonstrates a diverse representation across multiple categories. The respondents were employed individuals residing in the National Capital Region, 36.5% were male, 53.6% were female, and 9.9% preferred not to say, who had undergone a major or minor degree of body and cosmetic enhancement surgery. The age distribution shows that the participants were at least 18-25 years old (19.8%), 26-30 with 26.1%, 31-35 with 30.2%, and 36 above with 23.9%. The participants' civil status was 60.8% single, 24.8% married, 8.1% widowed, and 6.3% separated. In terms of profession, 13.5% were managers/supervisors, 13.1% were entrepreneurs, 10.4% were models, 9.5% were flight attendants, 8.6% were engineers, 7.7% were receptionists, and 37.2% did something else. Those respondents work in a variety of industries, including fashion (15.3%), hotel and restaurant (14.9%), retail (11.7%), commercial aviation (10.4%), academia (9.5%), BPO (8.6%), construction (5.9%), and others (23.7%).

In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents (60.8%) were college graduates, followed by undergraduates (23.4%), master's degree holders (10.4%), doctoral degree holders (3.2%), senior high school graduates (1.4%), and high school graduates (0.9%). Furthermore, the monthly income distribution shows that 39.6% of participants have 40,001 or more income, 31.5% have 30,001 to 40,000 income, 14.9% have 20,001 to 30,000 earnings, 9.5% have less than \$10,000 income, and 4.5% have 10,001 to 20,000 income. Finally, the money spent by participants on enhancements reflects a diverse final background. The majority of participants spent \$10,000 or less (55.4%), followed by 10,001-20,000 (26.1%), more than 40,001 (9.5%), 20,001-30,000 (5.9%), and 30,001-40,000 (3.2%).

## Data Analysis

### *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Sample Measurement Adequacy. The KMO test is a measure designed to determine the acceptability of data for factor analysis. In other words, it determines whether the sample size is adequate.

The test determines sampling sufficiency for each variable in the model as well as the overall model. KMO values range from zero to one. KMO values of 0.8 to 1.0 imply that sampling is appropriate (Shrestha, 2021).

Furthermore, this study used an online sample size calculator to determine the number of respondents needed to represent the population. The parameters used to calculate the number of respondents needed are a 90% confidence interval and a 10% margin of error.

### *Exploratory Factor Analysis*

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a type of multivariate statistical method that seeks to identify the smallest number of hypothetical constructs (also known as factors, dimensions, latent variables, synthetic variables, or internal attributes) that can adequately explain the covariation observed among a set of measured variables. The goal is to identify the common factors that explain the order and structure of measured variables. In the social and behavioral sciences, factors are assumed to be unobservable characteristics of people, which are manifested in differences in their scores on the measured variables (Watkins, 2018).

### **Measures**

Body and cosmetic enhancements include a wide range of items and treatments that can be used to enhance and improve one's appearance and self-esteem, either surgically or non-surgical operations. According to Davis and Arnocky (2019), the current review defines appearance enhancement as a self-promotion approach used to increase reproductive success by making oneself more attractive to mates than rivals, hence boosting one's mate value. The various ways in which humans enhance their appearance are explained, as are the different tactics used by men and women to enhance their looks, which correspond to opposite-sex partner preferences in a heterosexual environment.

Based on the study of Ganesan (2018), employability is improved by a good academic record plus skills and attributes that enable you to adapt and manage the constantly changing work environment. Employability skills are transferable abilities that an individual must possess to be considered "employable." Employers frequently describe a set of abilities that they expect from an employee, in addition to solid technical understanding and subject knowledge. Teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, business knowledge, literacy and numeracy related to the role, ICT expertise, good interpersonal and communication skills, the ability to use one's initiative while still following directions, and leadership qualities were required.

According to Whitfield (2022), career development is the evolution of short-term measures taken toward long-term professional goals. It entails developing role-specific skill sets, which can include taking night classes, networking, seeking a mentor, and taking on new duties in your existing employment. Determine a career objective, then sketch out the experience, competencies, and contacts you'll need to get there.

### Data Gathering

The research focuses on investigating the relationship between body and cosmetic enhancements, employability, and career development. It involves a sample of 222 individuals from the National Capital Region, Philippines, who have undergone body and cosmetic enhancement operations, with participants being both male and female and at least 18 years old. Body and cosmetic enhancements are defined as procedures aimed at improving appearance and self-esteem, encompassing both surgical and non-surgical operations. The study emphasizes the importance of appearance enhancement as a means of increasing reproductive success and mate value, drawing from previous research by Davis and Arnocky (2019).

Employability is described as the combination of a good academic record, adaptable skills, and attributes necessary to navigate the changing work environment, as per Ganesan (2018). Employability skills encompass a range of abilities sought by employers, including teamwork, problem-solving, communication, and leadership. Career development involves actions taken to progress toward long-term professional goals, such as acquiring role-specific skills, networking, and seeking mentorship, as outlined by Whitfield (2022).

Data gathering utilized quantitative methods. Quantitative methods involved Likert survey questions to assess attitudes and perceptions. Data analysis employed statistical tools such as the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and the Structural Equation Model to evaluate the relationship between body and cosmetic enhancement, employability, and career development. Overall, the study aims to provide insights into how body and cosmetic enhancements impact employability and career development, utilizing quantitative approaches to gather and analyze data from the respondents.

### Factor Analysis

Multiple phases were involved in processing the data. Metrics such as the KMO and total variance explained are used to identify whether there is enough variation in the data to explain hidden constructs. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha was also conducted to determine if the metrics in each construct measure the construct adequately. Moreover, correlation analysis is employed to determine if certain demographic variables are related to the identified factors. Lastly, statistical modeling was utilized to identify the relationship between the variables simultaneously. In statistical modeling, the model created must conform to model fit indices.

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results

Corresponding Measures	Code	Factor Loadings
Demonstrate a passion and enthusiasm for one's work has a favorable effect on professional advancement	CD7	0.732
I believe that gaining diverse work experiences across different industries positively impacts career development	CD5	0.722

Getting good recommendations and support from the management boosts your likelihood of getting promoted.	CD6	0.722
I believe having a strong work ethic contributes to my career advancement	CD9	0.721
I believe acquiring new skills and staying updated with trends is relevant for career development.	CD2	0.697
I believe maintaining a strong professional reputation and personal brand is essential for career development.	CD4	0.696
I believe the level of education and continuous learning opportunities have an impact on career development	CD1	0.664
Positive feedback from previous employers enhances employability prospects	E10	0.579
I believe that dressing professionally and maintaining a neat appearance positively impacts employability	E9	0.577
I believe that people should accept their natural body rather than trying to enhance their appearance in any way	BCE12	0.696
I believe that having a tight connection to the executive level can lead to employment advancement	CD10	0.676
Peer opinions influenced my decision to get a cosmetic enhancement	BCE6	0.658
I believe my perception of beauty is influenced by media portrayal of enhanced bodies	BCE4	0.635
I think that considering a body or cosmetic enhancement as motivated by societal pressure	BCE2	0.624
I believe the length of service in an organization significantly impacts career development	CD3	0.617
Physical appearance has a big impact on job advancement	CD8	0.545
I feel the media creates an unrealistic beauty standard, which leads to a desire for body or cosmetic enhancement	BCE7	0.514
I believe my overall happiness has increased since having a body or cosmetic enhancement	BCE3	0.812
I do not doubt that having a body or cosmetic enhancement has improved my self-esteem	BCE8	0.776
I feel more confident in myself now that I've had a body or cosmetic enhancement	BCE1	0.742
I think that before making a choice, people should be informed about the advantages and disadvantages of cosmetic enhancements	BCE9	0.621

I believe higher education qualifications enhance job prospects	E4	0.687
I believe effective self-presentation significantly impacts employability	E6	0.645
I think a person's capacity to get work in various professions can be impacted by their physical appearance	E2	0.607
A well-written and tailored resume significantly improves employability	E1	0.571
Having appropriate work experience boosts employability	E5	0.542

The rotated component matrix is in its treated version. Several items were eliminated from the data after it was treated. This is because the items did not experience any factor loadings, i.e., their loading value was less than the fixed value of 0.50 used to calculate the factor loading. Cross-loading, where some items experienced loading factors on two different columns, is another reason. Additionally, the calculated KMO score of 0.947 is higher than the minimum cut-off of 0.8, indicating that the data set is a sufficient sample. Furthermore, the total variance explained has four components, and the data imply that the overall variance is 64%, meaning that 36% of the study remains unexplained and 72% of the research is explained by the findings.

#### Reliability Testing

Table 3. Reliability Testing

Factors	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpa	Cut-off	Remarks
Trans Insight	9	0.930	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Work Preparedness	8	0.869	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Perspective	4	0.861	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Holistic Approach	5	0.820	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable

The factor analysis is displayed in the table above. Cronbach's Alpha is used in reliability testing to gauge how strongly the items within the component factors are associated with one another. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, or how closely linked a group of things is as a whole. It is regarded as a metric of scale reliability. Cronbach's alpha is frequently used to assess the reliability of internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above is regarded as "acceptable" in most research scenarios (Sileyew, 2019). With scores of 0.930, 0.869, 0.861, and 0.820, respectively, the component factors Transformative Insight (C1), Work Preparedness (C2), Perspective on Career Advancement (C3), and Holistic Approach to Career Success (C4) over the normal cut-off of 0.7 received acceptable remarks.

Age & Transformative Insight - .203

There is a positive weak relationship between age and transformative insights. This can mean that transformative insights predict the age of an individual by 4%. The mean score obtained in the survey results about age is 2.60. This means that the respondents who are ages 31 to 35 and 36 and above have better transformative insights.

#### Industry & Transformative Insight- .214

There is a positive weak relationship between money spent on body enhancement and transformative insights. This can mean that the transformative insight predicts the industry by 5%. The mean score obtained in the survey about the industry is 5.85. This means that participants in the business process outsourcing, entertainment, fashion, beauty, and medical industries have a more transformative perspective.

#### Money Spend On Body Enhancement & Work Preparedness - .258

There is a positive weak relationship between money spent on body enhancement and work preparedness. This can mean that work preparedness predicts the money spent on body enhancements by 7%. The mean score obtained in the survey about how much money they spend on body enhancement is 1.83. This means that participants who spend at least 20,000 are better prepared for work.

#### Money Spend To Body Enhancement & Transformative Insight - .323

There is a positive weak relationship between money spent on body enhancement and transformative insights. This can mean that the transformative insight predicts the money spent by an individual /on body enhancements by 10%. The mean score obtained in the survey results about money spent on body enhancement is 1.83. This means that the respondents spending 20,000 and above on body and cosmetics enhancements have better transformative insights.

#### Money Spend To Body Enhancement & Perspective on Career Advancement- .242

There is a positive weak relationship between money spent on body enhancement and perspective on career advancement. This can mean that the perspective of someone on advancement predicts the money spent on body enhancements by 6%. The mean score obtained in the survey results about money spent on body cosmetics is 1.83. This means that the respondents spending 20,000 and above on body and cosmetics enhancements have a better perspective toward advancement.

#### Money Spend To Body Enhancement & Holistic Approaches to Career Success- .219

There is a positive weak relationship between money spent on body enhancement and Holistic Approaches to Career Success. This can mean that the holistic approach to career success predicts the money spent on body enhancements by 5%. The mean score obtained in the survey results about money spent on body cosmetics is

1.83. This means that the participants spending 20,000 and above on body and cosmetics enhancements have a better understanding of the holistic approaches to career success.

#### Income & Transformative Insights- .292

There is a positive weak relationship between money spent on body enhancement and transformative insights. This can mean that the transformative insight predicts the income by 9%. The mean score obtained in the survey results about income is 3.87. This means that participants with an income of 40,000 or higher have more transformative insights.

Factor	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
A	1	.178**	.471**	0.091	.132*	0.069	.259**	.486**	0.084	0.039	.203**	-0.074	0.037
B	.178**	1	0.029	0.047	0.074	0.113	0.092	.147*	0.073	-0.074	0.068	-.169*	-0.129
C	.471*	0.029	1	0.064	0.052	-0.110	.224**	.274**	-0.080	-0.090	0.095	-.139	-0.08
D	0.091	0.047	0.064	1	-0.032	-0.102	.181**	.159*	.178**	-0.004	0.032	-0.055	-0.001
E	.132*	0.074	0.052	-0.03	1	.411**	-.177*	-0.063	-0.049	-0.073	0.025	-0.117	-0.08
F	0.069	0.113	-0.110	-0.102	.411**	1	-.187**	0.056	.155*	0.029	.214**	-0.005	0.032
G	.259**	0.092*	.224**	.181*	-.177**	-.187*	1	.453**	.204**	0.066	.172*	-0.034	0.113
H	.486**	.147*	.274**	.159*	-0.063	0.056	.453**	1	.371**	.158*	.292**	0.009	.158*
I	0.084	0.073	-0.080	.178*	-0.049	.155*	.204**	.371*	1	.258*	.323*	.242*	.219*
K	.203**	0.068	0.095	0.032	0.025	.214**	.172*	.292**	.323**	.613**	1	.539**	.588**
L	-.169*	-.139	-0.05	-0.11	-0.00	-0.03	0.009	.242**	.539*	-0.07	.642*	1	.696
M	0.037	-0.129	-0.084	-0.001	-0.085	0.032	0.113	.158**	.219**	.768**	.588**	.696**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\* Note: A = Age; B = Gender; C = Civil Status; D = Location; E = Profession; F = Industry; G = Educational Attainment; H = Income; I = Money Spent to Body Enhancement; J = Work Preparedness; K = Transformative Insights; L= Perspective to Career Advancement; M = Holistic Approach to Career Success

#### Statistical Modeling

The researchers employed statistical modeling, specifically structural equation modeling (SEM), to assess constructs that cannot be directly measured by instruments but can be inferred from other measurable constructs. In structural equation modeling (SEM), the relationship between variables generates a structural model. This structural model can be explained using structural equations, for example, in regression analysis. This structural equation describes the relationship between the latent (exogenous) independent variable and the latent (endogenous) dependent variable. Researchers using structural equation models must know whether or not the model constructed using empirical data has a unique value to estimate it. If the model lacks a unique value, it is unable to be identified. A model's cause is classified as unidentified because the information provided in empirical data is insufficient to yield a unique answer when computing model estimation parameters (Hidayat and Wulandari, 2022).



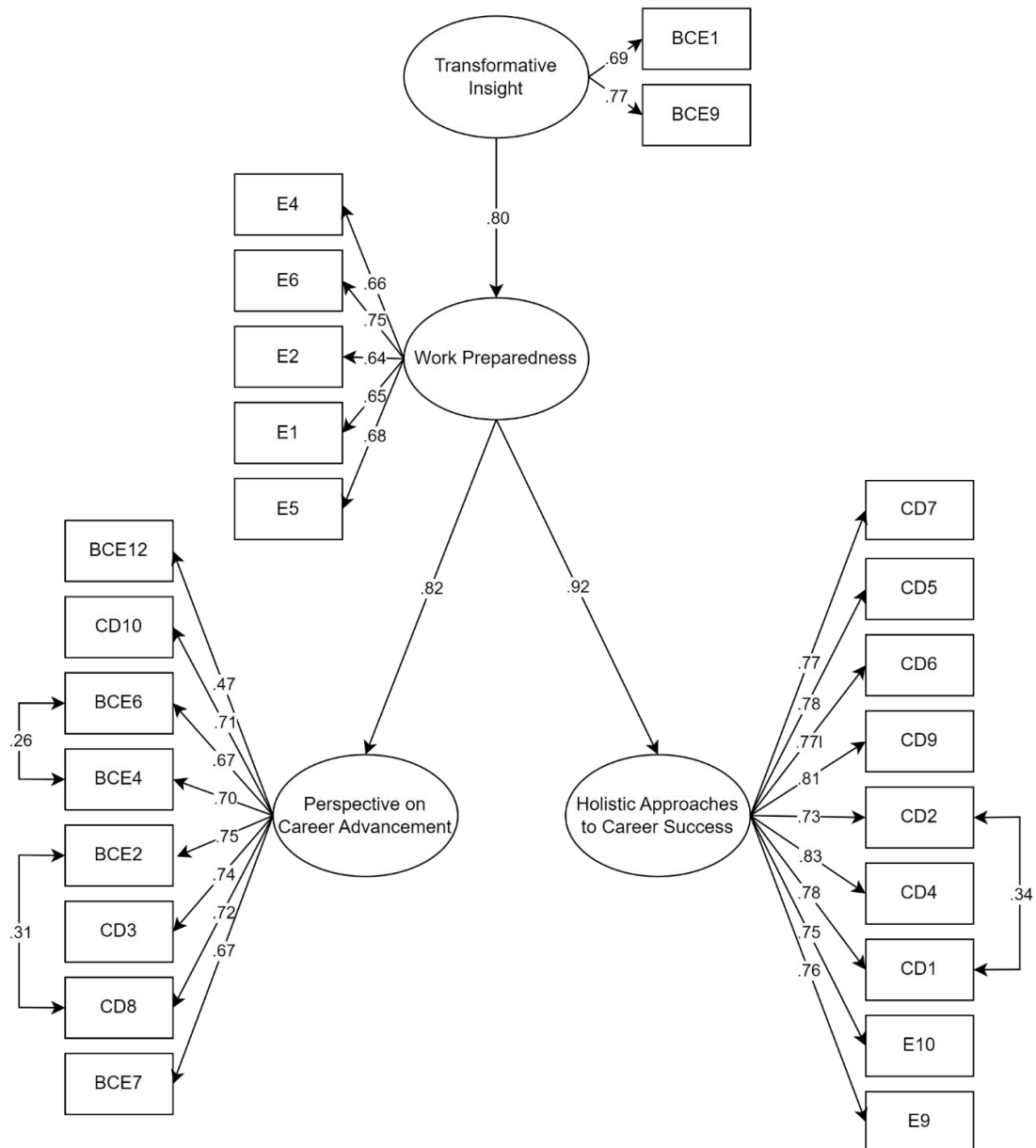


Figure 1. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Figure 1 depicts the Structural Equation Modeling of the study. Understanding transformative insight within organizational transformations involves conducting a thorough evaluation of change readiness, which encompasses the preparedness of leaders, employees, and the transformation program itself. As stated by Jahn et al. (2021), this concept is closely intertwined with work preparedness, as it requires assessing whether leaders possess the requisite skills and experience to navigate change, gauging employees' readiness to embrace new approaches, and ensuring that the transformation program is adequately supported with resources and systems. Through a systematic assessment of change readiness, organizations can pinpoint areas of full, partial, or lacking preparedness, empowering leaders to implement targeted measures to bolster work preparedness and enhance the likelihood of success. This approach transcends mere anecdotal observations and intuitive judgments,

instead relying on data-driven insights to inform strategic decision-making and foster effective change management strategies.

Transformative insight plays a crucial role in effective career management by empowering individuals to navigate transitions, seize opportunities, and develop resilience when confronted with challenges. In contrast, mentorship acts as a catalyst for fostering and applying transformative insight. It offers mentees the necessary guidance, support, and resources to navigate their career paths with clarity, confidence, and purpose. By harmonizing transformative insight and mentorship, individuals can unleash their complete potential and attain lasting success in their chosen professional domains. (Speaker Agency, 2024)

The model highlights the importance of taking into account various aspects of an individual's life, including skills, interests, values, and environmental factors, when making career decisions. This approach aligns with the concept of work preparedness, which goes beyond technical competence to encompass a thorough understanding of one's personal attributes and circumstances in relation to career goals (DreamGravity, 2023). The holistic view of career success emphasizes the need for balance and integration across different areas of life, recognizing that career satisfaction is intertwined with overall well-being. Promoting self-awareness, exploration, and informed decision-making assists individuals in aligning their career choices with their personal goals and values, ultimately fostering sustained fulfillment and achievement in the professional realm. Thus, the holistic approach contributes to career success by advocating for a comprehensive evaluation of individuals' abilities, interests, and aspirations in guiding their career paths.

Career readiness involves acquiring essential skills, knowledge, and confidence for transitioning from education to employment and pursuing fulfilling careers. As suggested by Heine (2023), this aligns with the idea of work preparedness, emphasizing the need for both technical and soft skills for workplace success. Additionally, career readiness empowers individuals to actively pursue growth opportunities, enhancing their employability and career advancement prospects. Scholars emphasize the significance of career readiness in bridging the education-to-employment gap and fostering long-term career success. Overall, career readiness plays a pivotal role in individuals' professional development and success.

Capabilities are referred to as "work readiness," which includes a variety of attitudes, actions, and abilities that equip people to carry out their professional roles in the workplace. Because of this, work-ready ECPMs have the qualities (behaviors, beliefs, and abilities) needed to successfully contribute to the completion of projects in project-based organizations (Borg et al., 2023).

Table 5. Model Fit Indices

Model Fit	Value	Cut-Off	References	Remarks
Chi-square/df	2.1	<5	and Hocevar (1985)	Acceptable
IFI	.91	≥0.90	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et	Acceptable

				al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	
TLI	.90	$\geq 0.90$		(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
CFI	.91	$\geq 0.90$		(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
RMSEA	.07	$< 0.10$		(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable

\* Note: IFI = Incremental Fit Index; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; *df* = degree of freedom

The table shows the model fit indices of the modified model. Results show that all model fit indices are satisfied. According to Stone (2021), model fit indices give researchers useful information to evaluate how well their structural equation models fit the data.

## Results

The results revealed 24 observed variables. The resulting variables were: confidence, informed cosmetic choices, work experience, resume optimization, appearance and professional opportunities, self presentation, education, passion, diverse work experiences, good recommendation from the management, work ethics, new skills, strong personal brand, educational attainment, positive feedback, neat appearance, media beauty standards, physical appearance, length of service, societal pressure, media portrayal, peer opinions, tight connection, and accepting natural body. Initially, there were 30 variables with various literatures, but factor analysis indicates that there are only 24 variables based on the measures developed. Furthermore, the resulting KMO score computed is 0.947, which exceeds the minimum cut-off of 0.7, indicating that the data set is adequate. This indicates that the sample size is adequate for factor extraction. Furthermore, the results show that the total variance is 64%, implying that the research explains 64% of the study and leaves 36% undiscovered.

The Structural Equation Model shows the final model results which revealed two factors that can be used to measure transformative insights. The variables included confidence ( $\beta = 0.69$ ) and informed cosmetic choices ( $\beta = 0.77$ ). This means that both external factors have a positive impact on transformative insights. Furthermore, other external variables of transformative insights, such as overall happiness and self-esteem, were removed from the statistical model because the estimates show low beta values, which cause model issues. The results of the data analysis showed that the five exogenous variables such as education, ( $\beta = 0.66$ ), self presentation ( $\beta = 0.75$ ), appearance and professional opportunities ( $\beta = 0.64$ ), resume optimization ( $\beta = 0.65$ ), work experience ( $\beta = 0.68$ ) positively impact the factors related to work preparedness. Moreover the data analysis results demonstrated that the nine exogenous variables, including work ethics ( $\beta = 0.81$ ), diverse work experience ( $\beta = 0.78$ ), passion ( $\beta = 0.77$ ), good management recommendations ( $\beta = 0.77$ ), educational attainment ( $\beta = 0.78$ ), positive feedback ( $\beta = 0.75$ ), and neat appearance ( $\beta = 0.77$ ), had a positive impact on the factors related to

holistic approaches to career success. The results of the data analysis showed that the eight exogenous variables such as accepting natural body, ( $\beta = 0.47$ ), tight connection ( $\beta = 0.71$ ), peer opinions ( $\beta = 0.67$ ), media portrayal ( $\beta = 0.70$ ), societal pressure ( $\beta = 0.75$ ), length of service ( $\beta = 0.74$ ), physical appearance ( $\beta = 0.72$ ), media beauty standards ( $\beta = 0.77$ ) has positively impact the factors related to perspective on career advancement.

In reliability testing, Cronbach's Alpha is used to determine the degree of association between the items in the component factors. The internal consistency of a group of items, or how closely related they are as a whole, is measured by Cronbach's alpha. It is recognized as a scale reliability metric. A common tool for evaluating the dependability of internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha. Therefore the values received acceptable remarks, showing a strong correlation between the items in each factor.

The Model Fit Indices yielded outstanding results. The chi-square/df result is 2.1, which is less than the acceptable threshold of 5. The model's IFI is 0.91, with an acceptable value of 0.90 or greater. The model has a TLI of 0.90 and a cut-off value greater than 0.90. The RMR score is 0.05, which is less than the acceptable threshold of 0.1. The CFI score is 0.91, with an acceptable value greater than or equal to 0.90. The model's NFI score is 0.90, which is an acceptable value equal to or greater than 0.90. Finally, the RMSEA score is 0.07, which is less than 0.1, making it acceptable. The results of the model fit indices were all within the cut-off limit.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of rigorous data treatment and statistical analysis in understanding the complex relationships between body enhancements, demographics, and career perspectives, urging further research in this area. Based on the findings and conclusions, this study made a number of recommendations. The study's findings revealed an association between body and cosmetic enhancements, employability, and career development.

## Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the complexities of data treatment, factor analysis, and the relationship between various demographic variables and constructs related to body enhancements and career perspectives. The utilization of statistical modeling, such as structural equation modeling (SEM), facilitated the examination of constructs that are not directly measurable, thereby enhancing the depth of analysis. Upon examination of the rotated component matrix, it was observed that several items were eliminated from the dataset due to their failure to meet the predetermined factor loading threshold of 0.50. This rigorous selection process ensured the integrity of the data and the accuracy of subsequent analyses. Additionally, the occurrence of cross-loading, where items exhibited loading factors on multiple columns, underscored the need for meticulous scrutiny in construct measurement.

The high Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) score of 0.947 surpassed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.8, affirming the adequacy of the sample for factor analysis. Furthermore, the substantial proportion of total

variance explained (64%) by the identified components signifies the robustness of the findings. However, the remaining unexplained variance (36%) highlights the presence of other factors influencing the phenomena under investigation, suggesting avenues for future research exploration. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency among the component factors, with scores exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.70. This indicates that the items within each factor are strongly associated with one another, enhancing the credibility of the measurement instrument. The correlation analyses revealed weak but significant relationships between demographic variables and constructs related to transformative insights, work preparedness, career advancement perspectives, and holistic approaches to career success. Notably, variables such as age, industry, income, and money spent on body enhancements exhibited modest predictive power about these constructs, offering valuable insights into the nuanced interplay between individual characteristics and career-related perceptions.

In evaluating the structural equation model, all model fit indices met the criteria for satisfactory fit, as outlined by Stone (2021). These indices provide researchers with valuable information regarding the appropriateness of the proposed model for explaining the observed data, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the study findings. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of robust data treatment procedures, rigorous statistical analyses, and careful interpretation of results in advancing our understanding of the complex interrelationships between body enhancements, demographic variables, and career perspectives. Future research endeavors should aim to further elucidate these relationships and explore additional factors that may influence individual perceptions and behaviors in the context of career development and personal enhancement strategies.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study unveil the profound impact of confidence and informed cosmetic choices on various facets of professional development. Specifically, transformative insights, work experience, portfolio creation, appearance, and self-presentation were found to be significantly influenced by these factors. Moreover, the educational attainment of individuals emerged as a crucial determinant of work preparedness, passion, diverse work experiences, recommendations from management, work ethics, skill acquisition, personal branding, and feedback. Additionally, the influence of one's neat appearance on holistic approaches to career success and media beauty standards, alongside societal pressures, peer opinions, and connections, underscores the intricate interplay between personal attributes and career trajectories.

Furthermore, this study's rigorous analytical approach, employing structural equation modeling and factor analysis, elucidated the complex relationships between demographic variables, body enhancements, and career perspectives. Notably, the meticulous data treatment procedures, evidenced by the rigorous selection process and reliability testing, ensured the integrity and accuracy of the findings. The robust statistical analyses revealed significant correlations between demographic variables and constructs related to career advancement, emphasizing the importance of individual characteristics in shaping professional outcomes.

The satisfactory fit indices of the structural equation model further attest to the validity and reliability of the study findings. Collectively, these insights underscore the necessity of comprehensive data treatment procedures and rigorous statistical analyses in advancing our understanding of the multifaceted dynamics influencing career trajectories and personal enhancement strategies. Looking ahead, future research endeavors should continue to explore additional factors that may impact individual perceptions and behaviors in the context of career development, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of professional success and personal enhancement strategies in contemporary society.

## Recommendations

The study suggests several recommendations for individuals to understand the benefits and drawbacks of cosmetic procedures. It suggests disseminating information about cosmetic procedures, fostering self-esteem and body positivity, and collaborating with influencers and media outlets. Media literacy programs can help individuals critically assess and interpret beauty standards. Employers should provide resources for career development, emphasizing a well-rounded skill set, continuous learning, and professional networking. Career counseling services and mentorship programs can help individuals develop technical and soft skills for success in the job market. Future research should explore the relationship between body enhancements and employment, focusing on initial employment, job retention, and opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, the sample size may be augmented based on the required model's complexity, the number of observed variables, and the intended amount of statistical power. It can strengthen the validity and reliability of their factor analysis and model fit assessments. Ethical and legal considerations should also be considered. The study's findings should be carefully considered to ensure the validity and reliability of factor analysis and model fit assessments.

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## 'Problem Case Historiography': Alternative Learning Strategy to Instill Students' Historical Thinking Skills in Merdeka Curriculum

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**Abstract:** Merdeka Curriculum, the latest curriculum implemented in Indonesia by the Ministry of Education and Culture since 2021, faces obstacles in its implementation, including in history subject. A key obstacle history teachers encounter is the lack of alternative learning strategies designed to develop students' historical thinking skills. This study addresses this gap by formulating and examining a new strategy specifically designed to instill students' historical thinking skills named Problem Case Historiography, tailored to build critical historical reasoning abilities. This learning strategy integrates Problem Based Learning, Case Study, and Historiography concepts. This study aims to obtain new perspectives related to the implementation of Problem Case Historiography in historical learning within Merdeka Curriculum. This research was conducted in six senior high schools in Malang which have implemented the Curriculum. Data collection involved observing lessons and conducting interviews with teachers and students. The observational findings revealed increased student enthusiasm and participation during Problem Case Historiography. The results of the interviews also showed that they were pleased with the learning strategy applied, due to its clearly described procedures which could train them how to think like historian, so that their historical thinking skills could be stimulated.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum, Problem Case Historiography, Historical Thinking Skill, Learning Strategy

**Citation:** Astutik, W.T., Widiadi, A.N., Agung, D.A.G., & Wijaya, D.N. (2024). 'Problem Case Historiography': Alternative Learning Strategy to Instill Students' Historical Thinking Skills in Merdeka Curriculum. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 177-187), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new curriculum implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is starting from 2021. Initially, the Merdeka Curriculum was only implemented in Sekolah Penggerak. Sekolah Penggerak are pilot schools for the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. In the 2021/2022 school year, the Merdeka Curriculum will be implemented in nearly 2,500 schools participating in the Program Sekolah Penggerak (PSP) and 901 SMK Pusat Keunggulan (SMK PK) as part of learning with a new paradigm. This curriculum will be implemented from TK-B, SD & SDLB Grades I and IV, SMP & SMPLB Grade VII, SMA & SMALB and SMK Grade X (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a, 2022b)

The Merdeka Curriculum will replace the implementation of the previous curriculum, the 2013 curriculum. The 2013 Curriculum has been implemented in Indonesia for more than a decade. Apart from the various advantages of the 2013 Curriculum, it requires several improvements related to the various challenges that have emerged today, especially the COVID-19 pandemic since the beginning of 2020 (Widiadi et al., 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum have many differences, starting from the curriculum structure to the content of each subject. For history subjects, the difference between the Merdeka Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum is starting from the curriculum structure, where in the Merdeka Curriculum, the specialisation subject of history is abolished, to the changes in the content of the material taught. In the Merdeka Curriculum, the skills to be achieved in History subjects include process skills and conceptual skills. The scope of skills strands in history subjects, including; historical conceptual skills, historical thinking skills, historical awareness, historical research, historical practice skills (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a).

Based on the explanation above, one of the skill strands in history subjects is students' historical thinking skills. Students' Historical Thinking Skills is one of the new skill strands emphasised in the Merdeka Curriculum. In previous curricula, students' historical thinking skills were not explicitly emphasised within the scope of the history learning objectives. As something that is newly implemented, there are still many obstacles that arise in terms of what methods can be used by teachers to achieve the goal of developing students' historical thinking skills. For this reason, the researcher tried to formulate a learning strategy that can train students' historical thinking skills.

Based on the literature review conducted by the author, there are not many alternative learning strategies that can be used by teachers to achieve students' historical thinking skills. This study offers an alternative learning strategy that is specifically designed to train students' historical thinking skills. The learning strategy is called Problem Case Historiography, where this learning strategy is a combination of three existing theories, namely 'Problem Based Learning', 'Case Study' and 'Historiography'.

This research was conducted in six public senior high schools in Malang Regency. The selection of the research

sites is based on the decree of the Head of Curriculum Standards and Educational Assessment Agency, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 044/H/KR/2022 concerning educational units implementing the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in 2022/2023, which identified six schools out of thirteen public schools in Malang Regency to implement Merdeka Curriculum in 2022/2023 (Kementerian Pendidikan Kebudayaan Riset dan Teknologi, 2022). The reason for selecting research sites in public senior high schools in Malang Regency because these schools have been implementing the Merdeka Curriculum since 2022/2023 school year. Public senior high schools in Malang Regency can also be said to be equal in terms of student input and school facilities, so there is no gap between one school and another. This is an important consideration for the selection of research sites. The purpose of this research is to gain new knowledge in the field related to the use of the learning strategy Problem Case Historiography.

## Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach, by utilize observation and interview data collection techniques. Observations are conducted by making observations while learning is taking place, while interviews are conducted after learning is completed by interviewing several randomly selected students. The subjects of this research are Grade X students from six public senior high schools in Malang Regency that have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum since 2022. From each school, one class was randomly selected to carry out learning with learning steps according to the learning strategy Problem Case Historiography. The data from observations and interviews were then analysed to obtain findings related to the implementation of the Problem Case Historiography learning strategy as an effort to instill students' historical thinking skill in the Merdeka Curriculum.

This study become the first step taken by the researcher, the results of this study will provide information related to the advantages, disadvantages and difficulties in using the Problem Case Historiography learning strategy. The results of this study can be used to formulate further studies, both by the researchers themselves and other researchers, with the aim of reference, improvement and development of this strategy.

## Discussion

### 1. Concept of historical thinking

History is not just a series of events in the past, it is complex because it involves people, space and time. More than this, historical events can be understood as a complex concept that requires skills to understand. Teachers need to be selective in their choice of teaching methods and do their best to ensure that the learning that takes place achieves the learning objectives that have been set. According to some experts, teachers can use two approaches to classroom pedagogy, namely fact-based approaches or historical understanding/thinking (Jones, 2003; Parker, 2004; Stearns et al., 2000; Taylor, 2006; in Zajda & Whitehouse, 2009). The fact-based approach is more conservative in that students are only required to master historical facts, whereas historical

understanding/thinking focuses more on students' critical thinking about historical events and the complexities within them (Zajda & Whitehouse, 2009). To deal with the world's increasingly complex problems, teachers need to equip students with historical thinking skills so that they can think critically and be wise in the face of information disclosure and the rapid development of science and technology.

According to Widiadi, historical thinking skills are skills that are not automatically possessed by anyone, neither by students nor by historians (Widiadi et al., 2022). Historical thinking skills are the ability for learners to distinguish between past, present and future time, to see and evaluate evidence, to compare and analyse historical stories, illustrations and records from the past, to interpret historical records and to construct a historical story based on their understanding (Isjoni, 2007).

In line with historical thinking, learning approaches with the concept of andragogy or adult learning can also be an effort to improve learners' verification skills. Learners can use their experience as a resource for further learning. In addition, andragogical learning focuses on problem solving and learners are expected to take responsibility by finding solutions to existing problems. By thinking historically and based on the concept of adult learning through learning, it is hoped that students can solve problems in their daily lives, including being more selective in accepting information in circulation (Nurjanah, 2020).

According to Zed, historical thinking means a typical way of thinking in the discipline of history. History is an expression of scientific thinking. Scientific thinking is a systematic way of thinking, a way of thinking that is organised and integrated. In other words, scientific thinking is theoretical-systematic thinking or conceptual thinking (Zed, 2018). The standards of historical thinking consist of four (4), namely: 1) Awareness of time (sense of time / chronological thinking); 2) Awareness of the nature of continuum; 3) Ability (capacity) to capture and explain important changes that imply the existence of historical coverage (historical copherhension); 4) Ability to reconstruct historical events (Zed, 1999).

The application of diverse and appropriate approaches, strategies, methods and models in learning by prioritising students' active activities in the whole learning process will provide opportunities for students to develop all their potential in learning (Hudaidah, 2014). Based on the above explanation, historical thinking skills are not something that can occur naturally, there is a need for teachers' efforts to train students to have historical thinking skills. In addition, historical thinking skills have been mandated in the achievement of skills in the Merdeka Curriculum, so teachers need to pay more attention to the learning that will be provided so that students can achieve historical thinking skills.

### *Problem Case Historiography*

#### *The concept of Problem Case Historiography*

In this section, the author attempts to offer alternative learning strategies formulated with the aim of training students in historical thinking skills. As discussed earlier, the purpose of implementing this learning strategy is

to train students' thinking skills in the Merdeka Curriculum. The concept of problem-case historiography learning strategy was formulated from a combination of three pre-existing concepts, namely problem-based learning strategy, case study research method and historiography. In addition to these three concepts, this study was also inspired by Sam Wineburg's concept of 'Reading Like Historian'. Wineburg (Wineburg et al., 2012) recognises that today's students are overwhelmed by mountains of information and need new ways to make sense of it. The massive development of technology can bring both convenience and difficulty. Furthermore, with easy access to information, new skills are needed to select and verify information. Teachers therefore need to develop learning in this direction.

The term Problem Based Learning was first introduced in 1960 by Don Woods in his research with chemistry students at McMaster University in Canada (Mayasari et al., 2016). In the 1970s, several universities also used this method, such as Newcastle in Australia, Maastricht and New Mexico. Since then, Problem Based Learning has been used in various fields such as health, social work, engineering, architecture, business, law, economics, management, mathematics, education and agriculture (Schwartz, 2013). To date, Problem Based Learning continues to be used and developed, including in the world of education. Problem Based Learning has several characteristics, such as: learning begins with the provision of 'problems', usually 'problems' have real world context, learners actively formulate problems and identify their knowledge gaps, study and search for their own materials related to 'problems', and report the solutions they find. The teacher acts more as a facilitator, designing a problem scenario (Amir, 2009).

Case study is one of the social science research methods. In general, case study is a strategy that is more appropriate when the subject of research is related to how or why (Yin, 2014). Case study researchers provide an in-depth understanding of a case or cases (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Furthermore, (Kusmarni, 2012), argues that a case study is research in which researchers explore a particular phenomenon (case) in a time and activity (programme, event, process, institution or social group) and collect detailed and in-depth information using various data collection procedures over a period of time. Historiography is a research method in the study of history. As a science, history needs research methods. Bernheim defines historical method as "research techniques consisting of four stages, namely 1. Heuristics (searching and finding historical sources). 2. Criticism (judging whether a source is authentic or not and how credible the source is). 3. Synthesis (synthesis of facts obtained through source criticism or called source analysis). 4. Presentation (writing up the results) (Aron & Bernheim, 1978). Gottschalk (Gottschalk & Notosusanto, 1975: 27-28), defines the historical method as "four main activities consisting of 1. Collecting objects from the period, both printed, written and oral materials that may be relevant. 2. Eliminating materials or parts of materials that are not authentic. 3. deriving reliable evidence from the authentic materials. 4. organising the reliable evidence into a meaningful story or presentation (Dedi & Syair, 2014). According to Kuntowijoyo, there are 5 research steps in historiography, namely: 1. selecting the topic; 2. collecting sources; 3. examining historical criticism; 4. interpreting; 5. writing history (Kuntowijoyo, 2003).

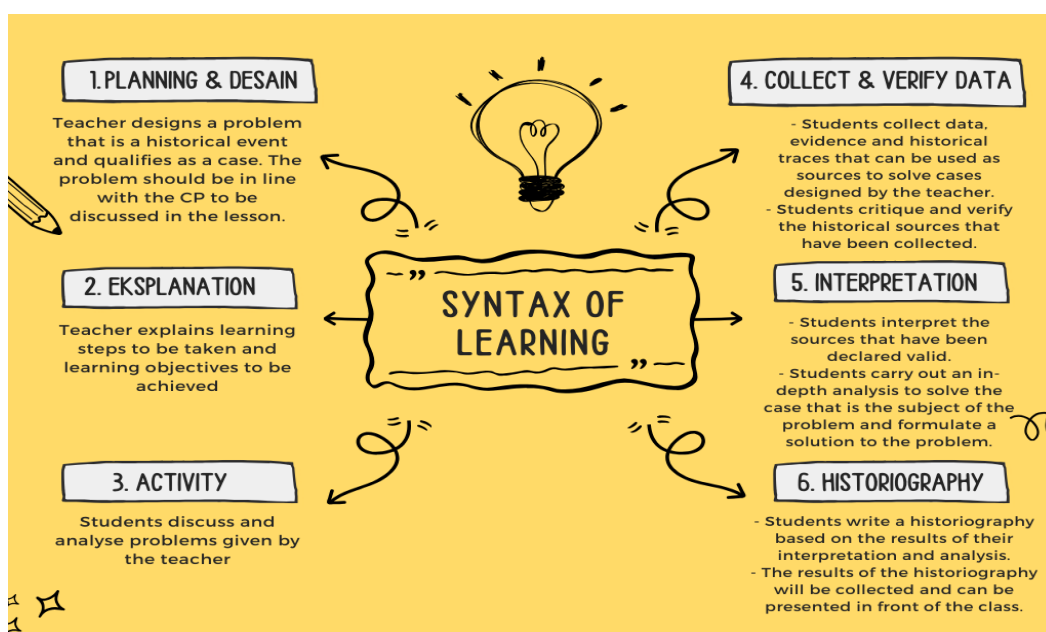
From the theories mentioned above, the author tries to combine the three concepts to produce a new learning



strategy formulated with the aim of training historical thinking skills in students. The author believes that the Problem Based Learning method is still very relevant to be used in learning history, but it is still not strong enough to sharpen historical thinking skills, for this reason the combination with the Case Study research method, which explores a case/problem, is expected to train students to think more deeply about the problems designed by the teacher, so that students' historical thinking skills can be trained. The results of learning can be assessed from the products produced in the learning that has been done, for this reason the author adds the method of historical writing (historiography) in the combination of new learning strategies found. By including elements of historiography, it is hoped that students will be able to write a series of historical events with precise and in-depth narratives according to the problems designed. In this way, students will acquire products and skills after they have implemented their learning using this strategy.

*Syntax of the Problem Case Historiography*

In this section, the author will explain the alternative syntax of the Problem Case Historiography with the aim of instil students' historical thinking skills. The learning steps are as follows: First, before learning, the teacher designs a problem that is a historical event and qualifies to be a case. Second, the students (individually or in groups) analyse the problems assigned by the teacher; Third, the students collect data, evidence and historical traces that can be used as sources to solve the cases designed by the teacher; Fourth, the students criticise and verify the collected historical sources; fifthly, students interpret the sources that have been declared valid; sixthly, students carry out an in-depth analysis to solve the case that becomes the subject of the problem and formulate a solution to the problem; seventhly, students write the results of the interpretation and analysis in a historiography; finally, the results of the historiography are collected and can be presented to the class (Astutik et al., 2024). The flow of the understanding of the steps of the learning process can be seen in the illustration:



Source: Syntax of Problem Case Historiography learning strategi (Astutik et al., 2024)



The learning syntax above includes the syntax of the three concepts discussed earlier, namely problem-based learning, case study and historiography. The purpose of this syntax design is to train students to think like historians, where the next phase can teach historical thinking skills. This goal can be achieved by following each phase, starting with the presentation of a problem, then asking students to find information and evidence, then verifying the information/evidence, and then after obtaining valid data, students can write the results of the investigation of the given case in a historical writing, which we know as historiography.

## Research Findings

This research was conducted by asking the teacher to help implement the learning according to the syntax previously formulated by the researcher, and then observing during the learning process. After the lesson, interviews were conducted with two to three randomly selected students. The observation guide includes questions about the learning process, the students' responses when carrying out a series of tasks in accordance with the syntax of the Problem Case Historiography learning strategy, and the students' activity and enthusiasm as reflected during the learning process. The interview guide contains questions about the students' opinions about the learning process that was carried out, the obstacles that were encountered, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the learning strategy that was just implemented compared to the learning strategy that is usually carried out by history teachers in the classroom.

The results of the research are presented as follows; based on the analysis of the results of the observation sheets of six classes in six schools of the research subjects, it can be concluded that the students are active and enthusiastic in the learning process. The observation results from the six schools are on average the same because the schools have the same student background, the same student input and the same adequate school facilities. This liveliness and enthusiasm were reflected in the students' activity in finding historical sources related to the historical cases used as assignments.

Students also actively communicate with other students to exchange ideas and opinions and to discuss the historical sources they have found. In the early stages of learning, students were confused and needed explanation and guidance from the teacher regarding the given task. During the verification process, students had problems, active students asked the teacher to carry out the verification process, while less active students tended to wait for instructions from the teacher or wait for questions from friends.

From the interview the following results can be obtained; almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the respondents, namely the students who were randomly selected after the learning process, admitted that they were interested and enthusiastic about the learning that I had just implemented. They felt that the learning was interesting and exciting because it was different from the learning usually done by the teacher. The learning steps were clearly explained, so all they had to do was follow the direction of the learning syntax. However, they also felt that at the beginning they were confused about the tasks and what they had to do, so the teacher had to provide an apperception of the material

and tasks given. Most of them admitted that they got a lot of sources from the internet, but they still need help to check the data they get. They are still unfamiliar with the term historiography or historical writing, so they need to learn more to understand the concept.

The results of the interview provided information about the advantages and disadvantages of the learning process that had just been implemented. The advantage of this learning strategy is that it encourages students to be active and enthusiastic learners. Students have to find sources related to the given case, then verify and write the story. This strategy encourages students to actively question and discuss both with the teacher and with other students. Another advantage is that because the learning flow is prepared, the students' thinking process is more structured, although the students feel that the role of the teacher is still very necessary to accompany each learning process. The demands of the task of making history or writing history can stimulate students to try to write, although students still find it difficult to write history because almost all students have just received this concept.

The shortcoming perceived by the students in relation to the learning process is time management. The students felt that the time given to carry out the series of learning processes was very insufficient. This is because the series of learning processes are only carried out in one session, so students feel that there is not enough time to do the task properly, as a result they are rushed in finding sources and verifying them, even when writing their historiography. This information is an important note for the researchers to make improvements and develop this learning strategy in the future.

Nowadays, many teachers use constructivist methods in teaching under the pretext of student-centred learning, so the teacher's role in learning is not so important. Although learning is student-centred, the teacher's role in learning is still absolutely necessary. This is in order to avoid misunderstandings and misconceptions on the part of the students. The results of the observations and interviews show the importance of the teacher's role in explaining learning materials and tasks. Students who were initially confused by the tasks given were able to complete them well after the teacher gave explanations and instructions. Although the learning syntax is clearly written and structured, the role of the teacher in the classroom is still very important in order to accommodate the learning process well.

The students still find it difficult to think like historians, as the concept is new to them in high school. In fact, they are still unfamiliar with the term historiography or historical writing.

Developing historical thinking in students, especially in Grade X, is a major task for history teachers and stakeholders, especially for schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This is because the previous curriculum did not emphasise this aspect. Students are used to being exposed to the material only in junior high school, so there is a stigma that history is only about past events. But more than that, history has theories, concepts and values that we need to live in this modern era, especially when the freedom of access to information and the development of science and technology are becoming increasingly rapid, as they are today.

Efforts to instil historical thinking processes must continue, to encourage students to think critically and historically as they face the era of globalisation. This learning strategy is a starting point for researchers or teachers to develop learning that can train students' historical thinking skills. Apart from the students' historical thinking ability being a skill that is emphasised in the Merdeka Curriculum, it is also because this ability is needed by students in facing the rapid development of science and technology and information disclosure. This skill is important so that students can think critically and not easily believe news or information without checking the source first. So that students can get used to thinking critically and historically to avoid false news that can break the unity and integrity of the nation or have other negative effects.

## **Conclusion**

The curriculum is constantly evolving from time to time in accordance with the development and demands of the times, so teachers must constantly update themselves with new methods so that the learning done in the classroom can meet the mandate of the curriculum.

Historical thinking skills, which are the competency strands of the history subjects in the Merdeka Curriculum, are absolutely necessary to meet the challenges of the times. Historical Thinking Skills can train students to think critically, this ability is absolutely necessary for the younger generation to face global threats both from within the country and abroad.

This study aims to provide new insights into the implementation of the Problem Case Historiography learning strategy. The results of the field research provide information that students are active and enthusiastic in carrying out the learning process. Students are active in the process of source finding, verification and historiography of cases used as assignments. Students feel that teachers need to provide awareness, explanation and support in learning activities. The shortcomings felt by the students are related to the time given. They feel that the time given is not enough to carry out a series of learning processes because they have to find sources, carry out verification and write historiography.

This study becomes the first step for researchers to improve and develop this learning strategy. The results of this study can be a reference material or a study for researchers or other researchers to make improvements or developments related to the problem case historiography learning strategy

## **Acknowledgments**

Praise be to Allah for all the goodness bestowed upon the author. The authors would like to express their gratitude for the provision of scholarships for financial support. This work is fully supported by BPI Scholarship - Balai Pembiayaan Pendidikan Tinggi (BPPT); Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP).

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## The Influence of Learning Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) on Students' Mathematical Learning Motivation

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**Abstract:** The application of learning models is one of the things that must be considered in the learning process in the classroom. This study aims to determine the effect of the cooperative learning model type STAD (Student Teams Achievement Division) on motivation to learn Mathematics in class VIII students of SMP 2 Mlati Yogyakarta. The research design used was pre-experimental (non-design) with quasi-experimental research methods. The sample of this research consisted of 26 students, namely class VIII A as the experimental class. The data analysis technique used is descriptive analysis and inferential analysis with the *Paired Sample t-test*. The results showed that there was a significant effect of the STAD (Student Teams Achievement Division) cooperative learning model on student motivation. This can be seen from the results of the *t-test*, namely the value ( $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < \text{level of significance} = 0.05$ ). In addition, it is also indicated by the change in the percentage of the pre-test value, which is 62.8571 which is included in the sufficient category, and the percentage value of the post-test which changed to 75.04 which is included in the strong category. This shows that the cooperative learning model type STAD affects motivation to learn mathematics.

**Keywords:** cooperative learning, STAD, learning motivation

**Citation:** Sahmat, S.D.R & Dhoruri, A. (2024). The Influence of Learning Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) on Students' Mathematical Learning Motivation. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 188-196), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The era of Society 5.0 demands that various key skills must be mastered to face the increasingly competitive demands of life and the world of work. There are four pillars of relevant 21st-century skills, namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Internationally, the quality of education in Indonesia is in position 110 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) with a figure of 0.684. Based on this figure, Indonesia is still lagging behind two neighboring ASEAN countries, namely Malaysia at number 62 and Singapore at number 11 (*Web Bapenas SDGs*, n.d.). This shows that the education system in

Indonesia needs to be improved in terms of the learning process, facilities, teaching staff, and even the assessment system applied. The results of the program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 showed that in the reading ability category, Indonesia was ranked 74th out of 79 countries, in addition to math and science skills, Indonesia was ranked 73rd and 71st out of 79 countries (OECD, 2019). Indonesia's ranking in the PISA assessment has not changed since Indonesia began participating in this assessment, namely from 2000 to 2018. This indicates that there are still many factors that cause Indonesia's math skills to remain low.

Mathematics is one of the subjects that has a perspective that math is difficult and a scary specter. This continues to develop in society and certainly affects the thinking or responses of students regarding mathematics itself. One of the causes of the low mathematics learning outcomes of students is that many students think that mathematics is difficult to learn and the characteristics of abstract mathematics, namely students think that mathematics is a frightening specter (Bilah et al., 2017). The assumption related to mathematics is difficult and tends to be avoided by students is wrong to cause students to feel anxious or afraid of mathematics itself. Some of the consequences that can be caused in addition to those described above are the learning process in the classroom becomes less fun and is often considered boring because of pre-existing perceptions. Many factors cause this to happen including factors within students (internal) and factors from outside students (external). In general, two factors can affect the success of learners, namely internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are factors that come from the learners themselves while external factors come from outside (Kapitan & Aseng, 2023). Internal factors include the interests, talents, and motivation of learners while external factors include the condition of the school environment, infrastructure, the learning model applied, and the media used in the learning process. The learning model is one of the things that affects many things including learning outcomes, achievement, talent, interest, and even motivation to learn mathematics. In addition, the right and fun learning model will also bring good results in the math learning process.

The use or application of the right learning model will certainly also affect the willingness of students to learn or in this case, the motivation to learn mathematics. Learning models that do not focus too much on the teacher as the center of learning and involve students' activeness in the classroom can help students understand the mathematics material being taught. One of the learning models that involves students' activeness is cooperative learning. This is in line with research conducted by (Eka Pratiwi & Sukanti, 2018) which found that there was a significant difference in student learning outcomes after applying a cooperative learning model of around 37.80%. The learning model that will be used in this study is the STAD (Student Teams-Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model. According to (Darmuki et al., 2017) STAD is a learning model that involves academic information uses verbal or text presentations, divides students heterogeneously into 4-5 people, and uses quiz procedures. In schools, many factors trigger the emergence of less pleasant learning and this can result in learning motivation in students.

From the results of observations at Muhamadiyah 2 Mlati Junior High School, it appears that students show different learning motivations, some are high, medium, and low. This can be proven through observations made by the author through interviews with mathematics teachers. Some of them are the existence of several other



activities carried out by students, namely during class time, students are often rowdy, talking to their classmates, doing other things when the teacher teaches and even students sometimes cheat when given assignments. Based on the problems presented above, the researcher is interested in further research related to the effect of the STAD (Student Teams Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model on motivation to learn mathematics in Muhamadiyah 2 Mlati Yogyakarta Junior High School students.

## Method

This research is quasi-experimental. The experimental research method is one part of the quantitative research method. According (Arikunto, 2019) research methods are the main methods used by researchers to achieve goals and find answers to the problems posed. The design used in this research is pre-experiment (non-designs), because there are still external variables that influence the formation of the dependent variable, while the form of the design is "pre-test and post-test one group design". In this study, the experimental method was used to determine the effect of applying the STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) learning model in Mathematics subjects and the design used in the pre-test and post-test treatment

Table 1. Research Design

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experiment	$O_1$	X	$O_2$

Description:

E : Experimental group

$O_2$  : Posttest in the form of a questionnaire

$O_1$  : Pretest in the form of a questionnaire

X : STAD model treatment

This research was conducted in class VII of Muhamadiyah 2 Mlati Junior High School Yogyakarta in the 2022/2023 academic year. The time of this research will be carried out in March 2023. The population used is all students of class VII A SMP Muhamadiyah 2 Mlati Yogyakarta with a total of 26 people a total of 16 female students and a total of 10 male students. Sample determination was carried out using cluster random sampling, which is a sampling technique based on certain groups rather than individuals. Through this technique, it can be determined which class will be the sample, where the class is designated as the experimental class, namely class VII A which will be taught with the STAD-type cooperative learning model.

The technique used in the data collection process is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted at the time before the treatment was given called (the pretest) and at the time after the students finished being treated or called (the posttest). The questionnaire used is to carve out students' math learning motivation.

The variables contained in this study are independent variables and dependent variables. The independent variable in this study is the STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model,

which is seen to have an effect or not on the dependent variable, namely the students' mathematics learning motivation. The following is a reference table for the criteria for determining the level of mathematics learning motivation used in this study.

Table 2. Percentage Criteria for Learning Motivation

Percentage	Criteria
25% - 40%	Very Weak
40% - 55%	Weak
55% - 70%	Fair
70% - 85%	Fairly Strong
85% - 100%	Strong

Source : (Marlis, 2015)

The math learning motivation questionnaire used and given to students has previously been validated. The data collection techniques or methods of this study are questionnaires and documentation. Documentation to complement existing data. Therefore, some are very important at the time of data collection, namely, researchers collect such as photos and questionnaire results from students. Furthermore, a questionnaire is a data collection technique that is done by giving a set of questions or written statements to respondents to answer (Sugiharto et al., 2018). This instrument is distributed before and after the implementation of the learning process ends and the data obtained were analyzed through three stages, namely the data description stage, the analysis requirement test stage, and the hypothesis testing stage.

## Results

The pretest and posttest data can be presented in the following table:

Table 3. Descriptive Data Analysis Results

Descriptive Data Analysis	Pre-test	Post-test
Highest Score	98	112
Lowest Score	60	78
Number of Samples (n)	26	26
Average (X)	79,8846	90,8846
Percentage	62,8571	75,04
Description Motivation	Fair	Strong

Based on the table above, it can be seen that numerically the average motivation to learn the mathematics of students before being given treatment is 79.8846 with a percentage of 62.8571 which can be categorized as sufficient motivation to learn the mathematics of students, and if seen in the posttest table or after being given

treatment using the STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model, the average is 90.8846 and the percentage is 75.04 with the predetermined category of strong or high mathematics learning motivation. By only looking numerically, it cannot prove that there is an effect of the STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model on students' mathematics learning motivation, therefore an inferential analysis is carried out so that the results obtained are truly accurate.

### Analysis Prerequisite Test

#### *Normality test*

The normality test aims to determine whether the data from each variable has a normal distribution or not. Based on the normality calculation test using the Shapiro-Wilk test with the provisions if  $p > 0.05$  which means that the data is normally distributed but otherwise if  $p < 0.05$ , the data is not normally distributed.

Table 4. Normality Test of Mathematics Learning Motivation of Students

Data	Sig.	Ditribution
Mathematics Learning Motivation	Pre-test	0,269
	Post-test	0,185
		Normal

Based on the table above, shows that the mathematics learning motivation of students in class VII A before being given treatment shows a value of 0.269 which indicates that the pretest is normal, as well as the post-test learning motivation questionnaire value shows a significance value of 0.185 so that the data is normally distributed.

#### *Homogeneity Test*

The homogeneity test is intended to show that two or more groups of sample data come from populations that have the same variance. Homogeneity is met if the sig value is 0.05, then the variance of each sample is the same (homogeneous). Conversely, if the significance obtained  $< 0.05$ , then the variance of each sample is not the same (not homogeneous). With the help of SPSS statistical data processing computer software. Obtained homogeneous test results are shown in the following table:

Table 5. Homogeneity Test Results Variance

Leveme Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.900	1	50	.347

Based on the results of the homogeneity of variance test output using the Levene test, the table above shows that the results of the population variance homogeneity test obtained a value of  $p = 0.347$  where  $p > \alpha$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$  can be stated that the population variance is the same (homogeneous).

### *Hypothesis test*

To see whether or not the effect of the learning model is significant on students' motivation to learn mathematics, hypothesis testing can be done. Hypothesis testing is carried out to answer research questions that were previously still estimates or conjectures. Hypothesis testing in this study was carried out using the paired sample t-test. The paired sample t-test test is used to determine whether the independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable. The calculation of the paired sample t-test test in this study used the help of the SPSS program. The results of the paired sample t-test are:

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

		t	Df	
Pair 1	<i>Pretest-Post test</i>	-4.452	25	.000

Based on the results of the paired sample t-test above, it is known that the sig value. (2- tailed) of 0.000. By the decision-making rules in the paired sample T-test test the sig value. (2-tailed)  $<0.05$  or  $0.000 <0.05$ , it can be concluded that the hypothesis is rejected and is accepted because there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test learning motivation. So, it can be concluded that there is an effect of using the STAD type cooperative learning model on the motivation to learn mathematics in class VII A students at Muhammadiyah 2 Mlati Junior High School, Sleman Yogyakarta.

### **Discussion**

Based on the results of data analysis obtained by pre-experimental methods with the one-group pretest posttest design, it can be seen that there are changes in students' motivation to learn mathematics between the Pre-test and Post-test in the class given the treatment. The Learning Process after being given treatment, namely using the STAD type cooperative learning model, in this case, the researcher took class VII A as the experimental class. This class has a total of 26 students consisting of 10 boys and 16 girls. As explained by (Kagan, 2009) cooperative learning is learning in the form of sharing information and experiences, responding to each other, and communicating with each other. In addition, according to (Maulana & Akbar, 2017) through group learning, students can train and get used to helping each other and sharing responsibilities, students also learn and practice interaction or socialization among their groupmates, various experiences and knowledge, learn to do and say, foster competition, and realize the strengths and weaknesses of each. At the first meeting, a pretest was conducted by giving a questionnaire of motivation to learn mathematics, then the next meeting began learning with the STAD-type cooperative learning model for circle material. Students were asked to discuss the circle material in this case through student worksheets, discussing by interacting with each other in groups by determining heterogeneous groups.

The determination of the group is also supported by the opinion conveyed (Le et al., 2018) that collaborative skills are also a person's ability to engage in activities related to others, appreciate relationships, and work in groups to achieve the desired goals together. His research (Wulandari, 2022) revealed that the STAD-type cooperative learning model is how students work in groups so that students can foster the willingness to work together, think critically, be motivated, and be responsible for the group. Based on the explanation above, the STAD model is more concerned with the participation or activeness of students in the mathematics learning process, in this case, when discussing and presenting the assigned tasks.

Giving a questionnaire of students' motivation to learn mathematics for the post-test was carried out at the last meeting, after being given a final questionnaire related to motivation to learn mathematics, the data was analyzed by the method used. Based on the results of data analysis regarding the comparison of statistical values, it shows that the number of samples is 26 people, the pretest questionnaire score for the lowest score is 60 the highest score is 90 and the post-test score for the lowest score is 78 and the highest score is 112. In addition, the average pretest score was 79.8846 the average post-test score was 90.8846 and the percentage based on the assessment of the mathematics learning motivation questionnaire at the time of the pre-test was 62.8571% while in the post-test questionnaire results, namely after being given treatment using the STAD (Student Teams Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model of 75.04%. This shows that there is a significant difference between the initial learning motivation and after treatment.

Based on the results of the hypothesis test calculation using the paired sample t-test, it is also known that the sig. (2-tailed) of 0.000. By the decision-making rules in the paired sample t-test test the sig. (2-tailed)  $< 0.05$  or  $0.000 < 0.05$ , this shows that there is an influence in the use of the STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model on math learning motivation, (Ngalimun, 2018) which can increase the ability of students to use the information and the ability to learn abstract to be real (real). The calculation of the hypothesis test above also shows that the STAD-type cooperative learning model contributes to or positively influences math learning motivation by 75.04%. While the rest is influenced by other factors not discussed in this study.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion, it is concluded that the cooperative learning model type STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) has a positive and significant effect on the motivation to learn mathematics circle material in class VIII A students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Mlati, Yogyakarta City. This can be seen from the results of the t-test, namely the value ( $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < \text{level of significance} = 0.05$ ). This shows that there is a positive influence on the use of the STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model on math learning motivation. In addition, the average value of the pretest was 79.8846 the average post-test was 90.8846 and the percentage based on the assessment of the mathematics learning motivation questionnaire at the time of the pre-test was 62.8571% while in the post-test questionnaire

results, namely after being given treatment using the STAD (Student Teams Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model of 75.04%. This shows that there is a significant difference between the initial learning motivation and after being given treatment and it can be concluded that the STAD-type cooperative learning model has an effect on students' mathematics learning motivation, but based on these figures, the rest is influenced by other factors not discussed in this study.

## Recommendations

In the STAD-type cooperative learning model in mathematics lessons, it is expected that students can develop ideas, ideas, creativity, and cooperation between peers in the classroom, to increase motivation to learn mathematics and other things such as learning outcomes and mathematics learning achievement. For educators, the STAD (Student Team Achievement Division) type cooperative learning model can be used as an alternative to learning mathematics. Motivation to learn mathematics is also not only influenced by one factor but by many factors, therefore for future researchers it is recommended that they examine other factors besides the STAD learning model.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the organization that provided financial support for this research, The Indonesia Endowment Funds for Education (LPDP).

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## Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Academic Writing: How Not to Cross the Line

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**Abstract:** The emergence of AI-driven writing tools has assisted students in writing academic papers. Although the positive benefits of these tools have been acknowledged, concerns regarding ethics emerge. This research is a qualitative study aiming to explore university students' perspectives on the use of AI tools for academic writing. This study sought to answer the following research questions: What are the reasons for using AI tools in academic writing?; What are some ethical concerns related to using AI in academic writing? In what instances is AI reliable to use for academic writing? This study involved ten university students, and each participant was interviewed. The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results revealed that the main reasons for using AI tools were to speed up the writing process, overcome writer's block, and enhance writing quality. Some ethical concerns about using these AI tools covered issues related to plagiarism, information accuracy, maintaining originality, and balancing AI's role in writing. The participants found these AI tools reliable for generating ideas, outlining, editing, and proofreading. However, writers should navigate reputable journals for accurate information, as these tools mostly do not have access to credible resources. This study concluded that despite the assistance of AI tools, writers should maintain control, uphold ethical standards and ensure the credibility of the information they incorporate in their scholarly work.

Keywords: academic writing, ethics, artificial intelligence, AI-driven writing tools

**Citation:** Afifah. (2024). Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Academic Writing: How Not to Cross the Line. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 197-207), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Academic writing is an essential component of higher education. It serves as the primary mode through which students demonstrate their understanding of complex concepts and theories. Further, students explore knowledge in their discipline and learn to meet the standard of being a scholar through academic writing practices (Yuvayapan and Bilginer, 2020). When engaging in academic writing, students are expected to exercise their critical thinking and learn to articulate ideas with strong argumentation. Unfortunately, the journey towards composing academic work often proves to be a daunting challenge for students.

Gupta et al. (2022) investigated several areas of difficulty in academic writing. The result of their study elucidated four common challenges: the writing process, idea and content development, use of grammar,

vocabulary, and writing organization. Students express that the most difficult one is the writing process itself. Writing academic papers is more than just putting ideas into words. It involves a complex process: sorting and analyzing large volumes of text to synthesize new ideas. Students are expected to write something new from what has been known in the literature. Every piece of written information should also be based on facts; students cannot state their opinion without strong evidence.

Writing a paper is even more challenging when students must write in a foreign language. This is due to the fact that many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students do not have sufficient proficiency in writing. Students may experience cognitive stress as they need to translate ideas from their native language to a foreign language (Gayed et al., 2022). Then, they should ensure their sentences are mistake-free and coherent and use linguistic conventions. Consequently, the language barrier adds to students' difficulties when composing an academic paper.

As technology advances, many AI tools emerge and provide assistance to ease the writing process. AI tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly have been significantly enhancing writing quality due to their ability to check grammar and generate text and feedback (Khalifa and Albadawy, 2024). Other AI writing tools like Connected Paper and Semantic Scholar help students find related references on the topic effortlessly. The use of AI for academic writing is also associated with better efficiency, consistency, writing style, and language level/word choice (Bahammam et al., 2023). In addition, a prior study by Song and Song (2023) has also shown that when used in instruction, AI enhanced students' proficiency in writing organization, coherence, vocabulary and grammar.

Although AI offers promising benefits, this technology also has downsides that may threaten the academic world. AI use for writing might lead to overreliance and loss of creativity (Bahammam et al., 2023). Students might degrade their cognitive ability as they become lazier in using their own critical thinking and analysis skills while writing. In addition, AI use in academic writing is also linked to issues like poor research paper quality, plagiarism, and other ethical issues (AlZaabi et al., 2023). However, AI tools for writing are growing in number, and it is more likely that people will continue to utilize them. It then becomes necessary to look at how students engage with these tools and investigate whether they are truly helpful in academic writing practices.

Therefore, three research questions framed this study:

- (1). What are the reasons for using AI tools for academic writing?
- (2). What are some ethical concerns related to using AI for academic writing?
- (3.) In what instances is AI reliable for academic writing?

## **Method**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. It aims to describe a phenomenon and its

characteristics from the viewpoints of those who experience it (Nassaji, 2015; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The participants of this research were 10 EFL graduate students from Indonesia who were familiar with AI writing tools. The data was obtained through a semi-structured interview, a data collection method that includes predetermined closed and open-ended questions and is also accompanied by several follow-up questions (Adam, 2015). The interview was done with each participant for around 30 minutes per session. The interview was recorded and transcribed using an online transcription tool. The transcript was further analyzed with thematic analysis, which included several steps: 1. familiarizing with the data, 2. Generating initial codes, 3. Searching for themes, 4. Reviewing themes, 5. Defining themes, and 6. Writing up (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

## Results

The findings of this study are presented according to the three research questions.

### **RQ1: What are the reasons for using AI tools for academic writing?**

Regarding the reasons for using AI writing tools, there were three themes generated: 1. To speed up the writing process, 2. To overcome writer's block, and 3. To enhance writing quality.

#### *1. Speed up the writing process.*

Students expressed that they mainly use AI to shorten the time needed to write. They stated that AI can help them finish the overloaded tasks that must be turned in around the same due date.

*"I use AI tools because it helps me when I have many assignments to submit at the same time" S3.*

Another student said AI cut her time to decide and have a clear outline of what to write and what to put on the paper.

*"The reason why I am using AI is because I need to have a faster way to reach a fixed concept before writing my articles." S9*

#### *2. Overcome writer's block*

Participants highlighted that they use AI when they experience writer's block, the feeling of not knowing what to write or how to continue writing.

*"I mostly use AI when I don't know what I will write in my paper." S2*

*"I usually use them when I feel struggled" S4*

These excerpts suggest that AI can help them overcome the common obstacles encountered while writing academic papers.

### 3. Enhance writing quality

As the participants are EFL students, they also experience some language barriers. Therefore, another thing that motivates them to use AI writing tools is to improve their writing quality.

*“I use AI only as tools to enhance my writing” S4.*

*“To help me make a good writing. It can help me to paraphrase sentences and make it more academic writing.” S2*

Student 2 conveyed that she utilized AI to make her work sound 'more academic'. EFL students may have limited knowledge of more advanced words commonly used for academic writing. Therefore, AI can help them choose better wording that is appropriate for their paper.

In addition to better wording, another student mentioned that AI tools can also improve writing organization and grammar.

*“ChatGPT helps me in improving the quality of my paper, for example, my paper can be more organized, the grammar is getting better” S7.*

Student 5 also acknowledges that AI improves the quality of his writing but in other aspects rather than content quality.

*“it is improving in relation to the quality of my writing. But it is not really helpful in relation to improving my content writing.” S5*

## **RQ 2: What are some ethical concerns related to using AI for academic writing?**

Four themes were identified based on the data obtained regarding the ethical concerns of using AI for writing academic works.

### 1. Plagiarism

Students worry that content generated by AI may contain plagiarism. It might be because AI cannot provide a link to the source of the information.

*"The challenge is that the content produced by the AI is not original, so it can cause plagiarism" S8.*

In addition, students are also afraid that the content will be detected as plagiarism when checked in the plagiarism checker.

*"sometimes I am worried about the detection of plagiarism." S3*

## *2. Information Accuracy*

Participant highlighted that when asked several questions/prompts, AI may not fully understand the context. As a result, the content generated might not be as they expected.

*"I have some concerns, especially related to its ability in understanding the context. I need to reread the suggestion made by the AI and evaluate whether the information has been as what I am looking for." S1*

## *3. Maintaining originality*

Participant articulated a common concern regarding using AI tools in academic writing, expressing apprehension about the authenticity of their writing when utilizing such technologies.

*"The original writing is my dilemmas when I use this AI. Because I feel like it's not my pure writing." S10*

However, students are also aware of taking ownership of the paper by expressing their original thinking, putting their voices on it, and demonstrating critical thinking while using AI for writing.

*"By putting my own thoughts." S5*

*"at the writing process, the author has a responsibility to keep their authentic voice." S2*

*"Well, I have to use my critical thinking when writing with AI." S9*

Students believe that by doing these things, they could maintain the originality of their writing.

## *4. Balancing AI's role in writing*

I can automatize many tasks and generate text in a very short time. It must be tempting for students to rely solely on the text produced by AI, as acknowledged by student 9.

*“It is challenging to make sure that the AI does not dominate the result of our writing.” S9*

Nevertheless, students pointed out to keep in mind that this technology is here only to help, not to replace their overall effort.

*“it's important to remember that they are meant to assist, not replace my own writing.” S4*

*“By using AI as a tool not as a writer. Utilize them to enhance your content, provide suggestions, and streamline the writing process, but always maintain ownership of the content.” S1*

Based on the above excerpt, the student also emphasizes using AI for things other than writing the main content or ideas of the paper.

### **RQ3: In what instances is AI reliable for academic writing?**

This section categorized the data into two themes: reliable and not reliable. The first theme generates four subthemes, while the second has two.

#### *1. Reliable*

##### *a. Generating ideas*

Most participants expressed that AI assisted them from the very beginning of the writing process in finding ideas on what to write.

*“AI have been helpful in generating ideas and expanding my thinking process” S4.*

*“AI tools help me in generating the idea of my writing” S3.*

Further, student 3 explained that AI can be a brainstorming platform, giving her initial knowledge on the topic to write.

*“. I usually use AI to look for some references and wider view about a problem or topic to work on.”*

*S6*

##### *b. Outlining*

Once participants know the topic to work on, AI can be used to write a comprehensive outline so that they will have clear goals on what to write in detail.

*“AI tools help me in creating structured outlines by suggesting me the main sections, subsections, and key points to include in each part of the paper. also it helps me to organize my thoughts and ensures a logical flow of information in my paper.” S10*

As student 10 stated, AI can build a very structured outline. Thus, it also helps her to organize her ideas so the paper will have a logical flow.

c. Editing and proofreading

Participants also use AI to find and correct sentence errors, particularly grammatical errors.

*“My writing is simple sentence, and the AI helps me to find advance vocabulary. For grammatical also, it helps me to correct my error sentence.” S9*

*“I use AI to grammar check my writing” S7.*

*“I use AI as grammar checker to cut the time” S5.*

2. Not Reliable

a. Critical Analysis

Student 10 was reluctant to use AI for tasks requiring critical thinking and analytical reasoning. It suggested that AI is limited in replicating the complex cognitive processes involved in such tasks.

*“I don't use AI in content creation especially for critical analysis and original thinking.” S10*

b. Finding Credible resources

A participant stated that using AI is fine for getting the general background of the topic. However, students need to manually search for accurate information from credible resources.

*“I use AI when I need big pictures in relation to imagining what to write, but to expand my writing, I will go to credible references.” S3*

Student 10 also raised concerns about the validity of information in the AI-generated content.

*“AI may provide good answers to our prompts. However, it cannot link to the original sources. I am afraid the text is not valid”, S10.*

Therefore, it is highly recommended that students go to credible search engines or digital libraries to find references.



## Discussion

This study revealed that the main reason students go to AI when writing academic papers is to cut the writing time. Participants acknowledged that writing takes a lot of time, and AI helps speed it up. For instance, students need prior knowledge on the topic they plan to write. Previously, students should go to search engines and read many articles to gain an understanding of the topic. AI can provide and highlight essential information so students can easily grasp the background knowledge. Then another common challenge students face is finding ideas on what to write and what to include in their papers. This technology can tell and suggest writing outlines with each detail, even at the subtopic level. It is safe to say that AI saves time, particularly in the pre-writing process, which often becomes the longest part of writing.

Another important point is that AI is very good for brainstorming. Whenever students feel stuck or struggle to continue writing, they can always ask anything to AI. From trivial matters to questions related to the problem, they are facing. This way, AI is a go-to assistant ready to overcome students' writer's blocks. Participants also mentioned that AI has helped improve their writing quality, as it can be used as a grammar checker, paraphraser, and writing evaluation tool. It is beneficial for writers who are not native users of the language as they should no longer worry about sentence mistakes. Participants in this study mentioned these three points as the reasons for using AI for academic writing. Concurrently, they acknowledged that AI is beneficial, which also aligns with previous studies: cutting the time needed to write (Mondal and Mondal, 2023), solving writer's block (Washington, 2023), and improving writing quality (Marzuki et al., 2023).

Several concerns related to AI use emerged from the participants. Firstly, they mentioned about the plagiarism. Students think that AI, particularly generative AI like ChatGPT, does not produce original content as it only generates text without mentioning citations or providing resources. Even when ChatGPT generates text with citations, most of the citations included are inaccurate (Kacena et al., 2024). It is indeed a threat as the AI may fail to cite properly. This finding supports a previous study by Francke and Alexander (2019) that found that AI can proliferate plagiarism in higher education.

Nevertheless, there have been several generative AIs, like perplexity and Jenni AI, which have the ability to provide citations to the content generated. These tools might produce better and more accurate information compared to ChatGPT as they put citations that refer to the original source. In addition, students also expressed that they are worried if their paper is detected using AI with AI detectors. However, such detectors might be beneficial as a counterbalance to the generative AI use. Students may become more aware of using AI responsibly as they do not want their work identified as having a higher percentage of text generated by AI.

Another issue is related to the accuracy of information from the generated text. When given instructions or prompts, AI sometimes does not fully understand the context and produces content which is not as expected. As

largely known, generative AI is pre-trained with large amounts of information freely accessible on the internet, and the content generated will be based only on the pre-trained data. According to Salvagno et al. (2023), ensuring the generated text contains accurate and up-to-date information is difficult. There can also be risks of biases, societal stereotypes, and discrimination in the content produced. Again, AI might be good for brainstorming and understanding general knowledge on a certain topic. However, writers are suggested to go to credible sources for more accurate information.

Students also expressed concerns about balancing the role of AI and their efforts in composing academic work. However, as the participants are graduate students, they have the responsibility to take ownership of the writing. They acknowledge that AI is very helpful, but it is here only to assist. However, for undergraduate students still honing their academic skills, the potential pitfalls of overreliance on AI loom larger. To address this, institutions should have better regulations to ensure these AI tools will not overpower students.

AI tools are varied and can be used for many stages of writing. This study found that AI is particularly helpful for idea generation, outlining, editing, and proofreading. The findings are the same as previous work by Khalifa and Albadawy (2024), suggesting that AI is a multipurpose tool for writing. Unfortunately, AI tools like ChatGPT are unable to do tasks requiring critical analysis and reasoning. It is also unreliable for literature search as it often generates inaccurate information (Francke and Alexander, 2019). Users can opt for AI tools that include citations with direct links to the resources so they can see the sources. Some AI-powered websites, like Connected Paper and Semantic Scholar, are also specifically for literature searches. Users should use such tools or manually find references in credible academic databases.

## **Conclusion**

This study delves into the motivations driving students' adoption of AI tools for academic writing. Participants emphasized how AI can quickly complete tasks like giving background information on certain topics and writing and structuring outlines, reducing the time needed for writing a paper. Furthermore, AI shows promise as a trustworthy tool for overcoming writer's block and improving writing quality, which is especially helpful for students learning to write academic work. It can be used for ideation, outlining, and editing processes. However, its limitations become apparent when doing tasks that require critical analysis or involve robust literature review. There also come worries about possible plagiarism issues arising from generative AI and the dependability and accuracy of AI-generated content. These results highlight the necessity of a balanced integration of AI, encouraging students to be responsible for maintaining academic integrity while utilizing AI as a helpful tool.

## **Recommendations**

This study only involved a small sample size and was conducted on EFL students. Consequently, the findings of

this study might not apply to other contexts in general. Further studies may include more participants from diverse backgrounds so that the findings can represent many disciplines.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to express gratitude to Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) for funding this research.


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## The Language Between the Geological Structure and The Chemical Significance: An Interlinguistic Approach

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**Abstract:** As scientific advancements continue, researchers increasingly confirm the interconnectedness of various scientific disciplines. This has led to the development of interdisciplinary studies within the realm of science and knowledge. Among the diverse subjects explored by researchers, language stands out prominently. It has been thoroughly examined from multiple perspectives including historical, social, philosophical, linguistic, cognitive, psychological, cultural, and civilizational angles. These studies concluded with results of high scientific value, which led to the development of linguistic research on the one hand, and methods of scientific and systematic thinking on the other hand. In this paper, the researchers believe that the subject of language has a close relationship with important vital fields like geology and chemistry due to the epistemological rapprochement that exists between the two fields in addition to linguistic thinking, where the subject is addressed - with a descriptive and analytical approach - in three points: **1<sup>st</sup>**. Language is viewed from a panoramic point of view, and its position in human life is different from the classical approach that stands at its known functions. **2<sup>nd</sup>**. approaching the concept of language from the perspective of geology, by projecting several geological concepts on language levels. **3<sup>rd</sup>**. approaching language from the perspective of chemistry, through a comparison between chemical elements and the interactions that occur between them, and between phonetic, morphological, and semantic elements and their effects during the verbal process.

**Keywords:** Language, structure, geology, chemistry, semantics, interaction

**Citation:** Bouabdallah, L., Karmastaji, F., & Hassen, U. (2024). The Language Between the Geological Structure and The Chemical Significance: -An Interlinguistic Approach-. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 208-222), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The most important feature that distinguishes this era is scientifically dealing with various issues through choosing the methodology rigorously, objectivity in description, comparison, and discussion, precision in controlling terminology and striving through the study of human, social, and natural phenomena to find solutions to problems resulting from observation and contemplation. One of those prominent issues is language, as it is one of the phenomena that linguists have sought to apply such rigor, objective, and accurate methodology. The obvious evidence for that is the emergence of several linguistic schools since the descriptive structural school, which was pioneered by de Saussure in the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, along with the theories and schools that followed. Some of them aimed to focus on the functions performed by the phonological elements within speech chains which is the phonological or functional school, and some scholars considered - in the study of language - the systems it contains, through a proposal that relies on abstraction and logical methods of reasoning, description, and conclusion. Some linguists viewed language as behavior, governed by the equation: “stimulus and response”, while some of those schools dealt with the transformations that enter into the processes of synthesis of linguistic elements. Among the linguistic trends were what was considered the innate predisposition that the speaker possesses, and the mental processes that occur according to the speaker’s competence and linguistic ability to act in language in its various contexts and syntactic structures, which is reflected in its effective performance to achieve its rhetorical and communicative purposes.

If each of these schools had founders, pioneers, followers, foundations, goals, and special linguistic concepts, then two basic things should be noted:

- 1) Every school was established on the relics of the previous school through the criticism it presented, that the study of linguistic phenomena did not meet scientific requirements which satisfied the cognitive insight that the language student expects.
- 2) The intellect of each school was keeping pace with the prevailing intellect in some areas of the human sciences such as structural, functional, and behavioral theory which appeared simultaneously with those that appeared in psychology and sociology, which indicates the cognitive communication between these sciences and others. This paved the way for later steps to study each science separately and reconnecting bridges between sciences, thus appeared the concept of inter-sciences in which the efforts of its scientists combine to study a multi-faceted subject with complementarity and openness.

## Research Problem

The examples we have given on the interconnection that exists between the human sciences based on the study of the subject of language opens the door wide for us to consider linking language to fields that seem at first glance unrelated in their subject matter, concepts, methods, and goals (other than the humanities). We have shown that this is possible by describing language as a subject to be studied in linguistics, sociology,

psychology, philosophy, and other fields, but here we mean the relationship of the subject of language to natural sciences, specifically geology and chemistry which is what this research aims to confirm by trying to answer the following basic research question:

- If structure and significance are among the most prominent linguistic issues addressed by modern linguistics in its branches (most notably structural linguistics, descriptive linguistics, and significance); can they be related to the fields of geology and chemistry respectively?

This fundamental question is divided into two sub-questions:

- 1 - How can the concept of “structure” and its related linguistic elements be linked to geological concepts?
- 2 - What are the aspects of the relationship between language and chemistry, specifically at the semantic level?

These questions will be answered according to the following plan:

*Outline*

Preface: Sciences and Interpersonal Spirituality

Topic 1: Language and its Role in Human Life.

Topic 2: The Geological Structure of Language.

Topic 3: Language and the Chemistry of Significance

*Problem of the Research:*

The significance of the study is related to the fact that it deals with two of the most prominent topics in the field of linguistics: “structure” and “significance”, and links them to two scientific fields: “geology” and “chemistry”. Thus, it reflects the vision of cognitive integration that exists between the various sciences and knowledge to establish cognitive bridges between their systems functionally and epistemologically and fill the existing gap and the isolationist position witnessed in linguistic studies. Accordingly, the research process becomes three-dimensional, as in Figure (1).

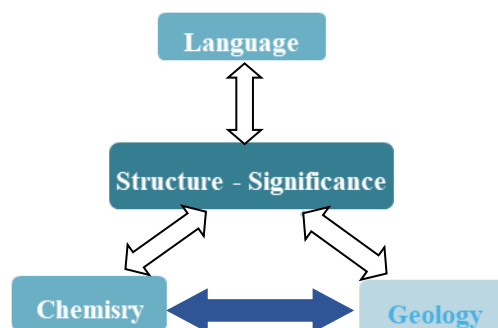


Figure 1. The relationship of significance and structure to geology and chemistry

*Research Objective*



- Considering the terms “structure” and “significance” as two of the topics addressed by linguists, on which theories were based and linguistic schools were laid which contributed to the development of linguistic research.
- Expanding the scope of language in its structural and significance dimensions to present them on an inter-level, highlighting its template for integration with various natural and cosmic sciences and making them available to researchers in natural and cosmic scientific fields.
- Highlighting the importance of the cognitive openness of humanities to the sciences - in general - and linguistic thinking - in particular - in linking the prevailing concepts in language studies to all fields concerned with studying issues of nature and the universe.
- Highlighting the relationship between the concept of structure and significance and the field of geology and chemistry

### *Study Approach and Tools*

The nature of the subject requires reliance on the descriptive and analytical approach in order to trace the elements relevant to the study of language from an interdisciplinary perspective and their presence in the fields of geology and chemistry by monitoring and describing existing relationships and demonstrating their importance in linguistic and scientific studies in general.

## **Literature Review**

What is common in studies that link linguistic approaches to the fields of geology and chemistry are those related to the fields of terminology or lexicography, which study the use of language in the two fields by addressing their terms within the framework of terminological and lexical systems, analyzing their conceptual elements, tracking them ontologically, comparing their units and the educational methods for teaching each field; to conclude results that are an addition to the field of science itself, at the linguistic (terminological and lexical) and educational levels, at the level of theory and application together.

### **1<sup>st</sup> - Studies related to the field of terminology and lexicography:**

#### *1) Related to chemistry:*

A - Language and the teaching and learning of chemistry, by: Silvija Markic & Peter E. Childs, 2016.

B - Symbolic language in Chemistry- A new look at an old problem, by: J. D. Bradley<sup>1</sup> and E. Steenberg, 2008.

C - Learning at the Symbolic Level, by: Keith S. Taber, 2009.

It is noted that these studies address the issue by linking linguistics to chemistry, in terms of:

#### *1.1 Terms and nomenclature:*

Both sciences use specific terms to describe their phenomena and concepts. In chemistry terms are used to describe chemical elements, compounds, and chemical reactions. Likewise, language uses terms to describe sounds, linguistic structures, and other linguistic phenomena.

### *1.2 Using symbols:*

Chemistry uses symbols and formulas to represent elements, compounds, and reactions. In contrast, language uses symbols such as letters of the phonetic alphabet and other linguistic symbols to represent sounds, linguistic structures, and linguistic phenomena.

### *1.3 Chemical linguistic analysis and studies:*

Studies have examined the relationship between language and chemistry where it is assumed that there is an effect of chemistry on language and human communication. For example, some researchers study the impact of chemicals in food on language and social interactions.

### *1.4 Common scientific applications:*

There are areas in common between language and chemistry, such as medical language which uses chemical terms to describe diseases, treatments and biochemistry which studies chemical processes in biology.

### *2) Related to geology:*

A - English language and usage in geology: a personal compilation, by: Dorothy Helen Rayner, 1982.

B - Language and Earth: Elective affinities between the emerging sciences of linguistics and geology, by: Bernd Naumann Frans Plank, Gottfried Hofbauer, 1992.

C - Employment of Manifest Intertextuality in Geology and Applied Linguistics (Ph. D. Theses): A Social Constructionist Perspective, Nauman Al Amin Ali El Sayed, 2014.

D - Frequency of Linguistico-communicative Features in Scientific Language of Geology, Nosrat Hejazi, Masoumeh Shiri, 2021.

The above studies link language to the field of geology with regard to the terminological aspect and this is represented in:

### *2.1 Using language to name geological terms:*

Language is used to name geological terms such as mountains, rivers, valleys, lakes and other natural places. These names are also used in describing the geological history and geological nature of those areas. Language is

also used in describing natural calamities such as: volcanoes, earthquakes, and others. These terms are also used to explain geological concepts such as: rock formation, paleontology, marine geology formation, etc.

### *2.2 Geology enriches the language:*

Geological phenomena can affect the development of language. For example, natural disasters such as volcanoes and earthquakes may enrich the language with new terms that express those phenomena.

### *2.3 Documentation:*

Geologists also use language as a tool to document new discoveries, results and concepts in the field whether through scientific publications, articles or academic books.

### *2.4 Comparison between applied linguistics and geology:*

As stated in Nauman Al-Sayed's study, which showed that the abundance of intertextual links in applied linguistics and their scarcity in geology is due to the interdisciplinary nature of applied linguistics; the scattered threads must be woven together into a cohesive fabric to build a common spirit between the writer and the reader. In contrast, the objective, linear and cumulative nature of geology largely omits such a need, as a great deal of procedural experience is assumed. Also, while geology has relied on human citations - abandoned phenomena - and non-integral salient citations, applied linguistics has tended to highlight human efficiency through integral citations.

In addition, nomenclature in citation structures in geology is intended to identify the report-based nature of the field while in applied linguistics there has been an emphasis on textual structures and verbal processes. (Nauman, 2014)

### *2<sup>nd</sup> - Studies related to linking the field of language to its elements and levels:*

A - The Geology of Language, by: John Edmund Barss, 1920:

This is obvious in his statement:

"And even if you accuse me of shifting from geology to the navigation of rivers I shall not complain, if only my inconsistency may help to convince you that out of the forbidding rock of an unknown language there may gush living waters, if we are truly athirst for knowledge" (Barss, 1920).

B - Linguistic groups: Geological connections, by: Sanjay Sonawani, 2017:

In which he concluded that:

"The regional Geological factors play a major role in the development of the languages, cultures and general psychological patterns of the people living within the boundaries of specific geological formations."

C - Linguistics as Chemistry: The Substance theory of semantic primes, by: Arnold M. Zwicky, (467-485).

He explained the role of living in specific geological formations in developing the development of languages, cultures, and general psychological patterns, as in his saying:

“The regional Geological factors play a major role in the development of the languages, cultures, and general psychological patterns of the people living within the boundaries of specific geological formations” (Sonawani, 2017).

*Comments on previous studies and the distinction of the current research:*

It seems that most studies have attempted to compare the field of language/linguistics with the fields of geology or chemistry by searching for the common point at the terminological level, which relates primarily to the development of terminology and the comparison between terminological systems which is an issue that can be addressed in all fields, given that terminologies are the key to science (El Massadi, 1989).

Regarding the study of (J.E. Barss), it has a philosophical and literary tendency, while the study of (Sanjay Sonawani), which linked the development of languages and cultures to the geological aspect, is closer to linguistic sociology and cultural sociology.

What this study aims to address is completely or initially different from what the aforementioned studies actually addressed; as the current research considers language in its structure from the perspective of geologists' view of the earth with its layers and divisions, as Claude Lévi-Strauss alluded to in his philosophical theses (researcher s will refer to it later), and its significance is considered as the chemists' view of the reaction that occurs between particles of matter.

## **Preface: Sciences and the inter-spirit**

It has become clear to us from the above that the human sciences represent a mosaic of knowledge and theories, which address topics that concern humans in various fields that solve their psychological and social problems, study their cultural and communication issues and discuss their literary and philosophical perceptions among others. One of the most prominent topics that have an impact on these fields is the issue of “language,” which is considered one of the most complex and important issues in human life.

Despite the different angles of view on this subject, and the diversity of approaches to studying it, modern scientific research has recorded an unparalleled accumulation of knowledge that has revealed the most subtle elements contained in language as a psychological, social, and cultural phenomenon which has its effects on the natural and material aspects. It also monitors all cognitive processes during the processes of linguistic communication and the pragmatic issues that it faces which constitutes a system of interconnected and

interrelated concepts in its essence, so this was one of the aspects of interconnection that exists within the fields of the human sciences, which we call Interdisciplinary fields.

The reality is that interdisciplinary fields are those bridges connecting one field to another, linking the unlinkable. So, we are talking about a connection between sciences that appear at first glance to be separate in their relationship, but the structural spirit that exists between them makes those sciences - with their multiplicity of topics - appear as one science, because ultimately, they fulfill the needs of humanity in every time and place without exception.

Perhaps this is why history records the interest of a number of scholars in previous eras and even currently, in more than one field, as is the case with Ibn Sina who was interested in medicine with all its branches and also in astronomy, psychology, philosophy, ethics, mathematics, astronomy, poetry, music, and so on. While Al-Biruni was interested in astronomy, geography, arithmetic, history, philosophy, culture, pharmacy, and others. In our time, we find Noam Chomsky's interests - for example - related to linguistics, grammar, psychology, philosophy, epistemology, and politics.

In addition to the terminological overlap between the concepts of these sciences, we often find the same terms (nomenclature) in more than one science, even though we differentiate between their concepts with definitions that include different characteristics, and sometimes this takes on a formal character.

The benefit of this epistemological openness in diverse sciences lies in raising the level of cognitive awareness in understanding natural, human, and cosmic phenomena, and transferring thought from one cognitive system to another in a way that confirms these systems an integrated structure reflecting human thought that has mastered the link between them.

We are then faced with a descriptive concept - which we borrow from linguistics - the systems of those sciences that come together within a cognitive entity. We can call it the "cognitive structure" which differs from the cognitive structures inherent in the human mind. Each knowledge of that cognitive entity can represent a cognitive element that falls within a harmonious structural context which is similar to the elements that make up the structure of a language.

Based on this, the distinction that most researchers make between sciences and disciplines is purely methodological, with organizational, functional, educational, and pedagogical motivations, and cannot, under any circumstances, be an intentional epistemic rupture.

### **1<sup>st</sup> requirement: Language and its role in human life:**

The role of language is what linguists and communication scholars intended when they addressed the topic of language functions. They initially stated that the basic and pivotal function of language is the communicative

function. Then those functions branched out and Jakobson mentioned the six famous functions which Louis Hébert summarizes in the following table:

Table 1. "Factors of communication and functions of language"

Function	Source Factor	Target Factor	Target factor and function no.
Referential	Message	Context	1
Emotive	Message	Addressee	2
Conative	Message	Addressee	3
Phatic	Message	Contact	4
Metalingual	Message	Code	5
Poetic	Message	Message	6

(Hébert, 2011)

As mentioned, Michael Halliday defined these functions as follows:

**1 - Instrumental Function:** It means using language to obtain material things, such as food and drink, and is summarized by the phrase: (I want).

**2 - Regulatory Function:** Language is used to issue orders to others and direct their behavior and is summarized by the phrase: "Do as I tell you".

**3 - Interpersonal Function:** Using language to exchange feelings and ideas between an individual and others, summarized by the phrase: "Me and you".

**4 - Personal Function:** The use of language to express one's feelings and thoughts, and Halliday summarizes it in the phrase "I come here".

**5 - Heuristic Function:** Using language to inquire about the causes of phenomena, and the desire to learn from them, and summarizing them in the phrase: "Tell me why".

**6 - Imaginative Function:** Using language to express imaginations and perceptions of his own creativity, even if they do not match reality, and summarizing them in the phrase: "Let us pretend".

**7- Representational function:** Using language to represent ideas and information and communicate them to others, summarizing them in the phrase: "I have got something to tell you".

**8 - Language manipulation function (Play function):** It means playing with the language and building words from it, even if they are meaningless, and trying to exploit all the capabilities of the language system, summing it up in the phrase: (Billy Pilly) (Al-Munizel, 2020)

**9 - Ritual function:** Using language to define the group's personality, express behaviors within it, and summarize them in the phrase "How do you do?".

These functions, no matter how numerous and different they are, indicate the urgent need for language in all human life. Indeed it can be said that the field of research into the functionality of language can be expanded depending on the diversity of linguistic research and the development of human thought. Accordingly, the function that emerges from this study is the collaborative function and we summarize it similar to what Halliday

did in the phrase: “Let us think and research,” as it represents a comprehensive tool for thinking and research in all areas of knowledge that concern humans. It is a tool for linguistic thinking and research in the natural sciences.

*2<sup>nd</sup> requirement: the geological structure of language*

Structure is: “those concepts and procedural tools that are used to know the characteristics and laws of the typical structure underlying natural phenomena” (Hobbs B.E, 1), and this indicates that its concept can be applied to the field of linguistic study and other scientific fields, and based on this Structuralism appeared in several scientific branches, including:

- Anthropological structuralism
- Social structuralism
- Structural functionalism
- Psychological Structuralism
- Philosophical structuralism
- Formative structuralism
- Structural geology

It is concerned with studying the elements that make up phenomena without considering factors external to them.

*I - Structure according to linguists:*

When defining the term "structure", linguists believe that: "Structures are determined by a set of relationships between elements".

They also believe that structure is an image and form that can be applied to any substance or phenomenon. Abdelrahman Al-Hajj Saleh explains all of this further by saying: “The search for the structure of a thing is the search for the elements from which it is composed and the standards upon which these elements are composed”. (Haj Saleh)

Accordingly, we can consider all the elements that constitute the language, which fall within the relationships between them, as structural elements, and the types of linguistic structures can be limited to:

- Phonetic structure
- Phonetic structure
- Phonetic structure
- Syntactical structure
- Lexical structure
- Semantical structure



## *II - The Structure in geology*

Structural geology means: “The study of the three-dimensional distribution of rock units in relation to their rupture histories”.

“Structure” is defined by geologists as: “rock is the spatial and geometric configuration of all the elements that make it up.”

They have types of it, including:

- Initial structure
- Shape structure
- Penetrating structure

Through the comparison between structure in the linguistic and geological fields, we can arrive to the following assumptions.

1) The geological structure also focuses on knowing the types of rocks, their distribution, the minerals that make them up and their locations. It includes igneous rocks that contain most of the mineral wealth and salts, while the sandy, calcareous, and chalky rocks of the Second Period contain petroleum ore, and the Upper Cretaceous and Paleocene rocks contain phosphate ore. Studying the types of rocks helps to know the types of soil and the extent of their fertility so does the linguistic structure, as it is based on knowledge of the phonetic system, lexical units, the nature of morphological forms, what the structures contain with their various basic components (attribution) and their complements, and the method of distributing linguistic signs in speech chains. And the metalinguistic elements related to these chains (context, body language, etc.).

2) Just as the phonetic structure in the language the geological structure also has syllables, which is called the “geological syllable”.

3) If structure in language is studied within a science in which topics intersect, such as morphology, rhetoric, and literature then structure in geology intersects with topics in topography, geophysics, and geochemistry.

4) This link between structure among linguists and geologists is confirmed by what was mentioned by (Al-Yousef, 2017), who explains the foundations of the cultural and intellectual repertoire on which Claude Lévi-Strauss relied in his deductions as a structural philosopher and anthropologist, and these three foundations are

A - Psychology.

B - Marxism.

C - Geology, which branches out from and is closely related to phonetics and language.

This connection between these three foundations led Lévi-Strauss to define structuralism as: “a scientific attempt to carry out geological excavations deep into the depths of the cultural soil, instead of being limited to

providing a superficial geographical description of some aspects and characteristics of human culture". (Ibrahim, 1976)



Figure 2. Language structure and geological structure

Thus, the relationships between structures become clear in the perspective of linguistics as a humanity science and social sciences, and its concept in the field of geology as a natural science, establishing a strong cognitive interconnection between the system of concepts of those sciences. It highlights the linguistic phenomenon in the field of humanities, like its counterparts in the field of natural sciences, characterized by comprehensiveness and totality.

### *3<sup>rd</sup> requirement: language and the chemistry of Significance*

Approaching language from the perspective of chemistry by comparing the chemical elements and the interactions that occur between them, and between the phonological, morphological, and semantic elements and their effects during the speech process leads us to review the most prominent aspects of the relationship between language, its elements and mechanisms, and the chemical substance and its compounds on the other hand:

1) The emergence of significance and the attainment of the functions of the language can only occur through the phonetic interaction of sound within the lexical units between the various phonemes (voices/vowels, stress/intonation) and the audio syllables, and between the various linguistic signs within the syntax, and between the syntax within the discourse. It is a functional interaction that penetrates elements of linguistic structures and keeps pace with their various and complementary relationships, which is what takes place within various chemical reaction processes when chemical elements or compounds are added to others which reveals the interactive characteristic of what chemists call the chemical wholesale.

2) Language with its structural components and its ability to keep pace with various external elements (context, situation, addressee...), and mechanisms that reflect an aspect of symmetry between internal structure and external appearance that represents a binarity (existence by force/ existence by action), or what those with transformative generative thinking express it in terms of deep structure and surface structure, which is the foundation embodied by chemical elements when they exist between latent (dormant) states and active (reaction) states during which types of changes and transformations occur at the level of chemical systems.

3) The chemistry of language imposes the presence of basic elements upon which the structure is based (such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives) and it differs from one language to another according to the characteristics of each language and its structural system, which is a natural principle that guarantees the survival and permanence of the structures, and corresponding to this in chemical equations, the reaction requires pressure, heat, and auxiliary agents such as water (H<sub>2</sub>O).

4) Achieving the functions of language requires full discretion of all its levels and mechanisms. This practice mainly emerges from the standard perceptions of language associated with the collective linguistic community (linguistics) to the use of various strategies during the process of communication (speech). This is similar to what happens in chemical reactions of breaking the chemical bonds between molecules of the reacting substances; to produce new bonds between molecules of the substances resulting from the reaction, leading to the formation of new different substances, in their chemical and physical properties together. (Fullick, 2001).

5) The concept of transformation according to the transformational generative school in the study of language is applying a specific set of transformation rules such as deletion, addition, substitution, and changing position, to a limited number of basic correct sentences (core or predicate sentences) to yield an infinite number of correct sentences, such as negation, interrogative, passive, or restrictive sentences..." (Harris, 1964), which is similar to the concept that chemistry aims to study in materials by studying the material and the changes that occur in it, specifically by examining its properties, structure, composition, behavior, and reactions.

## Conclusion

1 - The interdisciplinary field that exists between the sciences dealing with language goes beyond the humanities, which represent the cognitive environment for the subject, due to the various dimensions that language refers to: social, cultural, psychological, philosophical, and others, to other sciences that seem to be completely different.

2 - The relationship between language and the field of geology and chemistry goes beyond the terminological aspect, or shallow comparisons close to literary approaches, to a convergence in goals, cognitive tools, and epistemological contexts.

3- The structure of language with its system, levels, and phonological, individual, and syntactic elements resembles the geological system with its levels contained within the earth, its elements, and the shifts, deviations, and phonological and semantic developments that occur in language reflecting the approaches and transformations that occur in geological elements.

4 - Linguistic significance is a pivotal issue in the field of language functions, and it is a complex world made up of phonemes, which are formed into syllables, lexical units, and syntax similar to chemical components, in their phonetic, syntactic, and semantic interaction.

5 - The transformative and interactive processes that occur within the structure of language and the fields of geology and chemistry can be generalized to all sciences that deal with various natural and human phenomena. This indicates that all phenomena proceed in a coherent manner and according to harmonious laws. Therefore, it is possible for each field to benefit from the results of other fields, away from the cognitive disintegration that occurs for methodological or perhaps ideological reasons.


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# Knowledge And Attitude Regarding School-Based Sexual Health Education Programs Among High School Students in Bulgaria: A Cross-Sectional Study


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**Abstract:** Introduction: Sexual health education provides young people with accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health, which is very important for their overall health. The aim of this study is to determine the knowledge and attitude school-based towards sexual health education among high school students in Bulgaria. Material and methods: A cross-sectional study design was used to determine the knowledge and attitude towards reproductive and sexual health education among high school students. A total of 315 adolescents in the age group of 15-19 years were surveyed using a self-report questionnaire. Girls being predominant - 56.2% (n=177). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistic and non-parametric tests. Results: A significant part of the respondents did not attend a health lecture in the current year (40.0%; n= 126), and most often received health information from books, brochures, magazines (31.4%; n=99), followed by friends and relatives (24.8%; n= 78). Most of the respondents have good knowledge about preventing unwanted pregnancy (82.9%; n= 261) and sexually transmitted diseases (85.7%; n= 270), with girls being better informed about both the questions (P=0.019; P=0.000). 36.2% (n=114) of the respondents have ever had sex. The mean age at first sexual initiation was 15.56±1.761 years. Conclusion: High school students have a good knowledge of sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, but they receive this information mostly outside of school. There is a need for teachers to be engaged in effective teaching of sexual health education to high school students in order to improve the quality of their knowledge and attitudes towards sex.

**Keywords:** Sex, Sexual health education, High school, Students.

**Citation:** Stoyanova, R., Shopov, D., & Dimova, R. (2024). Knowledge and attitude regarding school-based sexual health education programs among high school students in Bulgaria: A cross-sectional study. In M.

Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 223-231), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Sexual health education programs are essential in providing young people with accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health. This education is crucial for their overall well-being and development. It encompasses a range of topics relevant to their age group, including understanding their bodies, healthy relationships, consent, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, and the emotional aspects of sexuality (World Health Organization, 2010).

In today's interconnected world, where young people have access to vast amounts of information through various media channels, providing accurate and comprehensive sexual health education is more important than ever (Olamijuwon et al., 2021). School-based sexual health education programs equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions about their sexual health, navigate relationships, and understand the importance of respect and consent (International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2016; Maqbool & Jan, 2019).

However, sexual health education for students can be a sensitive and challenging topic for educators, parents, and policymakers alike (Naz, 2014; Sharan et al., 2020). There may be concerns about age-appropriateness, cultural sensitivities, and differing moral or religious beliefs. Despite these challenges, evidence suggests that well-designed school-based sexual health education programs can have significant benefits, including reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies, promoting healthy relationships, and empowering students to advocate for their own sexual health (Women & UNICEF, 2018).

The aim of this study is to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding school-based sexual health education programs among high school students in Bulgaria.

## Method

### Study Design

The study design is cross-sectional, based on an online survey conducted among 315 adolescents aged 15-19 in the Haskovo region, Bulgaria. A convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data from the students. A link was sent to them via their e-mails. The number returned and validly completed questionnaires was 315.

### Questionnaire

A self-administered questionnaire was used to determine the knowledge and attitude towards school-based reproductive and sexual health education programs among high school students. The questionnaire included a



total of 6 closed questions regarding knowledge and attitudes towards school-based sexual health education programs, as well as 1 open-ended question related to the age at which they began engaging in sexual activity. The survey also included questions related to demographic characteristics such as gender and age.

*Data Collection*

The study was conducted from October 2023 to November 2023 using the Google Forms application for response collection. A total of 315 adolescents aged 15-19 participated in the survey, with 56.2% (n=177) being female. The average age of the surveyed individuals was 17.41±0.871 years.

*Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Non-parametric tests were employed to test hypotheses. Central tendencies, such as the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), were used to illustrate the dataset's distribution. Additionally, a significance level of P < 0.05 was established to evaluate the importance of the null hypothesis, ensuring a strong and reliable analytical method. Data processing was performed using SPSS 23 and MS Excel 2016 software.

**Results**

The results found that a significant part of students was sexually active - 36.2% (n=114) (see Figure 1). The average age at first sexual initiation was 15.56±1.761 years, with girls starting earlier than boys (P=0.003).

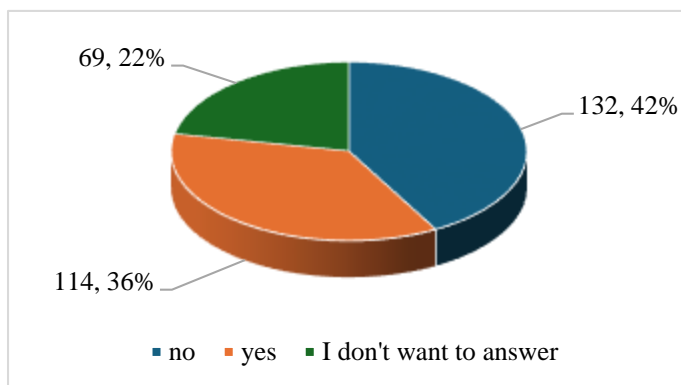


Figure 1. Are you sexually active?

Most of the respondents reported good knowledge about preventing unwanted pregnancy (82.9%; n= 261) and sexually transmitted diseases (85.7%; n= 270), with girls being better informed about both the questions (P=0.019; P=0.000) (see Figure 2 and 3).

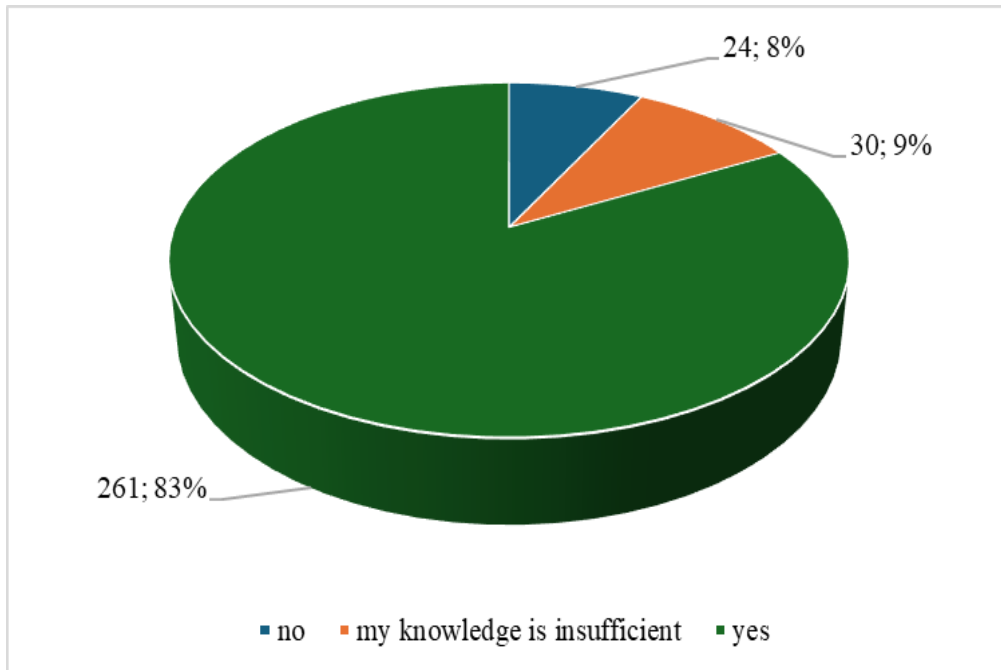


Figure 2. Do you know how to protect yourself from unwanted pregnancy?

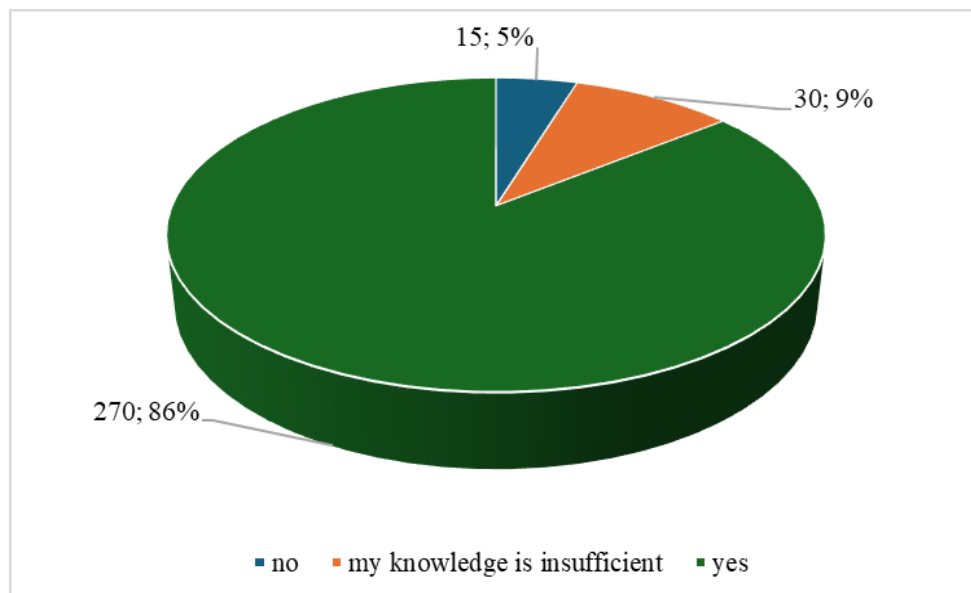


Figure 3. Do you know how to protect yourself from sexually transmitted diseases?

A significant part of the respondents did not attend lectures at school on health topics during the current year (40.0%; n= 126), as well as lectures on sexually transmitted diseases (39.0%; n= 123) (see Figure 4 and 5). Boys attended significantly fewer and less frequent school talks on both topics (P=0.011; P=0.015).

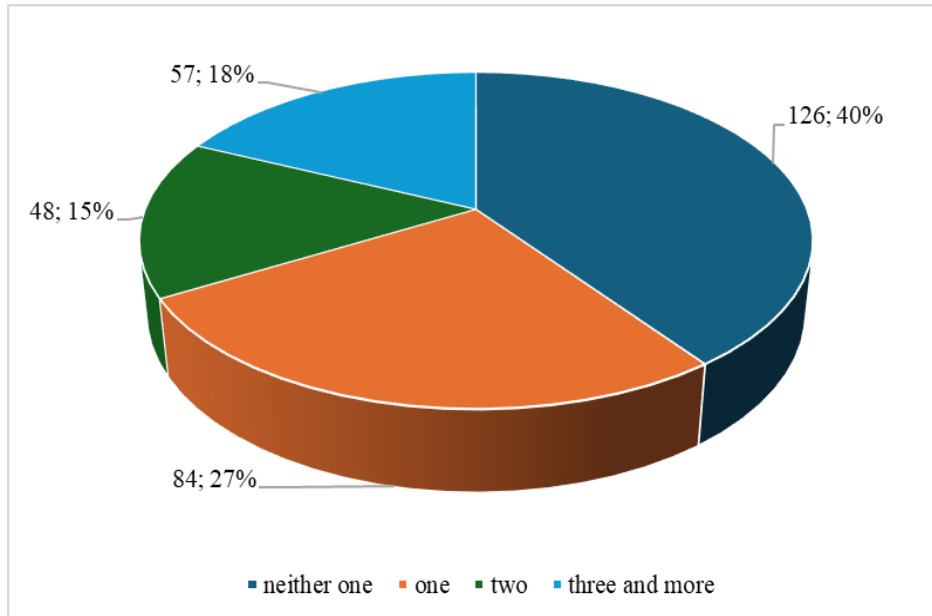


Figure 4. How many talks on health topics have you listened to this school year?

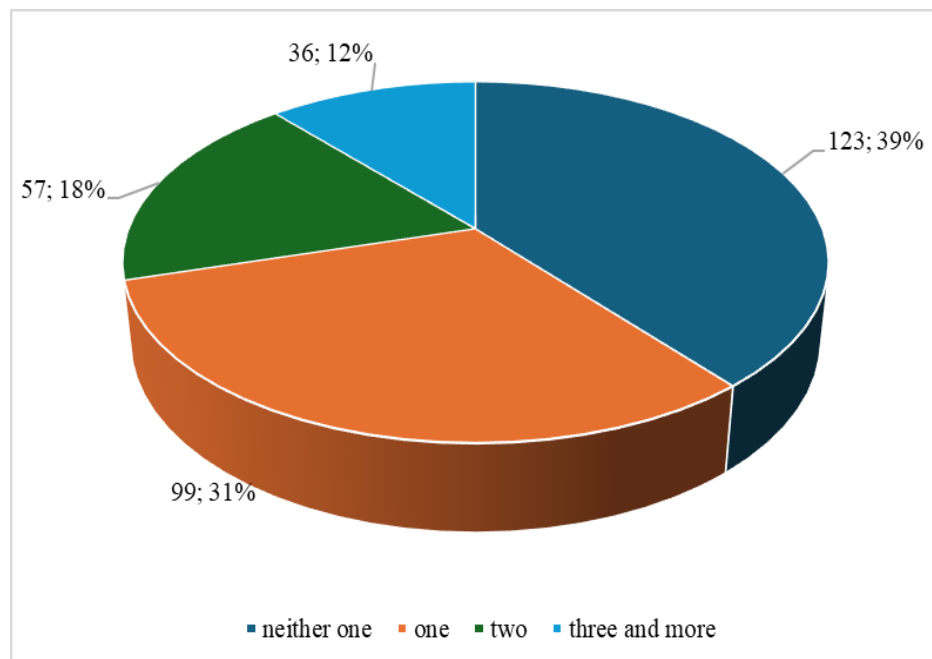


Figure 5. How many talks about sexually transmitted diseases have you listened to in school this school year?

The students reported that they most frequently received health information from books, brochures, and magazines (31.4%; n=99), followed by friends and relatives (24.8%; n=78) (see Figure 6).

Statistically significant differences were found in the responses of the students, with girls preferring to receive information on the topic from books, brochures, magazines, as well as health lectures at school. Meanwhile,

boys prefer to receive information from friends, relatives, and parents ( $P=0.000$ ). In both genders, a low percentage seeks information from their GP - 8.7% of boys and 11.9% of girls.

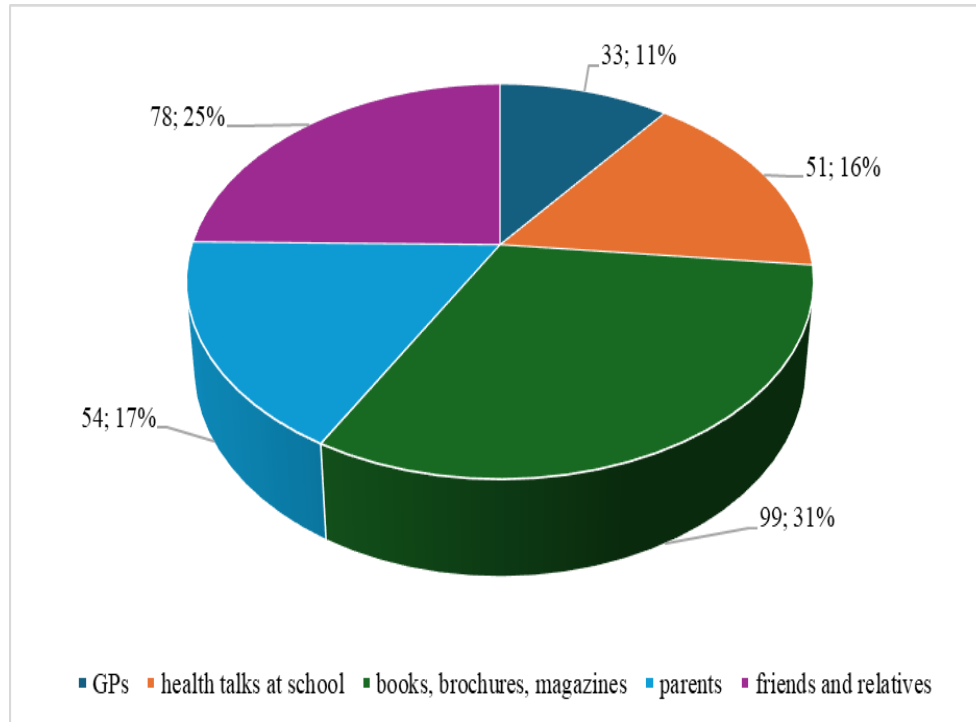


Figure 6. Where do you usually get information about methods of preventing sexually transmitted diseases?

## Discussion

The study has tried to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding school-based sexual health education programs among high school students in Bulgaria. The results indicate that high school students generally declare a good knowledge of sexuality and sexual and reproductive health.

Similar to our results, other studies have also shown that young women generally demonstrate greater awareness of sexuality issues (Moreira et al., 2023; Ronda, 2015; Nery et al., 2015; Ramiro et al., 2011). This observation may be related to several factors, such as increased curiosity and interest among adolescent females in topics related to sexuality. In addition, societal norms often assign women a greater role in managing their sexual and reproductive health, prompting them to actively seek knowledge and participate in conversations about these topics (Moreira et al., 2023, Ronda, 2015; Nery et al., 2015).

Despite the declared good knowledge of topics related to sexual health, the high school students in our study indicated that they receive this information mostly outside of school. In contrast, studies conducted in India found that a majority of adolescents prefer to receive sex education from doctors or teachers (Kumar et al., 2017). The preference for teachers as a source of sex education has been observed in various other studies

conducted in different regions and cultural contexts (Jaideep, 2012; Wong et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2007; Dorle et al. 2010).

In our study, teenagers might feel uneasy discussing their sexual health matters with medical professionals and teachers due to concerns regarding privacy, stigma, and the fear of potential judgment. This unease often originates from apprehensions about being perceived as sexually active or engaging in behaviors deemed socially unacceptable. As a result, many adolescents turn to their peer networks and conversations with friends of similar age as their primary sources of information and support regarding sexuality (Ronda, 2015).

Addressing these barriers is crucial to ensuring adolescents' access to accurate information, confidential healthcare services, and appropriate guidance. Healthcare providers and educators must establish a safe and non-judgmental environment, fostering open and honest communication with adolescents. By actively listening to their concerns, providing comprehensive and accurate information, and respecting their autonomy, healthcare professionals and teachers can help alleviate the fears and discomfort hindering adolescents from seeking the information they require (Ramiro et al., 2011). Additionally, efforts should be made to raise adolescents' awareness of the confidential nature of healthcare and educational services and their rights to seek and receive non-judgmental information. Educating adolescents about their rights, confidentiality laws, and the supportive role of these professionals in safeguarding their sexual health will empower them to seek health information without fear or hesitation (Hellström et al., 2021).

In our study, we found that adolescents heavily rely on seeking health information from peers and friends. Some research suggests that peer support and peer-led interventions can significantly impact adolescents' behavior in seeking information. Encouraging open and nonjudgmental discussions among peers offers a valuable platform for adolescents to exchange experiences, seek advice, and learn from one another. Initiatives led by peers, such as peer education programs, have effectively promoted positive outcomes in sexual health by addressing adolescents' unique needs and preferences, while also fostering trust and relatability (UNESCO, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2018).

On the other hand, with the rapid evolution of technology, shifting societal norms, and emerging sexual health concerns, it becomes imperative to provide adolescents with accurate and timely information through comprehensive sex education programs. These programs should cover essential topics such as consent, healthy relationships, sexual diversity, and digital safety, all of which hold increasing relevance in today's digital age (Hellström et al., 2021; Association of Women's Health, 2010). Moreover, promoting comprehensive sex education that goes beyond basic knowledge is critical. This involves discussions on communication skills, setting sexual boundaries, decision-making, and fostering positive sexual health behaviors. By imparting a holistic understanding of sexuality and equipping adolescents with practical skills, sex education programs can empower them to make informed choices and cultivate healthy relationships (Kotiuga et al., 2022).

Teachers, mass media, and friends play important roles in imparting information regarding sexual matters.

However, it is necessary for teachers to engage more effectively in teaching sexual health education to high school students to improve the quality of their knowledge and attitudes toward sex.

## Conclusion

The study reveals significant insights into sexual health education and knowledge among high school students. Notably, a considerable portion of students are sexually active, with girls initiating sexual activity at a younger age than boys. Despite this, most students demonstrate a good understanding of preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, with girls generally more informed than boys. However, it's concerning that many students did not attend school lectures on health topics, including sexual health, indicating a potential gap in formal education. Boys attended fewer talks on these subjects compared to girls. Moreover, while students receive health information from various sources, girls tend to prefer formal sources like books and school lectures, while boys rely more on informal sources like friends and family. These findings underscore the need for enhanced engagement of teachers in providing effective sexual health education to high school students, aiming to supplement their existing knowledge and address any misconceptions or gaps.

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## Factors Affecting the Stress Levels on Online Learning during COVID-19 Situation: A Case Study of Thai Undergraduate Students


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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic situation spreading around the world had brought dynamic changes in every field of life since 2019, especially in the learning processes. The processes of learning were done by using online platform. In a sudden shift in the learning processes, students were forced to adapt. Consequently, the processes of online learning affected students' stress. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting the stress levels on online learning of undergraduate students in Thailand. The participants of the study were 356 students from the Faculty of Science, Kasetsart University. The results from the multiple linear regression analysis showed that there were 7 factors affecting the stress levels; 1) improper time management, 2) lack of online learning supported devices, 3) the effects of covid-19 to the family, 4) online testing rules, 5) online learning rules, 6) expenses related to online learning and 7) internet problems. The remarkably high factor effected on the stress level on online learning was students' improper time management.

**Keywords** COVID-19, Online learning, Regression analysis, Stressor

**Citation:** Intarapak, S., Rojsiraphisal, P., & Supapakorn, T. (2024). Factors Affecting the Stress Levels on Online Learning during COVID-19 Situation: A Case Study of Thai Undergraduate Students. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 232-247), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a seismic shift in education, with traditional classrooms giving way to virtual learning environments. While online learning has provided a lifeline for continuing education during these challenging times, it has also introduced a new set of stressors for students, educators, and parents. In

2021, the COVID-19 pandemic, with the implement of lockdown measures, forcing a rapid shift to online learning in Thailand. The COVID-19 pandemic brought both challenges and opportunities to the education system. Although there were issues related to infrastructure and access to online learning, efforts had been made to address these issues and ensure that students could continue their education through online learning. The experience of online learning which was likely to have a lasting impact on the way education was delivered and may lead to the integration of more technology in future educational practices.

One of the most immediate stressors in the transition to online learning was the need for reliable technology and the internet access. Many students and teachers faced issues with the internet connection, device compatibility, and software glitches. These technological challenges could disrupt lessons, assignments, and examinations which cause frustration and anxiety to both educators and students. Online learning could be a solitary experience, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Students missed social interactions and support networks provided by in-person classes. The absence of face-to-face communication with peers and teachers could exacerbate stress, impacting mental health (Rizvi & Nabi, 2021). Traditional classrooms provided structure and routine, which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they had been disrupted by the sudden shift to online learning. Students had to adapt to a new learning environment, often without proper training or guidance. This transition, along with the need for increased self-discipline, posed significant challenges and stressors. Online learning requires prolonged screen time, which leads to digital eye strain, headaches, and fatigue (Bahkir & Grandee, 2020). The extended exposure to screens can also affect sleep patterns, exacerbating stress and impacting overall health. Assessment methods changed during online learning, with a shift towards more online exams and assignments. This change brought about concerns related to cheating and academic integrity, adding to the stress of students and educators alike (Janke et al., 2021). The fear of not performing as well as in traditional exams can lead to heightened anxiety.

For many students, online learning occurred within their homes, blurring the lines between school and personal life. This could challenge them to create a healthy work-life balance, leading to stress and burnout. Parents also faced stress as they had to juggle their own responsibilities by supporting their children's education. Online learning could make it difficult for students to stay motivated and engaged. The absence of physical presence and the distractions at home could lead to decrease in motivation to attend classes and to complete assignments. This lack of engagement could contribute to feelings of stress and academic underperformance. Not all students had equal access to the resources necessary for successful online learning. Socioeconomic disparities and disparities in access to technology and a quiet study environment became pronounced issues. Students who lacked these resources faced additional stressors in keeping up with their peers. The uncertainty brought by the pandemic, including concerns about health, the economy, and the future of education, added a layer of stress to an already challenging situation. Students worried about their academic progress and future prospects, while educators grappled with the uncertainty of their profession.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Thailand, schools and universities were forced to close to prevent the spread of the virus. To ensure continuity in education, institutions quickly shifted to online learning platforms. This

transition took place at all levels, from primary schools to higher education institutions. Such a quick and sudden shift in the educational system might cause intense stress on students. Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore the factors that contributed to stress levels of students in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Literature Review

In 2020, Moawad conducted a study analyzing academic stressors among students at the College of Education, King Saud University, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research highlighted that the closure of schools and universities in Saudi Arabia, coupled with the sudden shift to virtual learning, led to heightened stress levels among students. Uncertainty regarding exams and assessments due to these changes emerged as a significant stressor, reflecting the challenges faced by students in adapting to the new online framework. In a separate study in Ghana, Agormedah et al. (2020) explored students' response to online learning in higher education. Despite a generally positive attitude towards online learning platforms such as UCC Moodle, Alison, and Google Classroom, students expressed concerns about the lack of formal orientation, consistent internet access, and financial preparedness, highlighting the need for better support structures for online education.

In Jordan, Elsalem et al. (2020) evaluated the experience of remote E-exams among Medical Sciences students. The study revealed that 32% of students reported increased stress with remote exams, with factors such as exam duration, navigation methods, technical problems, and concerns about teaching methods contributing to their anxiety. Additionally, remote exams negatively impacted students' lifestyle habits, including diet, sleep, physical activity, and smoking habits. Research from Romanian universities, conducted by Coman et al. (2020) indicated that students faced technical challenges and a lack of preparedness from higher education institutions for online learning. Technical issues took precedence, followed by teachers' inadequate technical skills and difficulties in adapting teaching styles to the online environment. Surprisingly, students rated the lack of interaction with teachers as a lesser concern.

In 2021, Sukdee et al. studied the stress factors in online learning at the Faculty of Education, Thailand National Sport University Chonburi Campus. Their research identified key variables, including perceived usefulness of stress management, risk of stress, university policies promoting stress management, and social support, which significantly contributed to students' stress levels. These factors collectively accounted for 70.50% of the stress experienced by students. In Lahore, Pakistan, Hassan et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between online learning, time management, and self-anxiety among university students. Their findings highlighted a positive correlation between online learning, time management behavior, and self-rating anxiety, emphasizing the importance of effective time management in reducing students' anxiety levels. Baticulon et al. (2021) discussed common barriers to online learning, including difficulties adjusting learning styles, household responsibilities, and communication issues. Despite spending more time at home, students struggled to concentrate due to family conflicts and distractions. A mixed-methods approach employed by Barrot et al. (2021) revealed that the quality

of the learning environment at home significantly impacted students, with the pandemic exacerbating challenges related to learning experience and mental health. Students employed various strategies, including resource management, technical skill enhancement, and help-seeking behaviors, to cope with the challenges of online learning. Finally, Shafiq et al. (2021) explored the factors contributing to mental stress among students from public and private universities. Financial crises, uncertainties in online classes, and high tuition fees were key stressors for students, with private university students experiencing higher levels of stress compared to their counterparts in public universities.

In Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, Oketch-Oboth, J. W. B. (2021) investigated challenges faced by Psychology students in online learning, including an uncondusive learning environment, internet connectivity problems, inadequate training, unreliable electricity supply, and lack of necessary equipment. Coping strategies involved social media consultation, accessing learning materials, utilizing local internet cafes, and seeking technical help from university staff. Additionally, Bringula et al. (2021) explored the relationship between individual factors and students' mathematics self-concept during online learning. Students faced challenges in technology, personal life, domestic issues, assessments, pedagogy, consultations, and test anxiety, indicating the multifaceted nature of obstacles in online mathematics education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Method**

### **Populations and Samples**

A total of 365 participants were selected for this study from a pool of 3,044 students in the Faculty of Science at Kasetsart University. The Taro Yamane approach was used in a process selection.

#### *Research Instruments*

The research employed two main instruments: questionnaires and a stress test from the Department of Mental Health. These instruments were categorized into three parts:

#### *Part 1: Personal Information*

This section gathered personal information of the participants, including gender ( $X_1$ ), college year ( $X_2$ ), department ( $X_3$ ), GPA ( $X_4$ ), and location during online learning ( $X_5$ ).

#### *Part 2: 20-Question Stress Test*

Participants responded individually to the stress test questions, addressing their experiences and emotions over the past 6 months of online learning. The test, provided by the Department of Mental Health, the Suanprung Stress Test-20 (SPST-20) featured a self-assessment scale ranging from 1 to 5 corresponding to no stress to

severe stress. It has 20 items each on stress, anxiety, and depression. Each item has to be rated by a five-point rating scale. The rating scale is as follows: 1 (did not apply me at all), 2 (applied to me to some degree, or some of the time) , 3 (applied to me moderately), 4 (applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time) and 5 (applied to me very much, or most of the time).

Scoring for stress is based on a scale comprising 20 items, categorized into four types: normal-mild, moderate, severe, and extremely severe. The breakdown is as follows:

- Normal-Mild Stress (0-23 points): At this level, stress is minimal and transient. It's typical of everyday life and can be managed effectively. This degree of stress can even be beneficial, serving as motivation for success.
- Moderate Stress (24-41 points): Moderate stress arises from various challenges or threats in daily life, leading to feelings of anxiety or apprehension. However, it remains within manageable bounds and doesn't significantly impair functioning. Activities such as exercise, leisure pursuits, or seeking support from trusted individuals can alleviate this type of stress.
- Severe Stress (42-61 points): High levels of stress characterize this stage, often stemming from overwhelming concerns or unresolved conflicts. Coping becomes more challenging, impacting daily life and potentially contributing to physical ailments like high blood pressure or stomach ulcers. Effective stress management strategies such as breathing exercises, seeking support, and problem-solving are recommended. Consulting with counselors may also be beneficial if self-relief methods prove insufficient.
- Extremely Severe Stress (62 points or more): At this level, stress reaches a critical point, persisting over time or arising from significant life crisis like serious illness or profound loss. Both physical and mental health may suffer, leading to impaired decision-making and emotional instability. Without intervention, these effects can cascade, affecting not only the individual but also their close relationships. Urgent intervention from counselors or support services is essential to address the root causes and mitigate the negative impact of such severe stress.

### *Part 3: Contributing Factors Questionnaire*

This part focused on factors influencing stress levels among Faculty of Science students at Kasetsart University. There were 12 variables; surrounding environments such as weather and noise ( $X_6$ ), effects of covid-19 to the family ( $X_7$ ), difficulty of subjects ( $X_8$ ), task quantity and time ( $X_9$ ), lecturer-student miscommunication ( $X_{10}$ ), internet problems ( $X_{11}$ ), improper time management ( $X_{12}$ ), reduced support from lecturers and peers ( $X_{13}$ ), online learning rules ( $X_{14}$ ), online testing rules ( $X_{15}$ ), expenses related to online learning ( $X_{16}$ ), and lack of online learning supported devices ( $X_{17}$ ).

### *Data Collection and Processing*

Once the data was gathered, the collected questionnaire data underwent scrutiny, encryption, and organization

for subsequent statistical analysis.

#### *Descriptive Statistics (Part 1):*

Personal factors of respondents were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions.

#### *Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient (Part 2):*

The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between two variables, personal factors and contributing factors-as independent variables, and the stress levels of students as the dependent variable

#### *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (Part 3):*

The study employed multiple linear regression analysis with a stepwise regression procedure to identify and analyze factors influencing stress levels in online learning among students at the Faculty of Science, Kasetsart University, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Multiple linear regression, also referred to simply as multiple regression, is a statistical method that utilizes multiple explanatory variables to forecast the outcome of a response variable. The primary objective of multiple linear regression is to construct a model that captures the linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In essence, it investigates how several independent variables are interconnected with a single dependent variable. Once the predictive power of each independent variable regarding the dependent variable is established, this collective information can be employed to generate a precise prediction of the impact these variables have on the outcome. The model formulates a linear relationship represented by a straight line that best fits all the individual data points (Yale University, 2020).

Stepwise regression, a widely adopted approach, integrates elements of both forward and backward selection techniques. It is essentially an adaptation of forward selection, wherein, after each step involving the addition of a variable, all candidate variables in the model undergo scrutiny to assess if their significance falls below a specified tolerance level. If a variable is found to be nonsignificant, it is excluded from the model. Stepwise regression necessitates two significance levels: one for adding variables and another for removing them. The threshold probability for adding variables should be lower than the probability for removing variables to prevent the procedure from entering an infinite loop. In the context of modeling predictive equation for stress level, multiple linear regression will be employed. The multiple linear regression model, involving the dependent variable  $Y$  and  $p$  independent variables denoted as  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_p$ , can be expressed as  $Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{i1} + \beta_2 X_{i2} + \dots + \beta_p X_{ip} + \varepsilon_i$ ; where  $\beta_0$  represents the intercept,  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_p$  are the partial regression slope coefficients, and  $\varepsilon_i$  is the residual term associated with the  $i$ th observation. The regression model provides the expected value of  $Y$  given the fixed values of  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_p$  plus the error component.

Fundamental assumptions of regression analysis include the absence of serial correlation and homoscedasticity. The no multicollinearity assumption implies that the regression function should encompass only variables that are not linear combinations of others in the model. Coefficients such as  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  serve as general fit indices, with  $R^2$  approaching 1 for a well-fitted model and close to 0 for a poor fit. The adjusted  $R^2$  is recommended for conclusive analysis due to its sensitivity to the number of predictors and its ability to decrease or even become negative. The adjusted  $R^2$  increases as long as the  $t$ -value of a newly added variable's coefficient surpasses 1 in absolute value, with the  $t$ -value computed under the hypothesis that the true coefficient value is zero.

The subsequent phase in evaluating the model involves the  $t$ -test, where each regression coefficient is individually tested. The null hypothesis ( $H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \dots = \beta_p = 0$ ) posits a joint or simultaneous equality of all coefficients to zero. Overall significance can be examined through the analysis of variance technique, with the rejection of  $H_0$  indicating a linear relationship between  $Y$  and the independent variables. The variance inflation factor (VIF) serves as a gauge of multicollinearity among independent variables in a multiple regression model. A high VIF suggests substantial collinearity with other variables. Generally, a VIF exceeding 5 raises concerns about high correlation (Hair et al., 1995).

#### *Teaching and Learning Arrangements at Kasetart University amidst COVID-19 in 2021*

Kasetart University underwent adaptations in its teaching and learning methodologies throughout the year 2021 in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These adaptations were structured into three primary formats: (Kasetart University Announcement, 2020)

##### *Online Learning:*

Kasetart University prioritized the organization of teaching and learning activities through online platforms, utilizing various tools such as KU e-Learning, Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Webex. Educators were afforded the flexibility to employ diverse teaching techniques, including live online lectures (Live Streaming), pre-recorded lectures, and the facilitation of online group activities. Students were provided access to study materials, course content, and assignments via the online platform.

##### *Blended Learning:*

Blended learning approach integrated both online and face-to-face learning modalities. Instructors conducted certain sessions online, typically focusing on theoretical concepts, while arranging for in-person activities, such as practical exercises, within classroom settings. The blended format aimed to enable students to independently grasp theoretical concepts while reinforcing practical skills through hands-on classroom experiences.



*On-Site Learning:*

Kasetsart University implemented on-site instruction for select subjects necessitating specialized skills, such as laboratory practices. Class sizes were limited, and stringent measures were enforced to mitigate the risk of disease transmission, including mask-wearing, social distancing, and frequent hand hygiene practices. These adapted arrangements ensured continuity in education while prioritizing the safety and well-being of both students and staff amidst the ongoing pandemic challenges.

**Results**

**Descriptive statistics**

According to Table 1, the data revealed that the greatest proportion of students experienced the extremely severe level of stress, with 182 individuals comprising 49.9 percent, followed by 107 students, accounting for 29.3 percent, who reported severe level of stress. Additionally, 76 students, each representing 20.8 percent, reported moderate stress levels. Notably, none of the students reported normal-mild stress levels. This absence was attributed to the minimum stress score being 29 points, while the maximum was 100 points, with the median stress score approximately at 61 points, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of student stress level

Stress Level	Frequency	Percentage
Normal-Mild	0	0.0
Moderate	76	20.8
Severe	107	29.3
Extremely Severe	182	49.9
Total	365	100.0

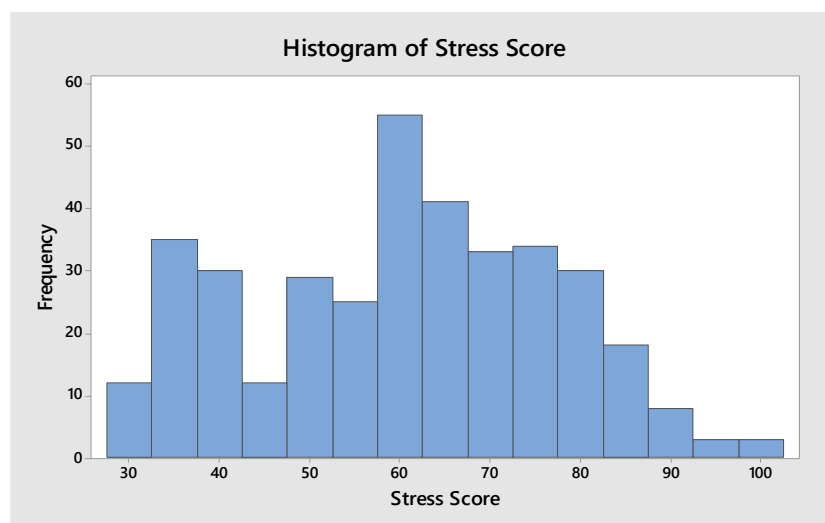


Figure 1. Histogram of Student Stress Scores

Table 2 revealed that among the 365 students in the Faculty of Science, 211 were females, making up 57.8 percent, while 154 were males, constituting 42.2 percent. The largest group comprised first-year students, totaling 124 individuals, representing 34.0 percent. This was followed by 85 second-year students at 23.3 percent, 75 third-year students at 20.5 percent, and 81 fourth-year students at 22.2 percent. In terms of average grades point average (GPA), the majority of students had the GPA between 2.51 and 3.00, accounting for 34.8 percent (127 students), followed by 28.2 percent (103 students) with the GPA between 3.01 and 3.50, and 17.3 percent (63 students) with the GPA of 3.51 and above. Additionally, 15.6 percent (57 students) held the GPA between 2.01 and 2.50, and a minority of students (4.1 percent, or 15 individuals) had the GPA lower than 2.01.

Table 2. Number and percentage of students classified by gender and college year and GPA

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	154	42.2
	Female	211	57.8
College year	Year 1	124	34.0
	Year 2	85	23.3
	Year 3	75	20.5
	Year 4	81	22.2
GPA	Less than 2.01	15	4.1
	2.01 – 2.50	57	15.6
	2.51 – 3.00	127	34.8
	3.01 – 3.50	103	28.2
	3.51 and more	63	17.3
Total		365	100.0

#### *Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient*

Table 3 revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship (at the 0.05 significance level) between any of the personal factors and stress levels in online learning among Faculty of Science students. The spearman's ranked correlation coefficients revealed that the six most least influential predictors of stress levels in online learning were improper time management, followed by lack of online learning supported devices, online learning rules, reduced support from lecturers and peers, expenses related to online learning, and online testing rules, respectively.

Table 3. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient of independent variables

Independent variable	Spearman's rank correlation coefficient	p-value
Gender ( $X_1$ )	.043	.418
College year ( $X_2$ )	.031	.555

Department (X <sub>3</sub> )	-.009	.865
GPA (X <sub>4</sub> )	-.052	.320

Table 3. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient of independent variables

Location during online learning (X <sub>5</sub> )	-.056	.287
Weather and noise (X <sub>6</sub> )	.215	.000
Effects of covid-19 to the family (X <sub>7</sub> )	.481	.000
Difficulty of subjects (X <sub>8</sub> )	.112	.032
Task quantity and time (X <sub>9</sub> )	.270	.000
Lecturer-student miscommunication (X <sub>10</sub> )	.422	.000
Internet problems (X <sub>11</sub> )	.073	.164
Improper time management (X <sub>12</sub> )	.643	.000
Reduced support from lecturers and peers (X <sub>13</sub> )	.511	.000
Online learning rules (X <sub>14</sub> )	.550	.000
Online testing rules (X <sub>15</sub> )	.505	.000
Expenses related to online learning (X <sub>16</sub> )	.510	.000
Lack of online learning supported devices (X <sub>17</sub> )	.585	.000

### Multiple regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify factors influencing the online stress levels of Faculty of Science students. The Stepwise Regression Procedure (see Table 4) was employed to select independent variables for inclusion in the model equation. The predictive equation for stress levels in online learning among Faculty of Science students, presented in raw scores, was as follow:

$$\hat{y} = 23.152 + 5.756(X_{12}) + 1.793(X_{17}) + 3.256(X_7) + 1.630(X_{15}) + 0.954(X_{16}) + 1.083(X_{11}) + 1.616(X_{14}).$$

Table 4. Regression coefficients of multiple regression analysis with the stepwise regression procedure

Model	Regression coefficient	Std. error	p-value
(Constant)	23.152	2.102	0.000
X <sub>12</sub>	5.756	0.604	0.000
X <sub>17</sub>	1.793	0.456	0.000
X <sub>7</sub>	3.256	0.490	0.000
X <sub>15</sub>	1.630	0.609	0.008
X <sub>16</sub>	0.954	0.434	0.029
X <sub>11</sub>	1.083	0.466	0.021
X <sub>14</sub>	1.616	0.438	0.032

adjusted R-Square = 0.627

It was evident that stress level among Faculty of Science students was influenced by various factors, including the effects of COVID-19 on the family ( $X_7$ ), internet problems ( $X_{11}$ ), improper time management ( $X_{12}$ ), online learning rules ( $X_{14}$ ), online testing rules ( $X_{15}$ ), expenses related to online learning ( $X_{16}$ ), and lack of online learning-supported devices ( $X_{17}$ ). All of these variables exhibited a statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Furthermore, the stress levels in online learning among Faculty of Science students, represented by adjusted  $R^2$  equal to 0.627, were attributed to 7 variables ( $X_7, X_{11}, X_{12}, X_{14}, X_{15}, X_{16}, X_{17}$ ) as mentioned above, explaining approximately 62.7% of the variance. The remaining 37.3% of the variance was accounted for by other variables. The study also addressed a multicollinearity by assessing the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The VIF value exceeding 5 indicates a lack of independence among independent variables. In this analysis, if the VIF values were not greater than 5, it suggested that the regression model was deemed appropriate (see Table 5).

Table 5. Variance Inflation Factor of independent variables in the regression model

Independent variables	VIF
$X_7$	1.173
$X_{11}$	1.041
$X_{12}$	1.474
$X_{14}$	1.856
$X_{15}$	1.672
$X_{16}$	1.849
$X_{17}$	2.216

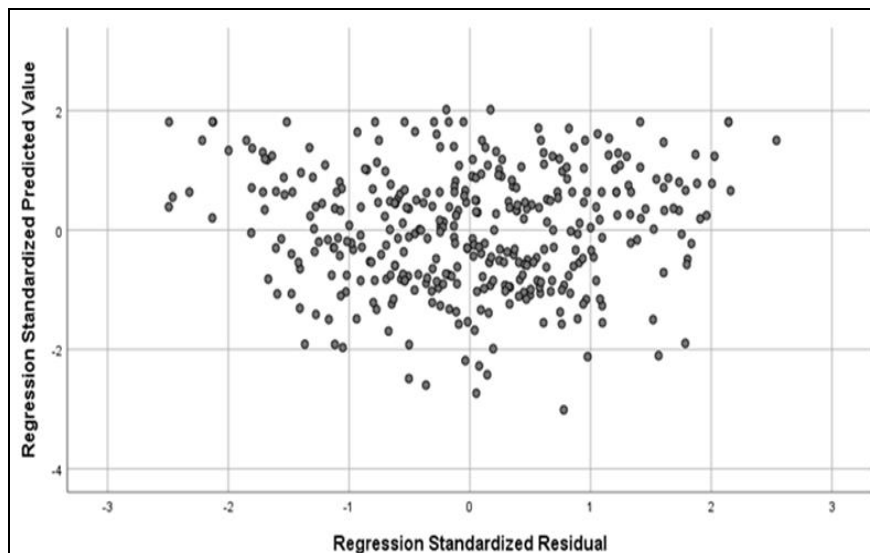


Figure 2. Scatter Plot of Regression Standardized Residual vs Predicted Value

Figure 2 revealed a distribution devoid of discernible patterns, suggesting a constant variance in the errors. Conversely, examining Figure 3, the Normal Probability Plot indicated a linear trend, signifying that the errors conformed to a normal distribution.

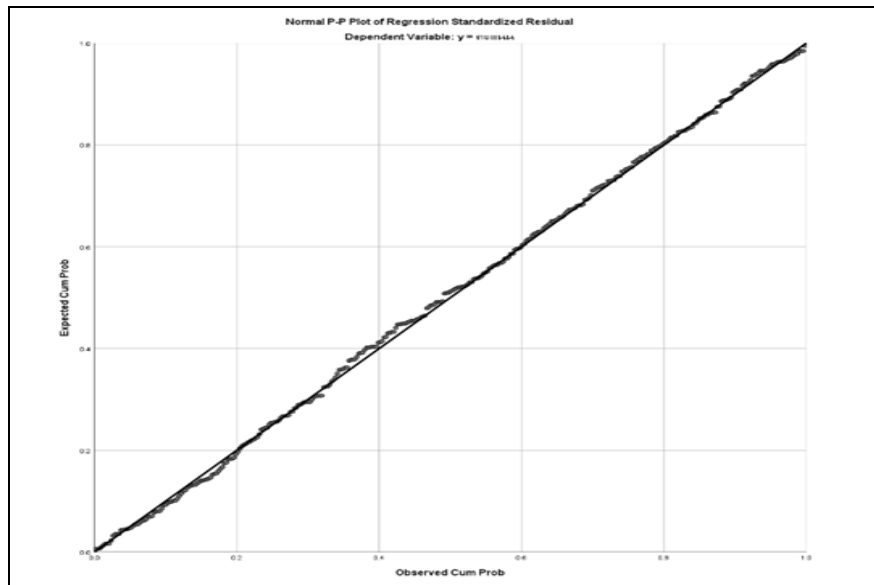


Figure 3. Normal Probability Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

## Discussion

On March 26, 2020, Thailand initiated its inaugural COVID-19 lockdown under the leadership of then-Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha. This action was taken in accordance with the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations 2005, which mandated a state of emergency across the entire Kingdom (Article 19, 2022). Among the strategies implemented to curb the transmission of the virus was the closure of high-risk locations, including universities, international schools, and tutoring institutes starting from March 18, 2020. Educational institutions were directed to rigorously enforce disease prevention protocols stipulated by the Ministry of Public Health. Additionally, venues such as boxing stadiums, sports stadiums, horse racing tracks, pubs, entertainment establishments, traditional massage parlors, and theaters in Bangkok and its environs were ordered to shut down. The suspension of classes in Thai universities was initially announced on March 23, 2020, with specific dates varying depending on individual university policies and the prevailing COVID-19 situation. For instance, Kasetsart University declared the cessation of teaching and learning activities from March 16, 2020 (Kasetsart University Announcement, 2020).

This study identified several factors contributing to stress level among students participated in this study:

- 1) The stress level experienced by students was partly attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their families. With cities under lockdown, economic activities such as trade, production, and tourism has been disrupted, leading to job losses and financial instability. Many students' families struggled to make ends meet, as businesses were shut down or operated below capacity, resulting in reduced income and financial strain (OECD, 2020).

2) Another significant challenge was the inadequate internet infrastructure, particularly in remote areas where many students reside. Slow internet speeds and unreliable connections hindered online learning, making it difficult for students to access educational resources and to participate in virtual classes effectively. The increased demand for online learning further exacerbated these connectivity issues, impeding students' academic progress (Aroonsrimarakot et al., 2023).

3) Many students struggled with managing their time effectively for online studies. A lack of self-discipline leads to distractions such as gaming and social media, as well as neglecting academic responsibilities for household chores. Additionally, inappropriate study schedules, such as prolonged study sessions or studying at non-optimal times, resulted in decreased productivity and motivation (Chukwu et al., 2022).

4) The stricter regulations imposed during the pandemic for online learning and examinations add to students' stress levels. The pressure to comply with these regulations while adapting to remote learning environments can be overwhelming for students, affecting their mental well-being and academic performance (Elsalem et al., 2021; Akpınar, 2021).

5) The costs associated with online learning, including purchasing necessary equipment; such as computers, tablets, headphones, video camera. and microphones, posed a significant financial burden on students. Additionally, expenses for internet access and educational software further strain their finances. Moreover, the increased electricity consumption for online learning added to the overall financial strain experienced by students (Tavitıyaman et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic had necessitated a swift transition from traditional in-person teaching to online instruction. Students and teachers have had to quickly adapt to this new mode of learning, albeit temporarily. However, the shift to full online learning; including online exams, online assignments, and other online activities, presented a novel challenge for many students and required significant adjustments. Prolonged hours spent in engaging online learning exacerbated this situation, contributing to heightened levels of stress among students.

The findings from this study revealed that approximately half (around 50%) of Faculty of Science students experienced significantly elevated extremely severe stress levels due to online teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, none of the students reported having normal to mild stress levels. This underscores the fact that exclusively relying on online teaching induced stress across all learners. Consequently, educators should steer clear of organizing teaching activities solely online.

Through a comprehensive analysis using multiple regression, seven key factors had been identified as

significant contributors to this stress level experienced by students at the Faculty of Science, Kasetsart University during the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors included improper time management, lack of online learning supported devices, the effects of covid-19 to the family online testing rules, online learning rules, expenses related to online learning, and internet problems. Collectively, these factors explain approximately 62.7% of the variance in stress levels observed among students.

## Acknowledgements

This work was funded by the Department of Statistics, Faculty of science, Kasetsart University.

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## Phronesis 2.0 For the VUCA World

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**Abstract:** This article presents the new concept of phronesis 2.0. The latter is defined by the academic social responsibility of business schools and what they have to deliver in terms of learning outcomes and when readying the next generation of graduates. Simultaneously, phronesis 2.0 deviates starkly as today's business environments differ significantly from what the ancient Greeks faced. The time span available cannot cover a lifetime, more is not always better as knowledge gets outdated, the source of inspirations and locus of control over the process of phronesizing diverges as well. Finally, the integration of modern ethical considerations and humanism in business is a prerequisite in today's world of ongoing moral crises, signs of unsustainability, and more diverse cultural norms colliding. This article presents conceptual progress made over time and discusses implications for business schools.

**Keywords:** Business schools, academic social responsibility, learning, practical wisdom, phronesis.

**Citation:** Amann, W., Stachowicz-Stanusch, A., & Tripathi, S. (2023). Phronesis 2.0 for the VUCA world. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 248-259), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Models, facts, figures, and insights on strategizing, leadership, and change can be downloaded from the internet at zero or low costs. Technological changes also decrease costs and allow for more flexible learning journeys via massive open online courses (MOOCs) (Burd et al., 2015) on, for example, Kotter's (2012) eight steps for managing change. On average, as many as four new leadership books are published per day, amounting to more than 57,000 volumes available on Amazon (Iarocci, 2015). The COVID-19 crisis starting to spread internationally in early 2020 also encouraged top business schools and faculty members to intensify their free access to thought leadership content in the form of webinars on leadership and strategizing in turbulent times. Knowledge is therefore not in short supply. Nevertheless, leaders and managers frequently find themselves at a loss when it comes to the question of what they actually should do or should have done in a specific situation.

The example of Nokia's previous CEO, Stephen Elop, is a case in point. He surprised his colleagues, the shareholders, industry peers, and journalists with his helplessness when ending a press conference in 2013 with the statement, "we didn't do anything wrong, but, somehow, we lost" (Harrison, 2016). This happened after the company became the official world market leader, enjoyed tremendous economies of scale and thus advantageous cost structures, and built up unique strengths at that time, such as the world's first music streaming included for free in their service packages. Yet, success bred a culture of fear inhibiting innovations and organizational evolutions as Harrison (2016) outlines.

This depiction of a rising adversity in a VUCA world – volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) (Betof et al., 2014) has implications on success statistics as outlined in the following two sections. A number of authors – although primarily in qualitative terms without quantifying their claims – that practical wisdom could help with the following insufficiencies. Thereby, the failure rates relate to all dimensions of corporate strategy moves.

These types of problems have repercussions for business schools (Brown et al., 2015), which need to ensure that their program graduates have the right capabilities to match the demands they will face. Phronesis now appears progressively in the management literature (Bachmann et al., 2018). Practical wisdom, i.e. phronesis, appears to be of the utmost importance in order to cope with business environments' adversity. In this context, Flyvberg (2017) regards Aristotelian phronesis as referring to "practical judgment, practical wisdom, common sense, or prudence."

If wisdom grows in importance, the questions emerge whether an executive education offer adds the right value and, if this is in doubt, how it can do so? This research project investigates the crucial role of phronesis – practical, applied, and actionable wisdom – as a desirable target of executive education. In order to endow the study with a clear focus, the objective is to address the research question: How do executive education course participants perceive the phronesizing process in business schools? Phronesizing refers to the process of creating phronesis in the form of practical wisdom. Answering this research question is the primary research objective.

There is, however, also a secondary research objective. Scholars have posited the world has become a VUCA (Betof et al., 2014). Antonacopoulou (2018) outlines that this VUCA world necessitates new forms of accelerated learning and an emphasis of learning leadership. It entails a different set of targeted learning outcomes. She posits that learners ought to acknowledge and embrace their vulnerability to avoid being surprised, but to continue their self-development. Furthermore, they should remain unnerved by ambiguity and the unknown, and even feel personally challenged and enticed to thrive in spite of it. Moreover, learners should show more candor and remain open to experience an awaking. Her four features of a learner in VUCA times form a corresponding VUCA acronym for learning leadership underlining this vulnerability, unnervedness, candor, and awakening. Conger and Xin (2000) similarly foresee a change of executive education in the 21st century along six dimensions including the learning needs of individuals and their organizations, learning andragogy, content, the role of and value added by instructors, the types and mix of participants, and approaches

to secure and foster integration of learning during and after programs. This article targets the concept of phronesis, which has to be understood differently in a VUCA world.

## Literature review

Jackson (2016) underlines the strong role phronesis plays as a stream within social sciences research. Extending the view of the above-mentioned Greek knowledge-related constructs as shared by Aldwin (2012) allows phronesis to be positioned within the context of other knowledge and learning-related constructs and semantics. More precisely and as illustrated in the following figure, Millo and Schinckus (2016) specify that Aristotle’s semantics comprise several parts relevant for learning. All of these parts extend beyond mere *daxo* – an individual, rather unsubstantiated opinion. *Techne* refers to practical knowledge and skills. *Episteme* zooms in on theoretical knowledge, focusing far less on any kind of application. *Praxis* sheds light on principled action. Even if certain contextual details were to change, relying on key principles can help a *praxis*-oriented learner achieve results. *Sophia*, in turn, refers to wisdom about theory, while *phronesis* addresses wisdom that is solely focused on application.

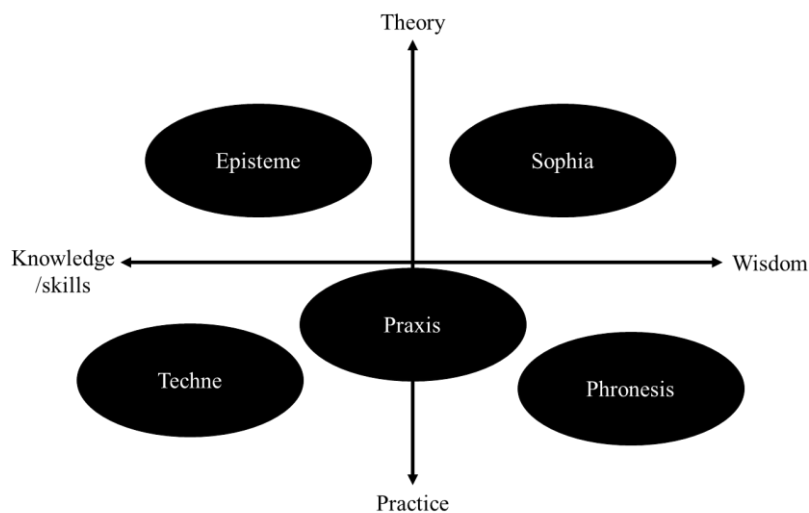


Figure 1. Overview of phronesis versus other knowledge-related constructs

Source: Based on Millo and Schinckus (2016)

Phronesis is the meta-capability to strategically deal with complexity encountered over time, requiring recurring learning and unlearning to serve humanism in business. Phronesizing is the process of developing this capability. This definition addresses and overcomes the following weaknesses identified in the partial or more integrative view of the definitions found in the literature and therefore has the following strengths: First, phronesis is clearly positioned as a capability representing a non-fatalistic view. It is an endogenous, not an exogenous, variable and construct. Research has long dealt with the question to what extent personalities or leaders are born rather than made. The first such study on the impact of genes dates back to Galton’s 1869 study. Steinbeis et al. (2017) maintain that the emergence of the developmental cognitive neuroscience field has advanced the available body of knowledge massively. Cognitive abilities, which include wisdom, are – to a

critical extent – malleable.

Second, phronesis is a meta-capability; owing to its importance, it should be clarified before other skills are. Third, phronesis serves a humanistic purpose, which overcomes the lack of clarity regarding what ethics other definitions refer to. Fourth, phronesis needs to serve more than one situation. It is about coping with challenging situations not once but over time. Environments are in flux (Betof et al., 2014), and as Strebel (2004) outlines, over time, companies ought to shift their main overall trajectory as part of a holistic, survival-ensuring trajectory management. Fifth, phronesis, if understood as a capability, can therefore not only emerge within one phronimos, but within a social group at a team, organizational, or even societal level.

Sixth, phronesis is no longer viewed as the “capacity of understanding hidden truths” (Delahunty, 2000, p. 418) because in a truly ambiguous environment the dynamics at work might no longer be fully understood. This train of thought resonates with the reasoning of others. Bennett and Lemoine (2014) outline that ambiguity implies two aspects. First, ambiguity means knowing very little about the situation, e.g., any causal relationships, and there are no relevant precedents to learn from. Second, the results of one’s actions are almost impossible to predict. Equally, Courtney et al. (1997) propose a framework with four levels of uncertainty. They define ambiguity as the highest form of uncertainty, making accurate assessments and predictions impossible. These hidden truths become undetectable, and predictions about their unfolding are both invalid and unreliable. As a consequence, stating problems will be more challenging. Seventh, context-wise, phronesis is most needed in complex situations. Seijts et al. (2010) regard complexity as “one of the salient hallmarks of the 21st century.” However, the ambiguity above is only one of the four drivers of this complexity, with diversity, interdependency, and flux (indicating the number of directions in which change occurs and the overall speed of change) representing the other (cf. Maznevski et al., 2007).

Eighth, the focus on learning and unlearning clarifies that phronimos, either as individuals or as social entities, may well be encouraged to resist the temptation to reapply past solutions. Thus, it is in line with Berthrong’s rather Confucian understanding of phronesis as a lifelong learning journey (Berthrong, 2008). Nevertheless, while there might be a cumulative effective endeavor due to lifelong learning, the gained phronesis has a shelf life. Martin de Holan et al. (2004) argue their case for a much-needed organizational forgetting of all that is no longer important.

Ninth, the above deliberations imply that phronesis naturally varies within individuals. This is in line with Kristjánsson’s (2021) hypothesizing that there is an interpersonal variance to perceive quandaries, a person-specific quality of decisions, and execution. Although he strongly emphasizes moral aspects in the phronesis while still including emotional regulation and prosocial behavior, this research project views phronesis as more than merely scalar – it is multidirectional. Tenth and finally, including the notion of strategy in a definition takes a clear stance on a teleological approach to phronesis. The notion of strategy refers to enabling a winning recipe. It should no longer be about the more neutral phrasing when applying judgment. Phronesis serves the purpose of winning as an individual, organization, or another grouping.

These considerations and explanations of the emerging phronesis 2.0 definition led to the overview and juxtaposition presented in Table 2 below. The numbering of 2.0 ought to indicate a bigger deviation from original assumptions as done by neo-Aristotelian thinking (cf., e.g., MacIntyre, 2013, 1981), which remained still strongly inspired by Aristotle while becoming partly less political, balancing relativist views with absolutes, opening up to empirical research, and distancing itself from prejudices against non-Greek and women. While the accomplishments of phronesis 1.0 are acknowledged, the contingency view and idea of fit require phronesis to be reinterpreted for the 21st century’s characteristic trait, which is complexity (Seijts et al., 2010).

### Method

We conducted a constructivist grounded theory based on Charmaz’s (2014) approach. We interviewed alums of a globally top-ranked EMBA cohort. Interviews took place online to offer convenience advantages to all participants. Memoing, constant comparison, transcribing, and interim visualizations took place as prescribed by the approach. Saturation materialized after 32 interviews. Due to space constraints of this 10-page submission, we focus on adding other parts of the research instead of adding more method-related details. ( Please contact Prof. Wolfgang Amann at Wolfgang.Amann@hec.edu for more details.)

### Results

The research yielded the model presented in the following figure.

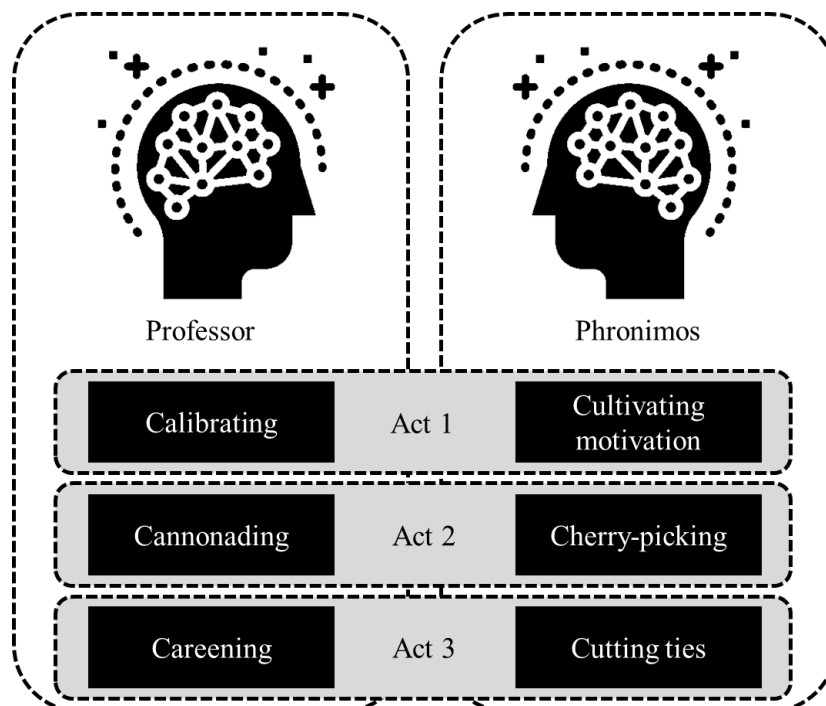


Figure 2. The 6C-duolog theory on building practical wisdom grounded in data



Phronesizing takes place based on what two core participants do. This is why the notion and analogy of a duolog from the world of theatre enters the fray. Other stakeholders, such as program directors or peers, possibly supportive employers or program managers were not mentioned as relevant. Both the learner as well as the faculty have three Cs to carry out as tasks – sequentially. Phronesis-building faculty members calibrate. They tailor their content and andragogy to the course participants, which many do not. Faculty members equally offer a plethora of stimuli as it is hard to anticipate who needs what kind of approach to learning. This is reflected in the cannonading. Careening is equally important. It is a wording for fixing boats by putting it out of the water and fixing them. Faculty members ought to be effective and direct. Their responsibilities do not end with teaching. They need to give direct feedback and ensure actual change.

In contrast, learners ought to clarify their motivation. Extrinsic focus on the diploma is not conducive. They need to cherry pick those key learning nuggets which serve them best. Finally, they must cut ties so as to not over rely on faculty to convey what is important and catalyze learning. They need to be independent and drive their own development.

## **Limitations and Suggestions**

During the research process, a series of decisions provide a clear focus and limitations as outlined in the following. Five main areas put the study into context. These limitations relate to several factors, such as the relatively strong focus of the study objectives, the choices made when fixing the research methodology in alignment with the research question, the maturity of constructive grounded theory, and its quality assessment system proposed in the literature. Equally, limitations stem from a specific choice made when narrowing down the interviewee pool, and finally, measuring the success of learning more holistically. These five aspects are detailed in the following subsections.

### **1) Focused study objectives**

The first decision addresses the research objectives. They are focused and narrow by choice. This study aims at a better understanding of the phronesizing phenomenon. In order to ensure sufficient depth within the analysis, a first boundary stems from the focus on executive education only, not all learning in business schools, such as undergraduate or pre-experience master's programs. The literature review clarified that according to Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2018), executive education takes place elsewhere, too, such as at strategy consultancies, human resource consultancies, personalized and remote learning platforms, and firm or organization-internal corporate universities or training departments directly delivering services to individual learners or organizations. CABS (2017) reasons that to ensure a crucial degree of depth, the activities of these other organizations, which account for at least 80% of the market, are out of scope.

Would the formation of phronesis be fundamentally different if an executive-education-level learning intervention is to be delivered by a non-business school training provider or management consultancy? Future research is encouraged to explore convergences and divergences and shed light on the remaining 80% of the market. A second boundary – exploratory in nature – originates from the type of research pursued. The boundary entails a how-based research question, which explains how the phenomenon and related dynamics are perceived if answered. While this matches the early stage of maturity, the available body of knowledge is in when it comes to the specific context of executive education in business schools; moreover, this choice in favor of a descriptive study is a choice against a primarily prescriptive one. Study outcomes, therefore, reach less far into practical recommendations as would be the case otherwise. Therefore, the second suggestion for future research is to complement this study with further research embracing prescriptive outcomes. Linked to these two initial limitations is the insight that the literature on phronesizing in executive education is thin and that the literature does not appear to be too clear on segmenting the offering. CAPS (2017) and Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2018) help understand that forms, scope, lengths, content, targets, learning levels, spaces, or andragogy and technologies diverge. Future research is suggested to first segment offerings better, placing particular emphasis on phronesis needs and learning constraints. Shorter programs clearly have less time available than longer learning journeys and interventions to grow phronesis.

## **2) Overall research methodology**

The second decision addresses the methodological and method-oriented decisions that match the research question with a corresponding epistemological and ontological research design. This limits the study's data collection and eventual impact in terms of generalizability. Quantitative data were not gathered. No hypothesis was tested, although authors like Schulze (2003) identify the potentials of mixed-method studies. Walker and Baxter (2019) argue similarly and share their priority of more research value in the form of a better understanding in direct comparison incompatibilities of debates on epistemology. This study gathered qualitative, not quantitative data. Future studies can address the potentials of quantifying observed dynamics and generate different and complementing datasets.

## **3) Maturity of the evaluation system for constructivist grounded theories**

A third limitation links to the perceived maturity of constructivist grounded theory as an approach. While an increasing number of sample studies rely on it emerges, a more enabling framework and guidelines for evaluating studies do not exist. Available articles and guidelines elaborate on the positioning of the approach within the available more extensive set of research methodologies and methods than on detailed guidelines for integrating axes and categories. Most pertinently, how to evaluate one's own or others' studies remains ambiguous to a certain extent. This is an opportunity for future research. Two directions emerge.

The one direction is to advance, enrich, and mature the available body of knowledge to evaluate constructivist grounded theory studies. The other direction is to encourage researchers to add more self-evaluations. This train

of thought mirrors a corresponding one by Gibbert et al. (2008) for the field of case studies. These authors ask what can pass as a rigorous case study and report more adequately about the design choices and outcomes for case studies. Future research ought to, of course, continue the quality assurance of coding, categorizing, and integrating empirical insights without feeling too constrained by reporting obligations or too tight guideline "corsets," as this would not necessarily be in line with the method's flexibility and constructivist nature. More transparency in future studies can help with the credibility of the research outcomes and the broader acceptance of constructivist grounded theory in an otherwise already very contested field with substantial polarization.

#### **4) Focusing on versus complementing the learners' with the faculty's views**

This research acknowledges the previously mentioned insight shared by Blaxter et al.'s (2006), who reason that research is the "art of the feasible" (p. 157). A strong focus on doing one method right, or as right as possible in practical, pragmatic terms, was a priority. Genuinely understanding the experiences and perceptions of the study participants was crucial to achieving the research objectives. It required resources in terms of time and attention as well as concentration. Scrutinizing the learner and subjective experiences is also in line with a learning philosophy of self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 1995). The interview choices allowed for the construction of the 6C-duolog theory to contribute to the available body of knowledge not on phronesis in general but on the process of phronesizing within executive education – all within the research context of this study.

One limitation originates from this focus on interviewing course participants. Faculty members and potentially additional individuals, such as highly professional and motivated executive coaches, program directors, facilitators, and program managers as part of the delivery team, help form the context and study experience, several of them in a more directional or transformational role, others as merely supporting the execution of a plan for a learning journey.

Pashler et al. (2008), for example, reason that learning becomes more effective when the instructors acknowledge and comply with the meshing hypothesis. The meshing hypothesis states that learning experiences become more impactful if faculty adopts formats in line with the learner's preferences. Newton and Miah (2017) reveal that the majority of teachers believe in this train of thought – yet only a minority behaves accordingly and brings the meshing hypothesis to life. Based on such other studies, there is a case to explore the faculty's contribution as the other group of actors in the 6C-duolog model. They design the learning experience in their module, provide a buffet of ideas, and ensure a conducive context for learning. Calma (2016) reasons that the school, the program director, and the faculty members as suppliers of the opportunity of a learning experience should have a straightforward approach to assurance of learning. According to Calma, many accreditation boards and bodies require corresponding documents that link program-related and module-related learning goals to specific means to measure them. Prusak (2010) clarifies that not everything can be measured, and not everything that is measured is managed well. However, in more professionally run top-ranked schools, the faculty members represent a potentially rich source of insights.

### 5) From taking an initial stock to evaluating outcomes more holistically

This train of thought of including more than the learner's perception does not have to stop with the faculty members. Philips and Philips (2011) suggest a model to depict learning holistically beyond the emotional reaction of course participants in the form of satisfaction and satisfaction scores on course evaluations. Higher levels of measuring learning include testing for actual learning, and this could entail qualitative or quantitative tests of learning progress on phronesizing. Philips and Philips (2011) likewise argue that the outcome of learning could be measured in improved contributions of study participants at work and then in how employer organizations benefit as part of a holistic return on education or return on investment decision. The study at hand emphasizes experiences, not such a stakeholder-oriented perspective on returns. Future studies could render the perception of phronesizing more objective by triangulating it with an evaluation of faculty members and an impact analysis in the workplace of graduates.

### Conclusions

This article builds on the insight that business schools suffer from tremendous adversity. Multiple dimensions of business schools and their executive education offering are subject to change in the 21st century (Conger & Xin, 2000). However, as Iñiguez de Onzoño and Carmona (2012) argue, tough competition has so far caused a Red Queen effect known from evolutionary biology. The Red Queen effect originally stems from Carroll's (1871) *Through the Looking-Glass* as part of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, in which the Red Queen shares the following with Alice: "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place" (p. 33).

This quotation clarifies that even substantial innovation and organizational development efforts might not render it easy for institutions to leap. All these efforts risk institutions facing similar struggles as when they started their efforts. Too little competitive advantage could be achieved, let alone sustained, as competitors evolved as well. What also has not changed is the ongoing quest to add more value and step up. As CAPS' (2017) data suggest, 2/3 of executive education programs add no value in terms of staff engagement, staff or customer satisfaction, or profits and sales. In parallel, when it comes to complying with the Principles of Responsible Management (PRME), which also includes an addendum principle, more progress is needed. According to Godemann et al. (2014), this PRME addendum calls on business schools to become role models in ethics, innovation, and ongoing professionalization efforts. This thesis helps address the adversity of business schools and the call for more value and values. In times of knowledge becoming a commodity, graduates benefit from a unique value-added when the focus shifts from knowledge to wisdom. In a wiggly VUCA world, Antonacopoulou (2018) clarifies that learning must adapt. The same is true for practical wisdom – be it in strategizing (Nonaka & Toyama, 2007), leadership (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2011), or in more general terms, any burning issue in organizations (Flyvberg, 2008). Deans of business schools and executive education providers received the main elements of a balanced scorecard granting centerstage position to phronesis. The idea is not

merely to add phronesis to an otherwise untouched educational system but to reorient it to add more value in VUCA and COVID-19 times. Also, each business unit setting is likely to have idiosyncratic forces for and against change, as the analysis of types of executive education providers and, for example, them suffering from “accreditocracy” (Julian & Ofori-Dankwa, 2006, p. 225) clarified.

The ensuing discussion on horses for courses, i.e., implications for staffing and faculty development, clarified the following. Within a reconstructivist view on the purpose of education, the 6C-duolog model requires more from faculty members. Faculty ought to dare more, truly fulfilling their calibrating, cannonading, and careening responsibilities as outlined in the 6C-duolog model.

Embracing a shift towards phronesis and the 6C-duolog theory requires change. For Byrne (2020), the COVID-19 crisis represents an opportunity for such change amidst all of the adversity it caused. It represents one of those critical incidents, which allowed for a catalyzed change in the past and can have the same impact today! This logic holds for executive education providers, faculty but also learners alike. COVID-19 might well have rendered institutions, instructors and learners more agile and digitally savvy while rendering curricula more up to date, as outlined by De Novellis (2020). If schools, faculty, and learners embrace value potentials from phronesis more, they can draw on insights gained from the research in this study. To my best knowledge and understanding of the literature on executive education, this is the first empirical study aimed at opening this black box of phronesizing. As the research objectives clarified from the very beginning, the emphasis of this study is on creating a better understanding of how phronesizing unfolds – how participants in an executive education program perceive the phenomenon. While this study is descriptive and exploratory, it prepares future research and can inspire practice.

There are implications for each learner as well. Passively expecting a higher return on education will not do justice to the rather active role they have to play in terms of cultivating a conducive learning motivation, cherry-picking, and cutting ties. It is a true interactive, interdependent duolog that can lead to more practical wisdom. Aristotle left subsequent generations a wealth of insights, one of them in the form of his deliberations on phronesis. He also reckoned that “the pleasures arising from thinking and learning will make us think and learn all the more” (Aristotle et al., 2009, p. 1153a). This research project closes with the hope that course participants will benefit from gaining more phronesis from their duologs and these very pleasures that encourage them to continue to learn. As Antonacopoulou (2018) reasons, it is the only means to survive and thrive in a VUCA world.

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## Inspiring Minds: Childhood Teachers Using Gamification to Motivate Children's Learning English as a Second Language (ESL)

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**Abstract:** Gamification is one of the novel teaching strategies, which has an effective role in developing students' learning, mainly in second language acquisition. In Saudi Arabia, the implementation of gamification as a strategy in English language teaching is a fairly new concept in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The primary goal of this study is to analyze the effect of Early Childhood (EC) teachers' beliefs on their attitudes toward applying gamification activities while teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). The sampling includes ( $n=422$ ) of (EC) teachers in Saudi Arabia, who were selected randomly. Data collection was done via a self-administered questionnaire and it was analyzed through using a descriptive analyses approach. Results revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between teachers' beliefs and practices of using gamification in teaching ESL in ECE. Some teachers indicated that they experienced several barriers relating to lack of training and knowledge in terms of implementing gamification in EC settings. The results of this study are useful to policy and decision makers, regarding the need to enhance the digital skills of EC teachers through the provision of an appropriate training program. Future researchers are advised to conduct further study on the digital professional competencies of EC teachers in relation to teaching ESL.

**Keywords:** English language, games, students' learning, motivation, early childhood schools.

**Citation:** Allehyani, S.H., & Alfayez, S. A. (2024). Inspiring Minds: Childhood Teachers Using Gamification to Motivate Children's Learning English as a Second Language (ESL). In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 260-277), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The boom in technology and the economy has encouraged an increase in the labor market requirements for skilled workers who are fluent in English as an important, global language. In 1927, ESL was presented in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia without a precise curriculum (Alkhuzay, 2015). English was presented later in 1953 at secondary and high schools with a well-defined curriculum (Al-Subahi, 1989). In the last century, the teaching of ESL was not integrated into Early Childhood (EC) curricula in Saudi Arabia. Within the Saudi New

Vision 2030, the government emphasizes the integration of bilingual education into EC (Allehyani, 2022a). At the end of 2021, the Ministry of Education incorporated English language into the first grade of primary schools to accomplish the strategic goals of the Saudi New Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2022). Without doubt, learning ESL is not a simple task for young students as they usually face many intellectual difficulties in mastering the skills of writing, reading, speaking and listening fluently (Al-dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021; Hong, 2016). Some language activities in the classroom, such as translation, are time consuming, which is a burden on the teacher, especially in large classrooms (Kamaruddin et al., 2019). In this case, teachers need to apply inventive teaching techniques to engage all students in learning a new language, so that they form part of that culture (Jetzkowitz, 2018).

Classroom gamification is a relatively new trend in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Gamification refers to a problem-solving strategy that uses game design features and techniques within modern learning contexts (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). In preschool classrooms, implementing a gamification strategy is important in stimulating the minds of young children to learn. The use of games is common in educational institutions, but the application of a gamification strategy is a fairly new concept, especially in ECE in Saudi Arabia. As such, there is little research on this topic in the field of ECE in Saudi Arabia. Gamification in teaching English is one of the effective ways to motivate children and develop their interests in learning a second language (Zhang, 2018). Most scholars have confirmed that well-designed games can increase students' motivation to learn (Gee, 2003; Fullerton, 2014; Eichenbaum et al., 2014, Eguia & Contreras, 2016, Ahmed et al., 2022). By applying gamification in the classroom, teachers can motivate their students to learn, as it is one of the most beneficial strategies in the educational process (Garland, 2015). Gamification has proven effective in increasing students' efficiency in the educational process (Al-dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021).

Besides, gamification provides an atmosphere of social cooperation among students during learning. Gamification allows interaction and communication between students without any obstacles (Ahmed et al., 2022). In social contexts, gamification is used to encourage students to express themselves and their emotions freely (Pantazidou et al., 2021). In public schools in Saudi Arabia, for a long time, English was taught without much focus on developing learners' communicative abilities (Al-Nassr, 2015). The contents of English language curricula in Saudi Arabia often contain isolated subjects and inferential activities that result in limiting the progress in vital elements such as communication skills and critical thinking (Almukahhili, 2022). Nowadays, teaching English in kindergarten and primary schools in Saudi Arabia has become a central focus for developing learners' competency (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017). In light of this educational development, English language teachers are trying to use more creative and enjoyable teaching methods to maintain students' attention and drive for learning (Al-jifri & Elias, 2017). Gamification is useful in developing children's language skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing in English language contexts (Khosiyah, 2023). There are many applications of language games that stimulate children's English language learning, which are commonly used in ECE.

When reviewing the existing literature that dealt with gamification in EC, it was found that there is lack of

literature on several points. First, most of the current studies were limited to short-term evaluations and a small number of samples (Turan et al., 2016; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). Secondly, the studies that investigated the effect of teachers' beliefs and practices toward applying gamification strategies on teaching young students ESL, especially in primary school, are very few (Su & Cheng, 2015; Yildirim, 2017). Finally, most of the current literature focused on the field of application of gamified activities in e-learning systems is mainly linked to computer science education, which increases the issue of generalization to other learning areas for instance: languages (Park, 2019). More importantly, there are few studies that deal with EC teachers' use of gamification to motivate children to learn ESL, specifically in Saudi Arabia, and this is what the current study seeks to focus on. Zhang and Hasime (2023) recommend that future researchers focus more on investigating using gamification in kindergarten and elementary stages. To the best of our knowledge, existing studies on game-based learning mostly ignore the vital role that EC teachers play (Jong & Chang, 2015). Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the beliefs and practices of EC female teachers, and barriers they face in applying gamification in their classrooms based on the following three research questions:

1. What are EC teachers' beliefs and practices toward applying gamification in the classroom?
2. Is there a statistically sufficient correlation at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between the degree of practices and beliefs towards the use of gamification in teaching ESL?
3. Is there an effect of teachers' beliefs on practices towards the use of gamification in teaching ESL?

## Literature Review

### Gamification definitions

Gamification is one of the new educational phenomena that aim to incorporate some digital components from games into enhancing learning, especially in ECE. Gamification is a fashionable and active area of research (Kasurin & Knutas, 2018). Deterding et al. (2011) defined the use of game mechanisms and strategies in different contexts such as playing digital games for learning purposes. These entertainment contexts include virtual rewards, player points, game levels, and instructions on game mechanics (Hamari, et al., 2014). The mechanisms integrate into gamified online learning systems to support learners' education (Simões et al., 2013). Digital technology has a great potential to expand and improve the quality of education and students' learning outcomes, providing teachers with innovative digital tools, to motivate students in appropriate ways. Gamification refers to the employment of games that promote teaching and learning through fun, to support and motivate activities that occur in the classroom (Meza et al., 2020). It is very important to distinguish between the definitions of games and gamification. Foncubierta and Rodríguez (2014) "recognize the game as something concrete, while gamification is based on didactic content, that is, the elements and thoughts of the game are used to spice up the proposed activities" (p.63). In engaging activities, students gain knowledge as if they were playing a game (Simoes, 2013; Romero & Espinosa, 2019). Hamari and Koivisto (2013) recognized that gamification affects students' behavior, because it allows them to form new experiences, and provides them with the ability to exercise self-control and feel motivated.

### *Motivational Impulse in Gamification*

In EC settings, educators can apply play-based strategies such as gamification as most effective for teaching young children a second language. The widespread use of gamification in recent years is likely due to its impact on the user's motivation and learning (Garland, 2015; Kapsalis et al., 2020). This is essential in second language education, where motivation has been reliably associated with learning (Brown, 2007). There are two types of motives that are widely noted as important in increasing the learners' desire to learn, namely extrinsic and intrinsic. The theory of Self-Determination was introduced by Ryan and Deci's work, which was published in 1985 (Miller et al., 1985; Manzano-León et al., 2021). In this theory, the authors discussed extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Lepper (1988) explained the learners' external behavior, which involves actions taken to obtain the reward or avoid external punishment for a specific activity. Intrinsically motivating behavior is defined as that which is displayed to achieve the pleasure it provides, the learning it allows, or for the purpose of evoking a sense of accomplishment (Lepper, 1988). Intrinsic motivation can be achieved when someone enjoys doing something (Ellis, 2015; Manzano-León et al., 2021).

In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation results were lower in learners' motivation levels in the learning process over time, in gamification contexts (Hanus & Fox, 2015). Learners tend to perform better when they are intrinsically motivated (Lepper, 1988). Despite these differences, educators can incorporate extrinsic motivational tools into activities and use them in a way that enhances learners' intrinsic motivations and behaviors (Landers, 2014). Gamified activities can be used for increasing learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Learning ESL is related to learners' motivation. Gamification increases learning motivation and engagement levels, and develops students' learning performance (Araya et al., 2019; Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Shortt et al., 2021). Within the Second Language (SL) context, integrative motivation into classroom play a significant role in increasing a student's desire to devote time to schoolwork (Cook, 2016). Several scholars agreed that games are a useful educational method to engage children in learning English because they can enhance students' motivation and self-confidence (Boudadi & Gutiérrez-Colón, 2020; Edwards, 2022; Jiang, 2008; Kuo, 2008). Since children's attention span is short at this early age, the application of the gamification strategy is appropriate to attract their attention toward achieving great learning (García et al., 2021).

Despite the fact that gamification has proven to be an effective method for enhancing engagement and motivation when it comes to teaching, further research is required to deliver strong proof of its improvements on both students' emotional states and learning outcomes (Dicheva et al., 2015). Learning ESL for students requires a long period of time to study vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and other skills to master the second language (Cook, 2016; Lin, 2016; Seibert-Hanson & Brown, 2019; Martin, 2020; Shortt et al., 2021). A previous study by Wang et al. (2011) found that students had a positive attitude towards the effect of using games on improving their motivation and their acquisition of vocabulary. In addition, gamification can offer learners immediate feedback on their learning progress, which is crucial to improve and track their learning outcomes in the second language context (Khosiya, 2023). Scholars such as Edwards (2022) and Wang (2023) found that if students do not have any kind of motivation, they will not be inspired to continue learning and will

likely be left behind academically. Therefore, the role of teachers is to develop motivation in students to ensure the sustainability of learning in a positive environment.

### *Teachers' Implementation of Gamification*

Nowadays, technological devices surround children in their daily lives. Thus, some teachers prefer to integrate technology into children's learning at school. Teachers' digital competence is essential to adapt the modern teaching model to meet students' digital needs (García et al., 2021). However, continuous teacher training in this field is needed. Ciganda (2018) argued that teacher training programs related to gamification strategies should focus on promoting the development of related knowledge and skills to employ modern technology to enhance children's learning. In the same vein, Birova (2016) found that teachers have positive attitudes towards games in ESL teaching, as they have proven to be a useful method in teaching practice. Additionally, the gamification method was found to be necessary and very useful for all student age groups and levels (Birova, 2016). The teachers revealed that there is a lack of fun activities and exercises in the foreign language textbooks, which burdens them; therefore, the game method is useful for teaching a foreign language (Birova, 2016). This finding acknowledges that teachers suffer from a lack of appropriate teaching resources, and guidelines in foreign language curricula. The teachers' instructions to the students while playing online games were very important in arousing enthusiasm to participate in the lesson and understand its content (Wang et al., 2011). The results of the Kaur (2019) study showed that the use of language games to teach a second language was effective, as the games attracted students and increased their interest during learning.

There are many free, online English language applications that teachers can easily access and download. These applications enhance learning English language skills. Several scholars agreed that online games such as Kahoot and Duolingo are the most common commercial applications (Bustillo, et al. 2017; Gafni, et al. 2017; Hung, 2017; Iarenenko, 2017; Mateo-Gallego & Ruiz Yepes, 2018). These are free game-based online platforms established by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, which encompasses design features that encourage educational activities such as (timetables, points, effects, sound, leaderboards, nicknames). Teachers can create quizzes, discussion boards and surveys in a basic and straightforward indicative method. Gafni, et al. (2017) reported students' positive attitudes and satisfaction with using Duolingo as an enhancer of supporting their language learning courses. Kahoot proved to be an effective tool in English lessons where students felt positively about it (Dellos, 2015; García et al., 2021; Wang & Tahir, 2020; Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016). A comparative study by Khosiya (2023) examined the effectiveness of gamification between two groups of children who used traditional and modern methods through gamification in learning ELS. Learners who used their favorite gamified apps in learning language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation obtained higher scores than other learners who used the traditional method (Khosiya,2023). The study found that learners who use the gamified platforms are more stimulated and engaged than learners who use traditional language learning methods (Khosiya,2023).

Developing students' vocabulary has an important function in the language, as vocabulary is considered

significant for mastering speaking skills. Games are the best e-learning strategy to help students learn vocabulary in English (Kapp, 2012). A previous study by Kaur (2019) indicated that all teachers agreed that language games can increase students' vocabulary learning. By acquiring a large number of vocabularies, learners can master four skills in English which include: listening, reading, speaking and writing (Hamer & Lely, 2019). For example, the Pictionary game develops learners' language acquisition, which is highly effective for individual learners and provides language practice in different English language skills (i.e., listening and speaking, reading and writing) (Bendo, 2019; Hamer & Lely, 2019). Another example of a language game is Two Truths and a Lie. A previous study found that this game was positively effective on students' ability to speak to learners of English as a foreign language (Hariyati, 2018). Hot Seat is suitable game for any level of learner; it assists students to build their vocabulary and practice speaking and listening skills (Hariyati, 2018). Games are an effective tool for learners to gain new skills; although they take a long time and a lot of effort on the part of the teacher until they are well organized and managed (Bendo, 2019). A recent study by Jordán Buenaño (2021) found that using gamification has a great impact on developing learners' pronunciation skills while learning vocabulary in the target language, using a wide range of game elements to simplify the learning process. Besides, students' English vocabulary significantly improved as result of gamifying language activity (Jordán Buenaño, 2021). Hence, gamifying activity in ESL classes is very effective for developing students' language skills.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The aim of this study is to analyze the influence of EC teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards gamifying language activity to motivate children to learn ESL. This study targeted teachers in EC settings in the first-grade age, from 7 to 8 years in public schools in Saudi Arabia. The quantitative method was used in order to better analyze and define the problem and results of this research. This research design is suitable for this investigation. Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) stated that quantitative research is analysis into a social problem, which describes the phenomena by collecting numerical data that are examined by applying statistically based methods. The questionnaire was used as the best tool to reach a larger number of the sample and to achieve the purpose of the study.

### *Sampling*

This study includes ( $n=450$ ) participants of EC teachers in Saudi Arabia, who were selected randomly and agreed to participate voluntarily in this research. Data collection occurred via the questionnaire with the intention of gathering information on the teaching experience, practices, barriers, and attitudes of EC teachers regarding the implementation of gamification during ESL lessons. Prior to the data collection process, the researchers ensured that all participants had fulfilled the purposes of the current study, while maintaining the privacy of their personal information, which will only be used for the purpose of the study.



### *Instrument and Ethical Procedure*

The self-administered questionnaire was created using (Microsoft Forms) and it was distributed via EC schools' official email and social networking sites such as WhatsApp. The questionnaire contains three main sections: the first is the demographic information of the teachers, including (years of experience, professional training, and the barriers they may face in using gamification in teaching ESL to children; responses from the second and third sections are based on the Likert 5-point scale. The second section asks teachers about their role in motivating students' English learning via applying various language games in the classroom. The response has a range of answer options that go from (always=5 to never=1). The third section asks teachers about their perceptions of applying gamification as strategy to motivate students to learn ESL. The response has a range of answer options that go from (strongly agree= 5 to strongly disagree=1).

Prior to conducting data collection, at the first stage, the questionnaire was subject to content and context examination by the experts of the Kind Saud University Ethics Committee to ensure that all elements were scientifically correct and relevant to the subject of the research. All the questionnaire, research questions and methodology were submitted to the committee in both languages, Arabic (as the mother tongue of the local community) and English, to be assessed and examined ethically by the specialized academics. At the next stage, the final evaluation was conducted by two experts in the Higher Committee for Scientific Research Ethics. Their assessment and recommendation were taken into account in the final version of the questionnaire. After obtaining the final approval from the head of the University Ethics Committee (No: KSU-HE-23-148), the questionnaire was validated before the study, using an experimental group.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The descriptive statistics were analyzed via using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version26). Frequencies and percentages were analyzed and presented to summarize the questionnaire questions.

## **Results**

### **Demographic Information**

The researchers have used statistical description and an analytical method to examine the data by using (SPSS) in analyzing the sample characteristics to calculate the frequencies and percentage of the population sample. The study sample consisted of (n=450) EC English language teachers, and after applying data collection for the field study, the collected data were coded, entered into the computer, and then processed, analyzed and the statistical results were extracted using SPSS. Table (1) indicates the distribution of the English language teachers as a result of the study sample for the experience variable in teaching English: nearly (33.1%) of those teachers had from 1 to 3 years' teaching experience in ECE, while the rest of teachers (26.9%) reported that they had from



nearly 10 years and more as English teachers. Further analysis revealed that three-quarters of all English teachers (71.8%) indicated that they encountered various practical obstacles when applying the gamification method in the classroom. When those teachers were asked about the types of obstacles, the majority of responses (27.8%) revealed they had lack of digital gamified training.

Table 1. Background characteristics of English teacher respondents

Characteristics	Subgroup	Frequency	Percentage
Experience	1-3 years	149	33.1
	4-6 years	86	19.1
	7-9 years	94	20.9
	10 years and more	121	26.9
Gamification barriers in the classroom			
	Yes	323	71.8
	No	127	28.2
Barriers			
	Lack of digital gamified training	99	27.8
	Lack of knowledge on gamification	112	24.9
	Lack of time to prepare gamified activities	59	13.1
	Inappropriate classroom setting for gamified activities	20	4.4
	Does not fit subject schedule	13	2.9
	Other	7	1.6

Likewise, about (24.9%) of teachers reported that they had lack of knowledge on gamification (see Table 1). These are the most influential barriers mentioned by English teachers, which need to be tackled by government education policy-makers.

### *Judgment Standard*

Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) were analyzed for each concept and related items. These items were then ranked in a descending order according to the following scale: (Less than 2.33 = low, 2.34 – 3.67 = medium, and 3.68 - 5 = high).

### *EC teachers' practices and beliefs toward applying gamification in teaching ESL*

Table 2 shows the results of research question (1): What are EC teachers' beliefs and practices toward applying gamification in the classroom? The mean and standard deviation were analyzed for EC teachers' practices and beliefs toward using gamification in teaching ESL, showing the rank of the mean and its importance level

according to the class interval. As presented in Table (2), most of English teachers in EC settings reported that they implemented gamification when teaching ESL to children. The arithmetic means for this variable ranged between (2.86 – 2.98) with a general average mean value of ( $M=2.91$ ,  $SD=1.404$ ) on the five-point Likert scale. Interestingly, the most common game used by those teachers was (Pictionary), in order to increase students' vocabulary, with an arithmetic mean value of ( $M=2.98$ ), which is the highest arithmetic mean among all the phrases of the axis, with a standard deviation of ( $SD=1.469$ ).

Table 2. EC teachers' beliefs and practices toward using gamification in teaching ESL

<i>EC teachers practices toward using gamification in teaching ESL</i>				
No	Practices	M	SD	Level
1	I use game activities such as (Pictionary) to increase students' vocabulary	2.98	1.469	medium
2	I stimulate young children's learning grammar, spelling, listening, and writing via games such as (Word Jumble Race, Where Shall I Go?, The Mime, and What's My Problem?)	2.94	1.456	medium
3	I use game activities (such as Hot Seat, and Board Game, Broken Phone) to develop young children's listening, speech and social skills	2.90	1.382	medium
4	I stimulate young children to "guess" the meaning of unknown words and phrases in an interesting context instead of giving meanings instantly, in games such as (Continue the story, I spy with my little eye)	2.89	1.402	medium
5	I apply games such as (Two Truths and a Lie, Show and Tell) to enhance students' speaking and sense of belonging via sharing unique things about themselves with others	2.86	1.396	medium
Total mean and standard deviation		2.91	1.404	medium
<i>EC teachers' beliefs toward using gamification in teaching second language</i>				
No	beliefs	M	SD	Level
1	Young children's attention span is short, so I use language games to keep them in focus and have fun at the same time	3.72	1.207	High
2	Gamification is a good way for learners to self-assess (what they have learned, predict the outcomes of future behavior, and see how far they need to go to succeed)	3.72	1.207	High
3	I prefer to apply a gamification approach to motivate and engage young children in learning	3.71	1.249	High
4	The gamification technique encourages children to use language creatively and naturally	3.68	1.255	High
5	I use games in the class just because they are the perfect warming-up activities	2.95	1.364	medium
Total mean and standard deviation		3.55	0.960	medium

Results revealed that those teachers stimulate young children’s learning grammar, spelling, listening, and writing via using games, with a mean value of ( $M=2.94, SD=1.456$ ). Subsequent analysis showed that teachers reported that they were less likely to apply social games such as (Two Truths and a Lie, Show and Tell) to enhance young learners' speaking skills and sense of belonging, which enable children to share unique things about themselves with others; this category displayed the lowest arithmetic mean value of ( $M=2.86, SD=1.396$ ). EC teachers' beliefs toward applying gamification within teaching ESL were also examined as demonstrated in Table (2). The majority of English teachers agreed on the value of implementing gamification in teaching ESL axis, where the arithmetic means for this variable ranged between (2.95 – 3.72) with a general average of ( $M=3.55$ ) on the 5-point Likert scale, and a standard deviation ( $SD=0.960$ ).

Further analysis revealed that most of the teachers agreed that young children’s attention span is short; therefore, gamifying language activities assist children to maintain their focus, have fun at the same time and motivate them to engage more in learning. This category displayed an arithmetic mean value of ( $M=3.72, SD=1.207$ ). More importantly, English teachers agreed that gamification is an effective technique for learners to self-assess their learning progress, with an arithmetic mean value of ( $M=3.72, SD=1.207$ ). These results are significant as they reflect EC teachers' awareness of the real value of gamification within the ESL context as it builds children's engagement and strengthens skills through an activity-based approach to learning.

Interestingly, a few teachers expressed that they partially agreed with applying games in the class just because they are the perfect warming-up activities for young learners. This category displayed an arithmetic mean value of ( $M=2.95, SD=1.364$ ) (see Table 2). Regarding answering the second research question: Is there a statistically significant correlation at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between the degree of practices and beliefs towards the use of gamification in teaching ESL in early years. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between practices and beliefs towards the use of gamification in teaching ESL .As shown in Table 3, the significant value of practices towards beliefs of the use of gamification in teaching ESL is (0.001), which is ( $F$ )  $p<0.005$ . It indicates that the correlation is significant. The Pearson Correlation is (0.740 or 74.0%), which affirms that there is a positive relationship between practices and beliefs. In addition, the degree of importance of practices toward beliefs is (74.0%).

Table 3. Correlation between practices and beliefs towards the use of gamification in teaching ESL

		Practices	Beliefs
Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.740**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	450	450
Beliefs	Pearson Correlation	.740**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	450	450

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In relation to answering the third research question: Is there an effect of teachers' beliefs on practices towards the use of gamification in teaching ESL? Simple Linear Regressions calculated the effect of practices on beliefs towards the use of gamification in teaching a second language, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regressions between practices and beliefs towards the use of gamification in teaching ESL

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			R	Adjusted R Square	F Change	Sig. F Change
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	sig	R	Adjusted R Square	F Change	Sig. F Change
Constant	2.115	0.072		29.291	0.000	0.723a	.522	491.122	0.000
Practices	0.49	0.022	0.723	22.161	0.000				

5

a. Predictors: (Constant), beliefs

b. Dependent Variable: practices

As shown in Table 4, the value of the correlation coefficient ( $R$ ) for the independent variable practices and beliefs is ( $r=0.723$ ). This indicates that there is a strong direct correlation between the two variables, and that the coefficient of determination is ( $r=0.523$ ); this indicates that the percentage of variance in the dependent variable is (52.3%), through which we can predict the independent variable. Based on the value of Adjusted  $R$  Square, the predictive ability (variance) practices amounted to ( $r=0.522$ ). Therefore, when a change occurs in the independent variable by one correct amount, the dependent variable will change by 0.522 directly. Taken together, the results display that there is a significant ( $f$ ) test, with a value of ( $f= 491.122$ ), and a statistical significance level of ( $Sig. = 0.000$ ), which is a smaller value when compared to the statistical significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

## Discussion and Conclusion

Gamification is a useful and fun tool in teaching children a new language in an interactive way, which increases their motivation, desire and effective participation in the learning contexts. The present study intended to provide an in-depth analysis of the influence of EC teachers' beliefs on their practices: on the use and application of gamification in teaching ESL to Saudi children. Additionally, the current study explored the barriers EC teachers may face in teaching ESL since it is a new curriculum in ECE in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, the current research findings confirm the influence of teachers' positive beliefs about implementing gamification on their teaching practices for improving children's ESL. This result is a valuable contribution to EC literature, as there is lack of empirical research investigating teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward integrating gamification in teaching ESL in EC settings. Jong and Chang (2015) argued that there is need

for shedding light on the teachers' role in game-based learning contexts, which has been ignored in previous literature.

Broadly speaking, gamification has been found to be a vital and fundamentally enjoyable tool in language education in ECE; an additional motivation and enhancer technique in teaching ESL. It has been proven that EC teachers' positive perspectives toward gamification enhance students' enthusiasm and motivation in ESL. This result is in line with previous findings showing that teachers agreed on the significant role of game-based contexts, as students were more empowered and motivated toward learning new language (Boudadi & Gutiérrez-Colón, 2020; Edwards, 2022; Jiang, 2008; Khosiya, 2023; Kuo, 2008). Consequently, it directs and constructs the new language learning and teaching process into enjoyable tasks.

Interestingly, EC teachers in the current study reported their strong belief that gamification is the ideal tool to capture children's attention in the early language learning context. This finding is consistent with previous research that implementing gamification within language learning contexts captures children's attention, due to the entertaining nature of games (García et al., 2021). However, some EC teachers acknowledged that they encounter several barriers when applying games in learning contexts. The most influential and significant barriers those teachers face are the lack of knowledge on gamification and digital gamified training within ECE. Several scholars emphasized the importance of teachers' ongoing training in the digital education domain (Birova, 2016; Ciganda, 2018; García et al., 2021). Based on the results obtained in this study, it can be claimed that EC teachers should urgently be retrained as well as upskilled.

More specifically, our finding confirms that teachers have positive beliefs and practices toward using gamification for developing children's vocabularies, grammar, spelling, listening, and writing skills in English language contexts. This result supports previous critical findings on the influence of implementing gamification on children's learning outcomes in learning ESL (Bendo, 2019; Hamer & Lely, 2019; Kaur, 2019). In the same vein, teachers hold positive beliefs and practices in using gamification as assessment tools for improving children's second language learning outcomes. This result is consistent with previous finding by Khosiya (2023), who found that gamification offers learners immediate feedback on their learning progress, which is crucial for them to track and improve their learning outcomes in a second language context. All in all, the results of the current study indicated that there is an important relationship for children between learning English as a second language and using online games as a supportive pedagogical approach. These results prove that Saudi EC teachers consider gamification as the ideal technique for children to learn new vocabulary and improve their reading, writing and speaking outcomes, while evaluating the progress of their language skills.

### **Implications, Limitation and Recommendation for Future Research**

The findings of this study yield several pedagogical implications. The results of this research can be used as essential evidence to convince EC teachers, who still apply the traditional teaching method, specifically in

teaching children ESL, to start shifting their thinking and change their method of teaching to implementing more attractive and enjoyable techniques. These techniques should suit the characteristics and needs of young students to improve their educational performance. An additional important implication of gamification is that it encourages children to acquire hands-on experience effectively in the context of learning a new language, as it involves playing games within an active, experimental, and problem-solving learning environment. The results are valuable for use in planning the professional development of teachers in the field of technology in ECE, which has become a requirement for teachers and learners to teach and learn English as an official second language in the Saudi education system.

Despite the significant results of our study, a certain limitation needs to be highlighted. The limitation of the study lies in the reliance on the use of the quantitative method through the self-administered questionnaire in data collection; it is worth mentioning here that the use of other mixed qualitative research methods such as observations and interviews can enrich future results in revealing EC teachers' digital competencies in teaching ESL to children. The outcomes of this study may be important for policy makers and syllabus designers to create more digital and interactive courses for ESL young learners, through gamifying activities. As mentioned earlier, integrating the English language curriculum into ECE is new direction in Saudi education, which aims to enable young children to speak English and develop their essential skills. Accordingly, more attention is needed to providing suitable and flexible training programs to improve EC teachers' digital competencies based on children's developmental needs. In the light of the current results, the researchers suggest additional research on the role of the home environment in supporting children's acquisition of second language learning. The recent study might serve as a valuable reference for further examination into developing EC digital skills to promote young learners' skills in ESL through the implementation of gamification into the ECE classroom.

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## Less Is More: The Role of Lexical Complexity in The EFL Lexicon on TOEFL Reading Comprehension Outcomes

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**Abstract:** This study examines the role of receptive vocabulary knowledge on outcomes of the TOEFL reading comprehension task. Participants included 18 native speakers of Spanish learning English as a foreign language and 17 native speakers of English ranging in age from 19-25 years. Lexical stimuli were presented auditorily and were divided into “easy” and “hard” words based on both frequency and lexical neighborhood density. To increase difficulty, stimuli were distorted to simulate what is heard through a cochlear implant (CI). Linear regression showed that, for bilingual participants, higher scores on the TOEFL reading comprehension task were predicted by higher rates of accuracy for “easy” words. The theory of complementary distribution within the bilingual lexicon indicates that if a bilingual individual has a higher proportion of English-language words in their lexicon that are more colloquial (easy), they are less likely to have proficient knowledge of higher-level vocabulary necessary for university-level reading comprehension. This indicates that educators of English as a foreign language learners must work to improve knowledge and proficiency of more difficult vocabulary tokens.

**Keywords:** Reading Comprehension, Receptive Vocabulary, EFL, Complementary Distribution Theory, TOEFL

**Citation:** Waked, A., N. (2024). Less is more: The role of lexical complexity in the EFL lexicon on TOEFL reading outcomes. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 278-293), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Every year, nearly one million non-native speakers of English take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in the hopes of proving their English language capability. This test was developed in 1963 by the National Council on the Testing of English as a Foreign Language. Although the use of this exam has evolved over time, the original intent was to determine the language preparedness of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners hoping to enter English-medium institutions of higher education in the United States. The possibilities afforded by success on this exam have now expanded such that it can potentially allow one entry into over 7,500 employment and educational opportunities in over 130 countries around the world (Educational Testing Services, 2021).

While some institutions focus exclusively on the overall scores of the examination, others may additionally consider independent scores on the exam's measures of the four language competencies: Listening, speaking, writing, and reading. In the case of the TOEFL's examination of reading comprehension, two passages, approximately 700 words in length, are provided for analysis. These passages are excerpts from university-level textbooks. Comprehension is examined through five skills: Guessing vocabulary (the ability to use context cues), reference (e.g., identifying the referent of a pronoun), main idea (comprehension and identification of the primary themes of the passage), inference (determining the author's implied conclusion), and stated detail (identification of an explicitly stated fact; Educational Testing Services, 2021).

It is essential to examine reading comprehension through a multitude of skills as it is a complex task requiring knowledge of the orthography, morphology, and syntax of a language in addition to a large and comprehensive vocabulary (Nguyen et al., 2020). It has been estimated that in order to adequately comprehend a written passage, readers must understand a minimum of 95% of the words used (Ha, 2021; Hartono & Prima, 2021). For native speakers of English, frequently-used lexical items are naturally acquired throughout the developmental process (e.g., Höhle et al., 2020). However, this does not extend to the more complex and/or subject-specific vocabulary tokens necessary for academic success. In order to add these items to an individual's internal lexicon, or mental vocabulary storage, students must first be introduced to new lexical items.

As familiarity slowly increases over time with greater exposure to the novel word, retrieval becomes more automatized as it is assimilated into the internal lexicon. Nation & Coxhead (2013) classified the lexical knowledge required for this storage into three distinct dimensions. These are word form, word meaning, and word use. Repeated exposure to the word form helps to entrench both the form and its associated meaning into long term memory, the form of memory which stores items for a seemingly infinite length of time. Through the process of increasing familiarity, it becomes easier to quickly and efficiently retrieve these items into working memory (Bruning & Lewis-Peacock, 2020).

Working memory serves three important functions. Firstly, it retains input from immediate surroundings. Secondly, it retrieves information from long-term memory. Thirdly, and most importantly, working memory allows for the manipulation of this information long enough for it to be put to use (e.g., Waked et al., 2023). To successfully comprehend a written passage, readers must not only use their knowledge of the components of written language to extract meaning, but they must also retain the key concepts of what they have read in working memory. When reading a passage or text, it is important that readers only store the essential concepts, or "gist," of what they have read rather than each individual word and sentence. This allows for more efficient retention of what has been read into working memory, facilitating comprehension of forthcoming text (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Fluid reading relies on working memory to predict upcoming words, phrases, and sentences. Word prediction often relies upon the near-instantaneous process of word recognition that develops through increased exposure and familiarity. The development of word recognition is especially important for fluid reading in English as



many words in this language do not have phonemic orthography, that is, the sounds typically associated with the letters used to spell a word often do not align with the pronunciation of the word itself (e.g., Krepel et al. 2021). Additionally, English contains many words borrowed from other languages (e.g., “hors d’oeuvre”) that deviate from the typical sound/letter associations of English (Phuong, 2021). If a reader has a robust English-language vocabulary, s/he may be able to predict possible upcoming words and phrases that are grammatically and contextually in line with the overall meaning of the preceding text. Hence, a stronger vocabulary impacts the speed and accuracy of retrieval of linguistic information from long-term memory into working memory for more proficient reading comprehension (Carrol et al, 2020).

However, reading comprehension becomes increasingly difficult when the process of fluid reading is either interrupted or cannot be attained. For proficient readers, this can often be seen in sentences with syntactic or semantic ambiguity, in which either the grammatical structure or the written form of an individual word can potentially lead to multiple meanings. Evidence from eye-tracking studies shows that in such cases, readers may need to pause and re-read the portion of text that has interrupted the process of fluid reading before they are able to extract meaning (Hessel et al, 2021).

In some cases, readers may need to reread a larger portion of the preceding text to incorporate this meaning into what has already been stored in working memory (Nahatame, 2021). The interruption of fluid reading is often seen in EFL readers, particularly those with reduced vocabulary knowledge. Reduced knowledge of English-language vocabulary tokens may hinder one’s ability to successfully read and comprehend written text (Savasci & Akyel, 2022).

Reading is categorized as a receptive task as it is a means by which one receives, rather than produces, linguistic information. As such, receptive vocabulary has been found to predict reading comprehension outcomes in both native speakers of English as well as in EFL learners (e.g.,Tong et al., 2023). In the case of EFL learners, it has been proposed that the lexical capacity of an individual is likely to provide easier access to certain words in their native versus non-native language in different environments and situations. Words in an individual’s native language are often used in casual and colloquial settings whereas the English-language words used by EFL learners may be most often used in formal or academic settings (Grosjean, 1989).

Additionally, greater use of certain words in English may lead to more rapid and efficient retrieval into the working memory of an EFL learner. The neighborhood density of a word in English, or the number of words with related phonological or semantic connections, may also contribute to the ease with which a word is retrieved by working memory. Words with greater neighborhood density may be in competition with a larger number of related words for retrieval, thus hindering the retrieval process.

Kirk et al. (1995) created a task intended to examine receptive vocabulary using words divided into the categories of “easy” and “hard” in the Lexical Neighborhood Task (LNT) and Multisyllabic Lexical Neighborhood Task (MLNT). This division was based on the factors of frequency and neighborhood density.



“Easy” words are those that are higher in frequency, meaning that they are heard or read more often, and are therefore more likely to be easily retrievable from long-term memory into working memory. They are also lower in neighborhood density and therefore less likely to be confounded with words that are semantically or phonologically similar.

Conversely, “hard” words are those that are lower in frequency, and are therefore less likely to have been encountered often enough to become easily retrievable from long-term memory into working memory. They are also higher in neighborhood density, making them more likely to be confounded with words that are semantically or phonologically similar. “Hard” words, as defined by Kirk et al. (1995) are more likely to have features associated with academia than those classified as “easy,” which are more likely to share features with colloquial speech.

In this study, we examine the relationship between receptive vocabulary and reading comprehension in both native speakers of English and EFL learners. Participating EFL learners are all native speakers of Spanish. Native speakers of English self-reported that they do not speak any language other than English. Receptive vocabulary is tested using the “easy” and “hard” words of the LNT/MLNT. Reading comprehension is tested using the reading comprehension portion of the TOEFL exam. In order to more effectively examine retrieval of the lexical tokens of the LNT/MLNT, items were presented in sets that were either unaltered or distorted to simulate what is heard through a cochlear implant (CI). A CI is a surgically-inserted prosthetic device that allows Deaf individuals to perceive sound (e.g., Waked et al., 2017). All participants were students at an English-medium university located in the United States.

As such, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) Is there a difference between the receptive vocabulary of native speakers of English and EFL learners as measured by “easy” and “hard” words in unaltered and distorted conditions?
- 2) Is there a relationship between reading comprehension and the receptive vocabulary of native speakers of English and EFL learners as measured by “easy” and “hard” words in unaltered and distorted conditions?

Hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) As EFL learners typically possess robust vocabularies in their native language, lexical knowledge from their first language will likely lead to greater neighborhood density for the words used in this task (Ring & Dijkstra, 2023). In addition to the fact that “hard” words have greater semantic and phonological neighborhood density in English, there are also related words in an EFL learner’s native language that share overlapping features with target words in this study. As such, it is hypothesized that EFL learners will show greater difficulty retrieving “hard” words relative to their native-English-speaking peers. It is also hypothesized that no such difference will be found with regards to “easy”

words in the unaltered condition. Although these words will also likely have greater neighborhood density for EFL learners by virtue of participants' bilingualism, the fact that these words have lower neighborhood density in English may reduce the impact of this factor. Additionally, as "easy" words are presumed to be heard more frequently, EFL learners may have greater familiarity with these words and, as such, have the capability to more quickly retrieve them into working memory for immediate use.

It is additionally hypothesized that in distorted conditions, both language groups will show lower accuracy, as neighborhood density will be increased for both "easy" and "hard" words. Distortion in this study simulates what is heard through a CI. As such, words in the distorted condition lack a considerable degree of auditory frequency information. This form of distortion is also often described as robotic in nature, as the reduced frequency information causes language to lack the natural inflection found in typical speech. By distorting words in this way, neighborhood density will increase for both language groups as the limited information provided by this form of distortion will cause the quantity of words with similar potential auditory forms to increase (Han et al., 2015). Relative to their native-English-speaking peers, EFL learners will contend with both reduced familiarity with lexical items as well as even greater overall neighborhood density. As such, it is hypothesized that in this condition, native speakers of English will outperform EFL learners with regards to both "easy" and "hard" words.

- 2) Vocabulary knowledge is an essential aspect of fluid reading and reading comprehension (Ha, 2021; Hartono & Prima, 2021). As such, it is hypothesized that higher scores on the reading comprehension portion of the TOEFL exam will most strongly correspond to higher scores on the perception of "hard" words in both language groups. This is due to the fact that the features of "hard" words are more likely to correspond to those used in academic texts, whereas those of "easy" words are more likely to correspond to those used in colloquial speech. As the distorted condition will likely increase neighborhood density of both "easy" and "hard" words (Han et al., 2015), it is hypothesized that greater receptive vocabulary knowledge will be best reflected by recognition of words in the distorted condition. As such, higher reading comprehension scores are likely to be predicted by "hard" words in the distorted condition.

Reading is largely an automatic process for native speakers of a language (Roembke et al., 2021). Yet for EFL learners, this automaticity may not exist. As such, they may be more dependent upon a robust academic vocabulary to succeed in the reading comprehension task. As such, it is hypothesized that, for EFL learners, there will be a stronger predictive role of "hard" word retrieval in the distorted condition on reading comprehension than will be found for their native-English-speaking counterparts. It is additionally hypothesized that, in the case of EFL learners, there may be a similar, though potentially less notable, predictive role of the retrieval of "easy" words in the distorted condition on reading comprehension outcomes.

## Method

### Sample and Sampling

Prior to beginning this study, approval was attained from the University of Maryland's Internal Review Board. Participants were then recruited through the Department of Psychology at the University of Maryland and were compensated with course credit. Participants in this study included 17 native speakers of English and 18 EFL learners. EFL learners were native speakers of Spanish who were first exposed to English at ages ranging from 0 to 12 years. Despite this discrepancy, no significant correlations were found between age of first language exposure and any variable measured in this study. As such, all EFL learners were considered as one homogenous group. Participants in the native English speaking group ranged in age from 19 to 25 years with an average age of 20.9 years. Participants in the EFL group ranged in age from 19 to 23 years with an average age of 21.3 years. Native speakers of English included 12 female and 5 male participants. EFL learners included 13 female and 5 male participants. As such, groups were balanced with regards to both age and gender.

### *Materials and Procedure*

After providing informed consent, participants completed a pre-screening form collecting general information such as age, gender, education level, whether they had working knowledge of any language other than English, and whether they had been diagnosed with a learning and/or processing disorder/difference. Participants who reported no such diagnoses were then tested for hearing level. Qualifying participants had audiometric thresholds of 20 dB HL or lower between the frequencies of 250 and 8,000 Hz, indicating typical hearing. As such, they were deemed fit for receptive vocabulary testing via auditory presentation of lexical items.

Receptive vocabulary was tested using single words from the LNT/MLNT. These tasks were originally intended for use with children who use a CI. Kirk et al. (1995) used words compiled by Logan (1992), who tabulated lexical entries in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). This database contains transcripts from published studies of child language development. These corpora have been validated against several similar lists (Kirk et al., 1999) and have been shown to be equally valid in tests of both children and adults (e.g., Meyer et al., 2003). Both tasks are divided into two sets, each comprised of 50 concrete nouns. Half of all words in each set belong to either the categories of "easy" or "hard."

In the present study, the first set of each of these measures were combined and used in the unaltered condition. Following a brief training period, the second set of these two measures were combined and used in the distorted condition. Previous research has used similar testing of receptive vocabulary using words presented in noise (Kaandorp et al., 2016). However, as the LNT/MLNT was intended to be used by individuals with a CI, CI-simulation was used. Performance on both "easy" and "hard" items in these two conditions were tabulated as percentage correct, which were then converted to rationalized arcsine units (RAU). This was done to reduce the risk of violating the assumption of normality in further calculations.

Participants were first presented with unaltered items from the LNT/MLNT and were asked to repeat each lexical item immediately following its presentation. They were then presented with ten sentences altered to simulate what would be heard through a CI. These sentences were taken from the Harvard IEEE sentence corpus (Rothauer, 1969) and were used to familiarize participants with this form of distorted speech. Participants first heard these sentences in their distorted form and were asked to repeat what they had heard. They then received auditory feedback in which stimuli were replayed in their unaltered speech form followed by repetition of the same sentence using CI-simulating distorted speech. Participants were also concurrently provided with visual feedback using text presented on a computer screen. Following this training period, participants were presented with the second set of LNT/MLNT words in their distorted form and were asked to repeat each lexical item immediately following its presentation. All listening took place in a double-walled, sound-attenuating booth. Participants were accompanied by a researcher who manually recorded the accuracy of each target stimulus.

Following receptive vocabulary testing, participants were given a five- to ten-minute break before beginning the reading comprehension task. Reading comprehension was measured through the use of a passage from a practice examination of the TOEFL exam. Testing took place in the same double-walled sound-attenuating booth in order to reduce distractions and was administered as a hard copy. Participants were unaccompanied during this portion of the study. As per the directions given for this passage, participants were given 20 minutes to complete the reading comprehension task. The passage used was titled *Meteorite Impact and Dinosaur Extinction*. It consisted of 683 words distributed among 7 paragraphs. Each paragraph was 4-5 sentences in length. Every fifth line was numbered in the page margin in order to assist participants in locating information relevant to specific questions. Questions examined participants' abilities in five areas of reading comprehension: Guessing vocabulary (the ability to use context cues), reference (e.g., identifying the referent of a pronoun), main idea (comprehension and identification of primary themes in the passage), inference (determining the author's implied conclusion), and stated detail (identification of an explicitly stated fact; Educational Testing Services, 2023). Passages were manually scored by two researchers. Test re-test reliability was 100%. Scores were tabulated as percentage correct, which were then converted to RAUs to reduce the risk of violating the assumption of normality in further calculations.

## Results

A paired sample repeated measures ANOVA was calculated to examine differences between the two language groups. In the unaltered conditions, both "easy" and "hard" words were at ceiling for both language groups. However, in distorted conditions, native speakers of English significantly outperformed EFL learners at the  $p < 0.01$  level. As such, native speakers were found to have higher scores of receptive vocabulary relative to EFL learners. No significant difference was found between the two language groups in reading comprehension scores.

Pearson correlations were also calculated for reading comprehension scores and each of the four vocabulary conditions. For EFL learners, a significant negative correlation was found between scores of reading comprehension and “easy” vocabulary items in the distorted condition at the  $p < 0.01$  level. No other significant relationships were found. Linear regressions indicate that lower scores in the “easy” vocabulary items in the distorted condition predict improved reading comprehension outcomes. This may suggest that more proficient EFL readers have greater difficulty retrieving these “easy” words as they may instead have greater familiarity with “hard” words that are likely to share the features of words associated with academia. As such, these learners may have less experience recognizing and retrieving “easy” words, which are more likely to share features associated with colloquialisms. This may cause more proficient EFL readers to have greater difficulty retrieving “easy” words into working memory for use.

## Discussion

In this study, the relationship between receptive vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension was measured in both native speakers of English and EFL learners at an English-medium university located in the United States. Lexical tokens were taken from Kirk et al. (1995)’s LNT/MLNT tasks and were used as an auditory measure of receptive vocabulary. Items in these tasks are classified as either “easy” or “hard” based on both frequency and neighborhood density. As lexical items in these tasks are separated into two distinct lists, both “easy” and “hard” items from one list were first presented to participants in their unaltered form. Then, following a brief familiarization period with CI-simulating speech, items from the second set were presented in their distorted form. Reading comprehension was measured through a passage from the reading comprehension portion of the TOEFL exam. It was discovered that, for EFL learners, lower scores on “easy” items in the distorted condition predict improved reading comprehension outcomes.

This study sought to answer two research questions:

- 1) Is there a difference between the receptive vocabulary of native speakers of English and EFL learners as measured by “easy” and “hard” words in unaltered and distorted conditions?
- 2) Is there a relationship between reading comprehension and the receptive vocabulary of native speakers of English and EFL learners as measured by “easy” and “hard” words in unaltered and distorted conditions?

For the first research question, it was hypothesized that native speakers of English would outperform EFL learners in all receptive vocabulary conditions. While this was not the case with unaltered words, this result was found for both “easy” and “hard” words in the distorted condition at the  $p < 0.01$  level. As these words were taken from a data set originally designed for use with children over the age of five years (Kirk et al., 1995), it is unlikely that this difference arises from a lack of knowledge of these words by EFL learners. However, the difference between receptive vocabulary scores among native speakers of English and EFL learners may

potentially be due to a combination of factors related to the design of the vocabulary task.

One such factor is that native speakers of English may have greater familiarity with these words simply by virtue of the fact that they have used the English language over a longer period of time relative to their EFL learning peers. This may allow for greater entrenchment of lexical items into long-term memory. This may also have led to a relatively increased number of situations in which these words were retrieved into working memory. As such, native speakers are likely to be able to more quickly and accurately recognize words in a condition in which much of the auditory information has been removed. This may allow native-speakers of English to more effectively retrieve these words into working memory such that they can be successfully used (Nguyen et al., 2020).

A second possible reason for this difference is that bilingual EFL learners may simply have larger neighborhood density for the lexical items used as compared to their monolingual, native-English-speaking peers. The Lexical Neighborhood Theory posits that reading or hearing a single lexical item activates a network of related phonologically and semantically related items. Activated items then in turn activate a further set of phonologically and semantically related lexical items in a seemingly endless cycle. The larger a network cast by an initial lexical prompt, the more difficulty an individual will have retrieving the appropriate item (Peereman & Content, 1995). For EFL learners who have knowledge of the vocabulary of their native language as well as that of English, such neighborhoods are inevitably significantly larger than those of their monolingual, native-English-speaking peers. As such, when phonological information is reduced through distortion, the number of possible target words activated by the vocabulary items in this study likely causes far more difficulty with rapid and efficient word retrieval.

The second research question of this study addresses the relationship between receptive vocabulary scores on reading comprehension. Vocabulary items were presented in the “easy” and “hard” conditions in either an altered or distorted form. The hypothesis for this question posited that higher receptive vocabulary scores of “hard” words would predict improved reading comprehension, particularly for EFL learners. It was predicted that this would be particularly apparent in the distorted condition as greater effort would be required to overcome the effects of neighborhood density to retrieve the correct lexical token into working memory for use. However, this result was not found. Instead, an inverse result was found whereby reduced receptive vocabulary for “easy” words in their distorted form predicted improved reading comprehension outcomes for EFL learners at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

There are several potential reasons for this finding. One possibility is that a floor effect exists for these “hard” words due to the nature of the distortion used. CI simulation greatly reduces the amount of linguistic information available to the listener while simultaneously causing speech to present in a robotic form. It has been shown that typically-hearing children and adults can learn to understand this form of distortion after a four-hour training period (Waked et al., 2017). However, in the current study, participants were only given a brief familiarization period. As such, it is possible that these “hard” words were presented at a level at which an



accurate measure could not be obtained.

A second possible reason may arise from the ways in which EFL learners store and retrieve the lexical items of their languages of use. Theories exist proposing that the internal lexicons containing items from each known language overlap (e.g., Kroll & Stewart, 1994), while others indicate that lexical items are stored separately according to each language of use (e.g., Lambert et al., 1968). There are further theories that items from each lexicon overlap asymmetrically that are subject to factors such as frequency and environment of use (e.g., de Groot et al., 1994). There are additional theories that suggest that these items overlap rarely if at all (e.g., Bialystok & Luk, 2012).

The Separate Storage Model hypothesizes that there are separate representational systems for each language. In this model, the language not in use is considered to be completely deactivated in situations in which the other language is activated for use (Hamers & Lambert, 1972). Support for this model has come from early work using questionnaires, recall, and word association tasks. For example, Lambert et al. (1968) studied two groups of bilingual individuals, one consisting of speakers of both French and English and the other consisting of speakers of both Russian and English. Both groups were presented with various lists for free recall. Some lists were constructed such that all words presented across languages were semantically related, while others were given lists in which words presented across languages were semantically unrelated.

Lists either contained items in only one of the participant's known languages or items from both known languages. These items were administered simultaneously within one task. Because participants showed semantic benefit in the mixed-language condition, even with lexical items from their other known languages potentially interfering with one another, researchers concluded that participants' lexicons are able to switch rapidly between their active and inactive states. According to the hypotheses of this study, had a reduction in accuracy occurred in conditions in which semantic foils had been presented across target languages, this would have presented evidence that lexical items across languages are connected at the conceptual level. As this was not found to be the case, researchers concluded that bilingual individuals store lexical information in two separate, language-specific lexicons.

Conversely, some models propose that the two lexicons known by bilingual individuals overlap completely. The Concept-Mediation Hypothesis purports that lexical items in a bilingual individual's second language are linked to their first language at the conceptual level. In this model, the conceptual level contains both linguistic and non-linguistic concepts that are common between the two words in each language. Potter et al. (1984) examined this theory by studying two groups of individuals. These included Chinese-English bilinguals who were proficient in both languages and native English speakers learning French in high school. Members of the second group were not proficient in their second language. Participants were asked to identify either line drawings or written words. Half of the written stimuli were presented in a participant's native language and the other half in their second language. Both groups named images in their second language more quickly than was assumed necessary to translate a word in an individual's first language into the corresponding word of their second



language. Results were interpreted as showing unification of lexical items across all known languages rather than a rapid switch of language activation and deactivation as is assumed in the Separate Storage Model.

Unlike the Concept-Mediation Hypothesis, there are additional models and theories that propose that the two lexicons of bilingual individuals only partially overlap. Some also hypothesize that this overlap may be asymmetrical. Among these is the Distributed Model, which hypothesizes that some word types have relatively separate storage, whereas others generally overlap in what are termed “conceptual nodes.” Concrete words (e.g., nouns) and cognates, words found in both languages that are similar in both phonetic and semantic features, are assumed to share more features than grammatical items (e.g., pronouns) and abstract items (e.g., feelings). Because of these differences, this model predicts an asymmetrical overlap in which some types of words have shared representation while other types do not (de Groot et al., 1994).

Yet another theory of bilingual language storage is the Complimentary Distribution Theory. This theory is rooted in the bilingual disadvantage seen in many young, bilingual children. This disadvantage relates to the fact that, while bilingual children possess the same number of total lexical items as their monolingual peers, the number of items present in each language is reduced relative to monolingual individuals who are only exposed to one linguistic set of lexical items. The words in a bilingual child’s internal lexicon are divided based on both frequency of use in each language as well as the environment in which words in each language are used. Bilingual individuals in the United States are more likely to show reduced English-language vocabulary for words that are typically labeled as both frequent and common, i.e., colloquialisms. This is presumed to be due to the fact that these words are first acquired in an individual’s native language and are primarily used with family and friends. While some argue that this lexical imbalance becomes largely resolved as bilingual individuals age and become more fully immersed in the socially-dominant English-language community, others argue that some degree of imbalance persists throughout the lifespan (Bialystok & Luk, 2012).

As the Complimentary Distribution Theory posits that environment plays a role in the distribution of lexical items across the total internal lexicon of a bilingual individual, it is possible that EFL learners who are more proficient English-language readers possess a higher proportion of words that are associated with academia due to a potential focus on classroom learning. As such, these students are more likely to use their native language for words that can be classified as more frequent and common rather than using corresponding words in the English language. Such words are reflective of features of the “easy” tokens used in the LNT/MLNT receptive vocabulary task. As such, reduced knowledge of “easy” words in English may allow for a greater proportion of their overall internal lexicon to store words related to the academic environment, corresponding to features of the “hard” words in the LNT/MLNT task. If EFL learners are more frequently receiving exposure and semantic reinforcement of “hard” words, it is likely that they will have less robust representations of “easy” words in long-term memory. This may cause difficulty in retrieving “easy” words into working memory for immediate use. As such, lower scores on “easy” words may indicate that an individual has greater knowledge of the type of lexical items required for both fluid reading and reading comprehension.

## Conclusion

Vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental aspect of fluid reading and reading comprehension (Nguyen et al., 2020). For native speakers of English, frequently used words, such as those sharing the features of the “easy” words in this study, are often acquired from everyday interactions. But unlike native speakers, EFL learners frequently learn the majority of their vocabulary in the classroom environment (Nugroho et al., 2020). EFL learners who are academically inclined may be more likely to gain knowledge of new lexical items through direct education, interactions in the classroom, and external educational endeavors. As such successful EFL learners are likely to focus their use of English on academic activities, thereby gaining familiarity with the written form of English-language words and reinforcing their related meanings. Familiarity with a novel word and reinforcement of its meaning is what is required to successfully “know” a word as it is used in written text (Nguyen et al., 2020). As such, successful EFL readers are likely to have the ability to more easily access and retrieve words sharing the features of the “hard” type of lexical items used in educational settings. These are less likely to include items sharing the features of “easy” words, which can be acquired through more casual interactions. Conversely, if an EFL learner gains knowledge of new lexical items primarily through casual social interaction, s/he will likely possess greater knowledge of words sharing the features of “easy” vocabulary items. This may hinder academic success, as the EFL learner will have spent a lower proportion of her/his time using the English language to become familiar with academic vocabulary.

The value of the reduced ability to rapidly and effectively use “easy” lexical items may prove to be useful to EFL educators working to improve students’ reading comprehension. This information can be used to create activities both inside and outside academic environments that increase the use of lexical items sharing the features of “hard” words. This in turn may reduce the proportion of students’ time spent immersing themselves in activities reinforcing the retention of lexical items sharing the features of “easy” words. Such activities can involve explicit vocabulary instruction; however, many such tasks require rote memorization, which is often an ineffective method of retaining knowledge (Torlakli, 2019). It may instead be of interest to examine how the four language competencies can be used together to expose EFL learners to new words, increase their familiarity with the written and auditory forms of these words, and reinforce the meanings of these words through speaking and writing. Such activities may help EFL learners come to “know” novel academic vocabulary items such that they can be used to improve the students’ ability to truly comprehend what they read.

## Recommendations

This study raises several possibilities for future research. Among these is the opportunity to replicate this study with a larger number of participants. The current study examined 17 native speakers of English and 18 EFL learners. Replication with a larger sample size may allow for more definitive answers to the questions examined in this study. This study could also be replicated with individuals from a wider variety of linguistic backgrounds in order to determine if results are generalizable only to native speakers of Spanish or if they are applicable to

EFL learners as a broader population.

Another possible opportunity for further examination lies in the way in which distortion was used. Previous work by Waked et al. (2017) has shown that typically-hearing native speakers of English can learn to understand speech that has been distorted to sound like what is heard through a CI; however, this was achieved through a four-hour training process. Participants in the current study were provided with only a brief familiarization period consisting of ten sentences. Had participants received more extensive training, perhaps the floor effect on “hard” words found in the distorted condition would not have arisen.

It may additionally be beneficial to examine the intrinsic nature of participants themselves. Factors such as self-efficacy and learning orientation have been shown to impact learning outcomes. Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s innate sense of control over their life and life circumstances. Students with greater self-efficacy are more likely to be motivated to face difficult situations from the viewpoint that they are in control of their opportunity to overcome them. However, students with lower self-efficacy are more likely to view such circumstances as out of their control and are less likely to feel that they are able to work through difficult situations and succeed via their personal abilities (Pilotti, 2022a). Additionally, learning orientation may play a role in EFL students’ decisions regarding the context of their primary use of English. Students who approach education from a grade-oriented approach are more likely to exert academic effort primarily in ways that can be directly viewed as earning the tangible outcome of a high grade. Students who approach education with a learning-orientation approach however are more likely to work towards acquiring the skills centered on learning outcomes (Meyer et al., 2019; Pilotti et al., 2022b). EFL students with higher self-efficacy and a learning-orientation approach may be more successful in acquiring the academic vocabulary required to succeed in reading comprehension and less likely to devote their English-language learning experience to acquiring the high-frequency, more colloquial, vocabulary items that are less likely to help them to succeed in their academic endeavors.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the faculty and student research assistants at the University of Maryland who assisted in the creation of the data set used in this study.

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## STEM and Non-STEM Learners: Responses to Writing in a Second Language

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**Abstract:** Writing in a second language is an effortful activity that relies on the attentional resources of the writer's working memory for information processing. According to the interference account, anxiety affects students' writing performance because it depletes the resources necessary for the storage, retrieval, and manipulation of information in working memory. In the present correlational study, we asked whether STEM and non-STEM undergraduate students differ in their writing anxiety (i.e., somatic anxiety, behavioral avoidance, and cognitive anxiety) as well as in the quantity and quality of their writing output. We also examined the extent to which different types of anxiety predict writing quantity and quality indices in the two subject groups. We hypothesized that if STEM and non-STEM students approach the task of writing in a second language differently, they and their writing outputs will be susceptible to different types of anxiety. Participants were Arabic-English speakers during their first year of college who were classified as moderate or competent users of the English language. They were asked to write about their college life and then complete a questionnaire on writing anxiety. In this study, STEM students experienced less somatic anxiety and behavioral avoidance than non-STEM students but wrote fewer words per sentence. For STEM students, all types of anxiety predicted shorter text with fewer high-frequency words. For non-STEM students, only behavioral avoidance predicted shorter and less coherent text. It was concluded that differences not only in the amount but also in the type of anxiety experienced by STEM and non-STEM students might be a useful tool for interventions devoted to ameliorating writing in a second language.

**Keywords:** Writing, Second Language, Anxiety, Arabic

**Citation:** Kort, S., El Alaoui, K., Waked, A., & Pilotti, M. (2024). STEM and non-STEM learners: Responses to writing in a second language. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--*



*International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 294-304), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

During the freshman year, undergraduate students encounter many challenges in their attempts to meet the demands of college courses. One of such challenges for students who have English as their second language is writing. Undoubtedly, writing in a second language is a complex and demanding activity (Zailaini et al., 2015).

The challenge of writing in a second language may be addressed either as an opportunity or a threat. According to the cognitive appraisal model of Folkman & Lazarus (1985), learners may assess challenging and potentially stressful situations with an opportunity framing, which entails seeing potential gains as more salient than potential losses (Vandewalle et al., 2019). As such, they approach challenging situations, such as the possibility of poor performance, with little anxiety because they rely on beliefs about the value of additional effort when a setback occurs. Threat framing, on the other hand, emphasizes potential negative outcomes, thereby increasing people's anxiety and with it the desire to avoid the situation and/or activity that is perceived as the source of the threat (Sanner & Evans, 2019). It follows that the possibility of poor performance raises the fear of a negative evaluation, which devalues additional effort since it could further expose the learner to the experience of failure.

The affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), applied to writing in a second language, suggests that adverse emotional factors (e.g., low motivation, low self-confidence, and high anxiety) may reduce the amount of information that the writer can process, thereby leading to a degraded output (Deb, 2018). Evidence exists that anxiety is associated with impaired cognitive performance (Derakshan & Eysenck, 2009; Naveh-Benjamin, 1991) especially when the task to be performed is complex and attention-demanding, such as writing in a second language (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022). A more detailed account of how anxiety may affect information processing is provided by the interference account (Stout et al., 2017; Sari et al., 2017). According to this account, writing heavily relies on working memory, which is the "sketchpad of conscious thought" where information that the writer has gathered externally or from long-term memory is kept to be processed through limited attentional resources (Miller et al., 2018, p. 463). In one's working memory, the experience of anxiety involves the presence of various task-irrelevant thoughts (e.g., worries), which reduce the attentional resources that are available to be allocated to writing, a task-relevant activity (Stout et al., 2017; Sari et al., 2017). One of the most detrimental effects of anxiety is that retrieving the information needed for writing becomes difficult (Derakshan & Eysenck, 2009; Naveh-Benjamin, 1991). Consequently, it is not surprising that in the interference account, anxiety is expected to lead to poor writing, including declines in both quality and quantity. If poor writing is the correlate of anxiety, are there individual differences?

The present study was motivated by comments made by freshmen who were asked in focus groups ( $n = 60$ ) how they approached the task of writing in English (i.e., a second language; Pilotti, 2022). Answers tended to differ by major. The vast majority of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors described

an opportunity approach, whereas most non-STEM students tended to report answers that fitted a threat approach. This finding was not surprising because of the ecosystem in which STEM students reside. Consider, for instance, the scientific reading materials (e.g., textbooks, articles, etc.) to which STEM learners are mostly exposed, which tend to be written in a highly technical language whose content is concept-dense and abstract (Aydoğan & Koc, 2022; Fang, 2005; Hubbard, 2021; Lampropoulos & Admiraal, 2023; McSween, 2024; Toscano, 2023; Pham, 2021). Not surprisingly, STEM students report experiencing more difficulties in reading the technical language of their textbooks than non-STEM students (Pilotti et al., 2023). Yet, STEM courses are uniquely suited to emphasize a problem-solving approach to class activities (Al-Zohbi et al., 2022; 2023; Felder & Brent, 2016), thereby fostering the adoption of an opportunity approach when facing difficulties to ensure academic success in such courses.

In our study, we asked whether indeed STEM and non-STEM students differed in the anxiety experienced when writing in a second language. We hypothesized that if the differences reported by students regarding their approach to writing were solid, they would translate into differences in the amount and types of anxiety experienced. We considered three types of anxiety: somatic anxiety, behavioral avoidance, and cognitive anxiety (Cheng, 2004). Somatic anxiety pertains to self-reported symptoms of intensified autonomic arousal and nervousness, such as hyperventilation, sweating, trembling, and palpitations.

Avoidance behaviors may include withdrawing, procrastinating, and evading. Because writers with anxiety view writing as an unrewarding activity, avoidance behaviors exemplify their attempts to circumvent situations where writing is demanded (Daly & Miller, 1975). Cognitive anxiety refers to disruptions of thought processes, which may include intrusive thoughts, difficulties in keeping one's attention focused, and excessive worrying. Cognitive manifestations of anxiety include appraisal concerns, such as fears of being negatively evaluated, and communication apprehension, such as fears of not being able to communicate effectively (Cheng, 2004).

Interestingly, most studies on students' anxiety related to writing in a second language involve beginners. We focused on moderate and competent writers (as per scores on standardized tests) to determine the extent to which writing anxiety plays a role in this often neglected population. In our study, hypotheses were specifically formulated based on the assumption that STEM education promotes an opportunity-framing approach to academic challenges. As a result, we predicted that if STEM students see difficulties (e.g., reading textbooks and articles written in a technical language and writing in a second language) through the eyes of an opportunity framing, they would experience overall less somatic and cognitive anxiety as well as engage in less behavioral avoidance than non-STEM students (H1). If anxiety differs between subject groups, quantity and quantity measures of the output of writing should follow suit (H2). Furthermore, anxiety would predict declines in the quality and quantity of the written output, but differently for STEM and non-STEM learners. In non-STEM students, a threat approach would make avoidance behavior dominant over the other types of anxiety. Thus, avoidance behavior would more strongly predict declines in the quality and quantity of the written output for non-STEM students than for STEM students (H3).

## Method

### Participants

Participants were a convenience sample of 553 female undergraduate students who were enrolled in a written communication course of the general education curriculum of a Saudi Arabian University. The university complies with a US curriculum, which is to be taught through student-centered instruction. Students were Arabic-English speakers who had attained at least a 6.0 IELTS overall score and a 5.5 IELTS writing score (range: 0-9). Thus, the selected sample included second-language learners ranging from modest to competent users, who are often neglected in the extant literature in favor of introductory-level learners. The students' average age was 19.51 ( $SD = 1.57$ ). In the sample, 42.86% were STEM majors (i.e., engineering, computer science, or architecture), and 57.14% were non-STEM majors (i.e., business, law, or interior design), which reflected the first-year enrollment ratios of the selected University. The participation rate was 97.53%.

### *Materials and Procedure*

After giving informed consent, participants were assigned two tasks to complete. First, they answered a few demographic questions (i.e., age, major) and then wrote a brief paragraph regarding their college life. A minimum of 50 words was required by the instructions. A loose 15-minute timeline was allocated to the latter task. Second, students completed a revised version of the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAIr) of Cheng (2004). The inventory, which served to assess students' writing anxiety, consisted of 22 statements. Surface changes in the wording of some statements ensured second-language speakers' intuitive comprehension. For instance, the phrase "write English composition" was changed to "write assignments in English".

Participants were asked to respond to each statement by selecting a value on a 5-point scale from strongly agree (+2) to strongly disagree (-2) with 0 serving as the neutral point. Cronbach's alpha was 0.91. Items were organized into three dimensions of anxiety, as advised by Cheng (2004): somatic anxiety, avoidance behaviors, and cognitive anxiety (including appraisal concerns and communication apprehension).

### *Data Analyses*

The text written by participants was organized into two sets of indices: one measuring quantity and one measuring quality. The TextEvaluator® software developed by the Educational Testing Services (ETS) was used to automate scoring (Chen & Sheehan, 2015; Sheehan et al., 2014). Quantity measures included the number of words used, the number of sentences written, and the mean number of words per sentence.

At the word level, the quality measures of each participant included a word unfamiliarity score and a word concreteness score. Word unfamiliarity (range: 1-100) was computed from two corpora, one consisting of 400

million words developed by ETS, and one consisting of 17 million words developed by Zeno et al. (1995). Word concreteness (range: 1-100) relied on the concreteness ratings developed by Coltheart (1981). Higher word concreteness scores indexed the greater use of concrete words, whereas lower word unfamiliarity scores reflected the greater use of high-frequency words. Either score signified degrading quality. At the sentence level, an index of syntactic complexity (range: 1-100) incorporated the mean length of sentences, the mean number of modifiers per noun phrase, the mean number of dependent clauses per sentence, and a measure of sentence depth, which reflected the memory load imposed by sentences with varying syntactic structures (Yngve, 1960).

In addition, a lexical cohesion score measured the frequency of word repetition across contiguous sentences and the use of connectives. It was intended to reflect the extent to which a written output is a coherent message instead of an array of unrelated sentences. Higher coherence values indicate lower text complexity (i.e., degrading quality).

Quantity indices were used to assess whether anxiety was related to changes in students' word output. At the word level, quality indices were intended to test whether anxiety predicted the use of fewer low-frequency words and more concrete words (i.e., a more elementary writing output). At the sentence level, quality indices, such as syntactic complexity and lexical cohesion, were intended to assess whether anxiety predicted qualitative declines in students' written output.

Differences between STEM and non-STEM students in writing anxiety, and quantity and quality measures of written outputs were assessed via independent samples *t*-tests. Pearson correlations were computed for each subject group to determine the extent to which measures of students' written outputs would be predicted by each anxiety type (somatic anxiety, avoidance behavior, and cognitive anxiety).

## Results

Table 1 reports the mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) of writing anxiety, quantity, and quality measures for STEM and non-STEM students. Statistical analyses are organized by the questions they answer.

### Are There Group Differences?

STEM students reported less somatic anxiety [ $t(551) = 2.05, p = .041$ ] and behavioral avoidance [ $t(551) = 3.20, p = .001$ ] than non-STEM students. These findings partially supported H1. Of course, if anxiety differs between the two groups, quality and quantity measures should also differ. However, the only quality measure that yielded a difference in favor of non-STEM students was the number of words per sentence [ $t(551) = 3.19, p = .002$ ]. Namely, non-STEM students wrote longer sentences than STEM students. No group differences were observed for qualitative measures. H2 was not supported.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	STEM		Non-STEM		Sign.
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Somatic Anxiety	-.54	.98	-.37	1.02	*
Behav. Avoidance	-.94	.75	-.73	.78	*
Cognitive Anxiety	-.13	.75	-.02	.80	
<i>Quantity Measures</i>					
No. of words	69.34	30.82	66.97	28.51	
No. of sentences	3.61	1.93	3.34	2.05	
No. words per sentence	21.98	11.11	25.84	16.00	*
<i>Quality Measures</i>					
Word Unfamiliarity	41.03	17.40	40.48	18.17	
Word Concreteness	38.72	10.88	39.35	11.22	
Syntactic Complexity	59.60	20.17	61.21	22.82	
Lexical Cohesion	47.17	6.68	47.16	6.33	

Note: Significant group differences are marked with an asterisk.

*Does Anxiety Predict Quantity or Quality Measures?*

The level of anxiety suffered by students matters not only for their wellbeing but also for their performance. Table 2 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients between anxiety measures and quality or quality indices. The top panel refers to STEM students, whereas the bottom panel refers to non-STEM students. In STEM students, all types of anxiety related to a lower number of words and sentences used, and to a greater use of high-frequency words (i.e., familiar words). Non-STEM students' writing performance was primarily linked to behavioral avoidance. Greater behavioral avoidance was associated with fewer words and sentences used (i.e., brief text), as well as with a less coherent text (i.e., higher scores correspond to less coherence). H3 was only partially supported.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Statistics

<b>STEM students</b>	Somatic	Behav.	Cognitive
	Anxiety	Avoid.	Anxiety
<i>Quantity Measures</i>			
No. of words	-.234	-.130	-.234
No. of sentences	-.149	-.143	-.134
No. words per sentence	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
<i>Quality Measures</i>			
Word Unfamiliarity	-.152	-.213	-.151
Word Concreteness	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Note: ns = non-significant correlation.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Statistics

Syntactic Complexity	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Lexical Cohesion	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
<b>Non-STEM students</b>			
<i>Quantity Measures</i>			
No. of words	<i>ns</i>	-.168	<i>ns</i>
No. of sentences	<i>ns</i>	-.174	<i>ns</i>
No. words per sentence	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
<i>Quality Measures</i>			
Word Unfamiliarity	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Word Concreteness	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Syntactic Complexity	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Lexical Cohesion	<i>ns</i>	+.143	<i>ns</i>

Note: ns = non-significant correlation.

## Discussion

The results of the present study can be summarized in three points. First, even though very little or no anxiety was reported by most students, STEM learners exhibited less somatic and behavioral avoidance than non-STEM learners, whereas no differences emerged for cognitive anxiety. H1 was partially supported. Second, quantity and quality measures did not display similar group differences. Only one index, that is, the number of words per sentence, displayed a difference but in favor of non-STEM learners. Namely, non-STEM learners wrote longer sentences than STEM learners, which could be due to their conforming to the Arabic language's tendency to use long sentences (Akan et al., 2019). H2 was not supported. Third, contrary to the prediction of H3, in STEM learners, all types of anxiety predicted text that was shorter and with fewer unfamiliar (i.e., low-frequency) words. Instead, in non-STEM learners, only behavioral avoidance predicted shorter and less cohesive text.

The findings of our study suggest that there are indeed differences in the emotional approach to writing in a second language of STEM and non-STEM students. When proficiency ranges from moderate to competent, anxiety may be less prevalent in STEM learners. Nevertheless, anxiety is related to only minor quantitative and qualitative aspects of the learners' writing performance. Thus, for these learners, interventions intended to enhance the quality and quantity of their writing may focus on other variables, such as self-efficacy (i.e., confidence in one's abilities; Sabti et al., 2019). Of course, there is the possibility that students underreported their writing anxiety, thereby making the association with quality and quantity measures either weak or null.

One of the limitations of our study is that we did not consider vocabulary and syntactic errors, but merely measures of quantity and quality of learners' written products. Furthermore, our sample was composed of speakers whose proficiency varied from moderate to competent. If a broader sample of speakers at the lower end

of the performance distribution were to be included, relationships between anxiety and performance measures (including quantity and quality indices) might have been stronger. Most importantly, our study required students to write within a limited timeframe without any impending assessment of their performance. The latter might have contributed to underreporting the anxiety usually experienced when writing for a class assignment.

## **Conclusion**

Our study was based on the assumption that STEM students' approach to writing in a second language was guided by their view of writing as an opportunity, thereby restricting the experience of anxiety to low levels. Although writing anxiety was more dominant in non-STEM students, it did not translate into written outputs that were qualitatively inferior. Anxiety seemed to mostly affect quantity measures, which points to a potentially positive outcome of anxiety. That is, writing anxiety may lead students to reflect on their writing, making them more cautious and thoughtful. Bailey (2019) argued that moderate levels of anxiety have a positive impact on students' use of writing strategies, such as the adoption of a problem-solving approach to writing. Bailey's argument applies to STEM students' purported approach to writing (Pilotti, 2022). However, it does not fit the threat approach attributed to non-STEM students who also exhibited moderate levels of anxiety.

Of course, the approach that students exhibit when tackling a task, such as writing in a second language, is usually related to other individual-difference variables, such as their being grade- versus learning-oriented (Vandewalle et al., 2019), and their self-efficacy (Deb, 2018). Thus, a direct assessment of such variables may offer valuable insights into this population of writers. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the students selected to participate in our study possessed Arabic as their first language. Arabic is structurally and graphemically quite different from English. As such, interference between languages might have been minimal (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015), thereby contributing to keeping anxiety at relatively low levels.

## **Recommendations**

Our findings suggest that even for speakers whose proficiency in a second language is moderate or competent, interventions devoted to enhancing their writing in that language may need to acknowledge that different types of anxiety are experienced by STEM and non-STEM students. Yet, a focus on anxiety is to be intended as a mere conduit to interventions that foster an opportunity approach to all academic matters (Vandewalle et al., 2019), including writing in a second language. It is this approach that leads not only to students' well-being but also to their academic success.

## **Acknowledgment**

We thank the members of the Undergraduate Research Society and the colleagues of the Cognitive Science Research Center for their helpful feedback.



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## Statistical Investigation on the Impact of COVID-19 Towards Engineering Consultants in Malaysia


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**Abstract:** In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) described the COVID-19 pandemic as putting governments in a vulnerable position. Initially, it affected only the people of China. Then later, it has spread worldwide and became a global issue. Beyond the immediate health consequences, the COVID-19 pandemic is also expected to have a significant impact on the global economy. Therefore, it is crucial for the countries to urgently implement effective preventive measures to control the spread of COVID-19. The aim of this study is to investigate the engineering consultant on the impact of pandemic COVID-19 in Malaysia. Three independent variables were studied to investigate the engineering consultant towards the impact of pandemic in Malaysia. Quantitative study was chosen with a total of 120 respondents involved. The results revealed that three of the independent variables existing positive correlation to the dependent variable. In conclusion, the engineering consultants received adequate information about the pandemic COVID-19, which shows highest impact on perception, follow with awareness and readiness. It is recommended that the engineering consultant should prioritize on the readiness so that immediate mitigation can be adopted to control the outbreak of pandemic in Malaysia engineering consultant industry.

**Keywords:** Pandemic Covid-19, Engineering Consultant, Perception, Awareness, Readiness

**Citation:** Ong, W. H., Tan, O. K., & Lim, M. H. (2024). Statistical Investigation on the Impact of COVID-19 Towards Engineering Consultants in Malaysia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 305-319), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

It has been a significant period of time since the last pandemic that affected countries worldwide, causing millions of death cases. The most recent pandemic that was discovered and spread globally was the Swine flu influenza pandemic in 2009, resulting in over 500,000 deaths (Madhav, Oppenheim, Gallivan, Mulembakani, Rubin, & Wolfe, 2018). This explains the severe impact that pandemics can have on a global scale, causing high mortality rates. Historically, pandemics have had a long-standing presence, with notable examples such as the Black Death Pandemic that originated in 1347. Fortunately, the majority of epidemics have primarily occurred in mainland China and European countries, while Malaysia has experienced three significant epidemics in its history – Pandemic SARS, H1N1 and COVID-19.

In the year of 2019, the world witnessed the emergence of the most recent pandemic – COVID-19, which affected every country without exception. Globally, there have been 766,865,075 reported cases and 6,935,889 deaths (ILO, 2021). To prevent the rapid spread of the COVID-19, countries implemented lockdown measures, leading to significant challenges for all sectors, particularly the construction industry. For Malaysia, this pandemic represents the most severe health crisis experienced to date. Malaysians were urged to “stay-at-home” and practice self-isolation to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, all sector operations were forced to stop and shut down for lockdown precautions. Construction faced unique challenges as it could not be conducted virtually. In the meantime, it is also the most crowded place because all the people who operate works are gathered there, which caused it to be the most likely place for pandemic outbreaks to occur.

## Review of Literature

Construction has been an important sector of a country’s economy for centuries, playing a key role in its development and making a significant contribution to increasing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The construction industry on average contributes 7% of total global employment, employing approximately 220 million people (ILO,2021). In order words, construction is a major source of employment in any country. At the same time, it offers small companies the opportunity to play an important role in a country’s development. Decades ago, Malaysia’s construction industry had gradually developed into a relatively advanced sector. In late 2019, however, a devastating crisis be fell Malaysia: the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the construction industry faces the significant challenge of ensuring the health and safety of its workers. The incubation period of COVID-19 is 14 days, and symptoms may not be immediately recognized. This poses a risk of large outbreaks if a positive case occurs on a construction site, leading to delays in construction activities. Furthermore, the role of the engineering consultant is crucial in construction projects. However, during the Movement Control Order (MCO) period, the government-imposed restrictions on the engineering consulting industry, requiring them to work from home and prohibiting evaluations at the actual construction site. This directly affects the ability of engineering consultants to understand the exact impact of

the COVID-19 pandemic on construction sites, as their work heavily relies on physically presence at the construction site. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the impacts of engineering consultants in the construction industry upon the COVID-19 pandemic period. It aims to illustrated the consultants navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and adapt their practices to ensure the continued progress of construction projects.

To understand how impactful the COVID-19, engineering consultant's perception level is one of the crucial factors to be look into it. Perception involves the reception and processing of external information by various parts of our brain, forming our understanding or perception of something (Qiong,2017). For instance, individuals primarily obtain COVID-19 news and information through visual and auditory channels such as social media, television, newspapers, or discussions with friends. Consequently, the perception of engineering consultants plays a crucial role in assessing the impact of the pandemic on the construction industry. Due to the MCO restriction, engineering consultants were compelled to work from home, leading to a distinct working environment that directly influences their perception of the pandemic's impact. The shift to remote work limits their physical interactions and reduces their ability to make on-site observations, thereby potentially altering their perception of the challenges and consequences faced by the construction sector.

Another important factor in this study is awareness. Awareness explained as in comprehending risks, value, consequences and other factors. Self-awareness involves recognizing one's own strengths and weaknesses, improving personal values, and shaping attitudes (Sutton, 2016). Therefore, individuals need to be aware of the impacts of pandemic in order to develop effective strategies for prevention and mitigation. Understanding the awareness of engineering consultants regarding the impact of the pandemic able to evaluate the engineering consultant's knowledge and understanding of the challenges posed by the pandemic and respond ability to formulating strategies and measure to address the impact of pandemic on construction industry in Malaysia.

Lastly, readiness is determined to investigate on individual in assimilate available information, make informed judgements about the impact, and act to achieve the goals (Hall & Ripine, 2021). When individuals are ready, individuals have the capacity to collect and process relevant information related to the COVID-19 from reliable sources, such as government guidelines, industry reports, expert advice to ensure what's are the actions to address the impact of COVID-19 on engineering consultants. These traits played a crucial role when investigating the impacts of pandemic on engineering consultant in construction industry. By assessing their level of awareness, perception and readiness, valuable insights can be gained with regards to their ability to adapt and overcome challenges during the pandemic period. This includes considering factors such as workforce safety, supply chain disruptions, project delays and financial implications. In this regards, the following research objectives are forms: -

- a. To explore the statistical relations on the trait factors towards the impact on the engineering consultant in Malaysia upon COVID-19 period.
- b. To investigate the trait factors that impacting the engineering consultant in Malaysia upon COVID-19



period.

The above objectives aim to answer the issues that happening in the Malaysia engineering consultant industry. To enrich the knowledge base on the research objectives that form from the literature and reviewing on the previous studies and current industry scenario, the following questions are developed: -

- a. What are the statistical relations on the trait factors towards the impact on the engineering consultant in Malaysia upon COVID-19 period with regards to the significant level ( $p=0.05$ )?
- b. How the trait factors in this study impacting the engineering consultant in Malaysia upon COVID-19 period?

**Research Methodology**

**Data Selection and Interpretation**

Quantitative methods were chosen. The dependent variable in this study is the impacts of pandemic on engineering consultants. The measurement of this variable’s questionnaires was adapted from Bolisani, Scarso, Ipsen, Kirchner & Hansen (2020). The independent variables include perception (Garg & Van, 2015), awareness (Bonyan, AL-Karasneh, EL-Dahiyat & Jairoun, 2020) and readiness (Cvetković, Nikolić, Radovanović, Öcal, Noji & Zečević, 2020). The conceptual framework illustrating the relationships between these variables is depicted in Fig 1. To assess these variables, a 5 Point Likert Scale was employed, ranging from scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) to scale 5 (Strongly Agree). The analysis of the data was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

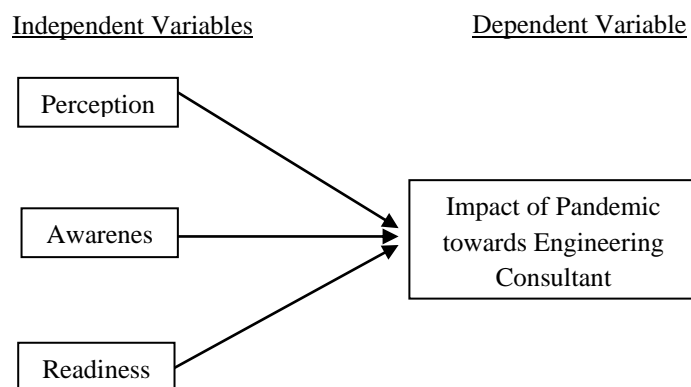


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

*Data Analysis Method*

This study employed a probability sampling method for data collection, specifically targeting consultant engineering companies. The aim was to distribute the questionnaires equally among these companies. To ensure a diverse sample, a combination of simple random, quota and snowball sampling methods were utilized. This



approach facilitated data collection by leveraging the connections and networks of other respondents (Kabir, 2016). Before conducting the data collection, a pilot test (Cronbach Alpha > 0.8) was carried out using a sample of 30 questionnaires.

The purpose of the pilot test was to assess the understanding of the questionnaires by the respondents and identify any potential errors in data analysis (Ismail, Kinchin & Edwards, 2017). Following the verification of questionnaire reliability, data collection commenced and a total of 129 numbers of data were collected from engineering consultants. However, during the screening process, 9 samples were identified as unreliable and invalid, and subsequently removed from the dataset to ensure the integrity of the data collection process.

Table 1. Summary of Demographic Profile of Consultant Respondents

	Respondent	Cumulative Respondents	%	Cumulative %
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	86	86	71.67	71.67
Female	34	120	28.33	100
<b>Age</b>				
20 – 29 Years Old	75	75	62.50	62.50
30 – 39 Years Old	30	105	25.00	87.50
40 – 49 Years Old	9	114	7.50	95.00
50 – 59 Years Old	4	118	3.33	98.33
60 Years Old Above	2	120	1.67	100
<b>Highest Academic Level</b>				
Primary Education	0	0	0	0
Secondary Education	0	0	0	0
Pre-University Programmed	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate Programmed	108	108	90.00	90.00
Postgraduate Programmed	12	120	10.00	100
<b>Position Level</b>				
Admin	0	0	0	0
Technical	113	113	94.17	94.17
Sales	7	120	5.83	5.83
Management	0	120	6.04	100
<b>Working Experiences</b>				
0 – 5 Years	76	76	63.33	63.33
6 – 10 Years	25	101	20.83	84.16
11 – 15 Years	7	108	5.84	90.00
16 – 20 Years	5	113	4.17	95.83
20 Years Above	7	120	5.83	100

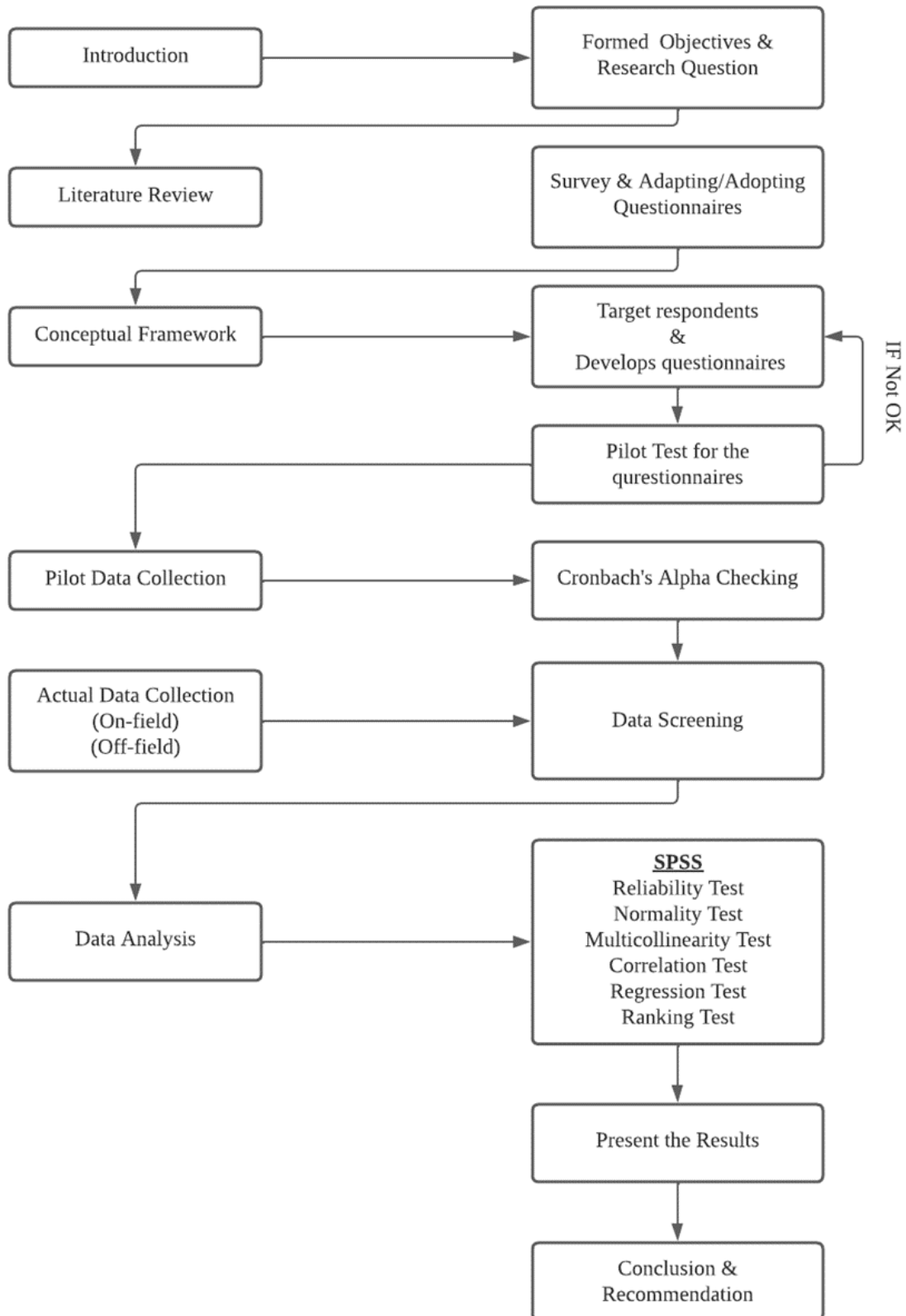


Figure 2. Methodology Flowchart of the study

Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of consultant in this study. The gender, age, highest academic level, construction parties, position level and working experiences are obtained through questionnaires from a total of 120 copies of usable respondents. The demographic indicated the distribution of the respondents and most of the respondents are worked as technical with minimum qualification of bachelor degree holder. These results reveal strong indication the appropriate respondents were selected.

The data were then gone through sreening process. After removing the unreliable data, the collected dataset was subjected to further analysis using SPSS software. Several statistical tests were conducted to examine the relationships and patterns within the data. First, a Reliability Test ( $\alpha \geq 0.8$ ) was performed to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.8 or above was considered acceptable, indicating a reliable measurement instrument.

Next, a Normality Test was conducted to evaluate the distribution of the data. The Z-score range of -1.96 to +1.96 was used as the criterion for determining normality. If the results fell within this range, the data were considered normally distributed and vice versa. To assess the presence of multicollinearity among the independent variables, a Multicollinearity Test is conducted. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is used as a measure, with values between 1 and 10 indicating acceptable levels of multicollinearity (Daoud, 2017).

To measure the interaction of the variables, either Spearman's Rho or Pearson Correlation coefficient is used depending on the normality of the data. Spearman's Rho is used for non-normally distributed data, while Pearson Correlation is used for normally distributed data. This test helped determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Finally, Regression Analysis is performed to examine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. This test allowed for determining whether the independent variables had a positive or negative relationship with the dependent variable. The entire methodology, including the data analysis steps, is summarized in a flowchart represented in Figure 2.

## Results and Discussion

In order to maintain the theoretical and conceptual consistency and accuracy of this study, the conceptual framework has been formulated as shown below – Figure 3.

Fig 3 shows the formation of conceptual framework of the study, which includes the independent variables and dependent variables. All of the variables were assessed using relevant questions and demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability, with Cronbach Alpha,  $\alpha > 0.8$  as presented in Table 1.

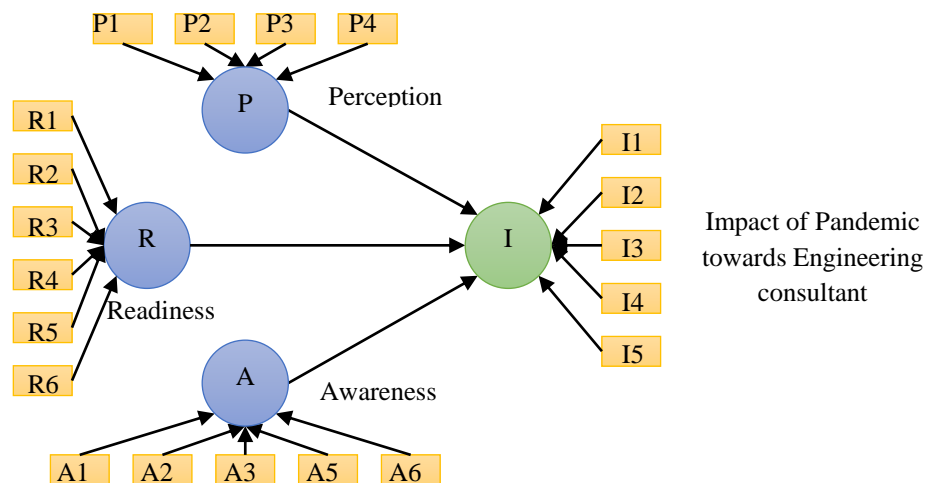


Figure 3. Formation of Conceptual Framework of the Study.

Table 1. Reliability Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
<b>Perception (P)</b>	0.801	4
<b>Awareness (A)</b>	0.805	5
<b>Readiness (R)</b>	0.886	6
<b>Dependent Variable</b>		
<b>Impact of Pandemic (I)</b>	0.805	5

A Normality Test was conducted to determine whether the data were prior to normal or non-normal. Since the number of data sets is greater than 85, this study selects Skewness and Kurtosis to conduct the normality test using a dataset of 120 samples. The results revealed that the z-scores for all statements within the range of -1.96 to +1.96 (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Therefore, the dataset in this study exhibited a normal distribution was considered parametric. Multicollinearity analysis was conducted to examining the correlation between each of the independent variable in this study, as shown on Table 2. The analysis helps to identify if there is a high degree of correlation among the independent variables, which can impact the reliability and interpretability of regression results.

Table 2. Multicollinearity

Independent Variables	Tolerance	VIF value
Engineering Consultant's Perception (P)	0.643	1.556
Engineering Consultant's Awareness (A)	0.820	1.219
Engineering Consultant's Readiness (R)	0.759	1.317

Based on the results in Table 2, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values fall within the range of 1 to 5, which

mean that there is no significant multicollinearity among the independent variables (Daoud, 2017). This means that the variables are not highly intercept with each other, ensuring the reliability of the regression analysis in this study.

Consequently, Pearson Correlation Analysis is utilized to perform the correlation test. Table 3 presents the significance level ( $p$  value) for each of variable, indicating that all values are lower than 0.01, which mean is significance. Apart from this, the results show the positive correlation, indicating that the dependent variable and independent variables moving in the same direction. The correlation analysis reveals that the perception exhibits the highest correlation coefficient 0.774, indicating a strong positive correlation coefficient with the impact of pandemic. Following perception, awareness shows a strong positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.652, indicating as the strong positive correlation coefficient to the impact of pandemic also. Lastly, readiness exhibits a moderate positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.481 (Senthinathan, 2019).

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Test

		Perception (P)	Awareness (A)	Readiness (R)	Impact of Pandemic (I)
Perception (P)	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.422**	0.489**	0.774**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	120	120	120	120
Awareness (A)	Correlation Coefficient	0.422**	1	0.169	0.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.065	0.000
	N	120	120	120	167
Readiness (R)	Correlation Coefficient	0.489**	0.169	1	0.481**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.065		0.065
	N	120	120	120	120
Impact of Pandemic (I)	Correlation Coefficient	0.774**	0.652**	0.481**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	120	120	120	120

\*. Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Apart from that, regression analysis was conducted to determine which variable has the most significant impact on the dependent variable. And lastly, ranking test reveals the variables that affecting the engineering consultants the most towards the impact of covid-19. Table 4 shows that the  $p$  value of all three traits are lesser than 0.05, indicating that all the hypothesis are accepted and the independent variables have a significantly effect to the dependent variable. In addition, all three independent variables show a positive relationship with the dependent variable ( $B > 0$ ).

Table 4. Regression Test

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	-.738	.318		-2.323	.022
Perception (P)	.509	.056	.528	9.034	.000
Awareness (A)	.370	.047	.403	7.797	.000
Readiness (R)	.232	.081	.155	2.883	.005

Based on the results in Table 5, it can be observed that perception has the greatest impact on the pandemic, followed by the awareness traits. The readiness traits have the least impact on the pandemic among the three variables.

Table 5. Ranking Test

Independent Variable	Standardized Coefficients, Beta ( $\beta$ )	Correlation	Ranking
Perception (P)	0.528	0.774**	1
Awareness (A)	0.403	0.652**	2
Readiness (R)	0.155	0.481**	3

With a quantitative study, although the ranking test provided the level of influence of each variable, it is crucial that investigating individual question's performance would provide detail explanation for the findings. Table 6 elucidates the mean ranking for each question. The mean can be used to represent the typical value and therefore serves as a yardstick for all observations.

Table 7 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing in this study. In overall, the results show that all three independent variables have the positive correlation towards the impact of pandemic. The results reveal that engineering consultants in Malaysia observe highest Perception level on the COVID-19 follow with the Awareness and Readiness.

Table 6. Means and Standard Deviations of the Responses of the Study Participants towards Respective Variables

<b>Impact of Pandemic on Engineering Consultant</b>				
No.	Item	Mean	Standardized Coefficients	Ranking
1	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I'm working more hours at home than normally	3.90	0.814	2
2	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I'm getting less productivity at home than normally	3.80	0.894	5
3	During Covid-19 pandemic period, my work at home is more demanding than normally	3.87	0.819	3
4	The information that I have gotten make me feel well prepared for working at home	3.83	0.792	4
5	I can keep a good relationship with my colleagues when I'm working from home	4.43	0.984	1
<b>Perception of Consultant Engineering</b>				
No.	Item	Mean	Standardized Coefficients	Ranking
1	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I felt that I would be able to balance my job and personal life while I'm working from home.	4.34	0.983	2
2	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I felt that my productivity will increase while I'm working from home.	3.79	0.925	4
3	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I miss physical interaction with others to coordinate complex task while I'm working from home	4.42	0.940	1
4	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I felt that contextual information is likely to get lost with electronic correspondents while I'm working from home.	3.98	0.761	3
<b>Awareness of Consultant Engineering</b>				
No.	Item	Mean	Standardized Coefficients	Ranking
1	During pandemic period, I aware that work from home is effective for preventing the spread of COVID-19.	4.58	0.857	1
2	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I aware that work from home can avoid contact with sick people in office.	4.54	0.849	2



3	During pandemic period, work from home order should be enforced by government to prevent COVID-19 spreading.	4.54	0.888	2
4	During COVID-19 pandemic period, I aware that work from home can avoid close contact with person who has active respiratory symptom to prevent further transmission of disease	4.58	0.837	1
5	During pandemic period, I aware that work from home can reduce the possibility to contact with contaminated materials or surfaces to prevent further COVID-19 transmission.	4.58	0.888	1

**Readiness of Consultant Engineering**

No.	Item	Mean	Standardized Coefficients	Ranking
1	Upon working from home, I find myself individually ready to respond to emergencies work from office	3.99	0.601	2
2	Upon working from home, I find that my company is prepared to respond to emergencies caused by COVID-19 pandemic.	3.95	0.620	4
3	Upon working from home, I find that my company has sufficient knowledge to respond properly to emergencies caused by COVID-19 pandemic.	3.88	0.643	6
4	Upon working from home, I find that my company is trained enough to respond properly to emergencies caused by COVID-19 pandemic.	3.91	0.661	5
5	Upon working from home, I find that my company has sufficient support to assist the employees.	4.02	0.635	1
6	Upon working from home, I find that my company has sufficient guidelines to assist the employees	3.98	0.635	3

Table 7. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Results	Decision
H <sub>1</sub> : There is a relationship between engineering consultant's perception to impact of pandemic to engineering consultant in Malaysia construction industry during pandemic period	Correlation = 0.774** (Positive; Significant) $P = .000 < 0.01$ $\beta = 0.528$	H <sub>1</sub> is supported and accepted.  Ranking: 1
H <sub>2</sub> : There is a relationship between	Correlation = 0.652**	H <sub>2</sub> is supported

engineering consultant's awareness to impact of pandemic to engineering consultant in Malaysia construction industry during pandemic period	(Positive; Significant) $P = .000 < 0.01$ $\beta = 0.403$	and accepted.  Ranking: 2
H <sub>3</sub> : There is a relationship between engineering consultant's readiness to impact of pandemic to engineering consultant in Malaysia construction industry during pandemic period	Correlation = 0.481** (Positive; Significant) $P = .000 < 0.01$ $\beta = 0.155$	H <sub>3</sub> is supported and accepted.  Ranking: 3

## Conclusion

The covid-19 that happened since 2020 has brought a huge impact to Malaysia construction industry. The pandemic forces the engineering consultants' company to work-from-home (WFH). Indeed, construction industry hugely depending on the site monitoring that would requires engineering consultant to physically observes and monitor the progress at the project site. Therefore, engineering consultant's accomplishment towards the impact is crucial. This study is conducted by investigating the engineering consultant's accomplishment upon the pandemic period. We can conclude that the awareness, perception and readiness have positive correlation with the impact towards engineering consultant in Malaysia. The engineering consultants are well aware and perceive the seriousness due to the influence from the pandemic problems. However, compare among the three variables, engineering consultants need to adapt the changes fast so that the engineering consultant are ready to overcome the sudden change which could lead to the immediate construction planning losses.

## Recommendations

This study provides a valuable insight into the traits of engineering consultants and the impact of pandemic in Malaysia construction industry. The findings suggest that perception, awareness and readiness are related to the impact of the pandemic on engineering consultants. In between these traits, the perception of engineering consultant plays a major role in understanding the impact of pandemic. This is because all the engineering consultants were forced to work from home during the pandemic period as the government implement the MCO to control the COVID-19 in Malaysia. Consequently, engineering consultant have received sufficient information from the government regarding the pandemic COVID-19.

However, despite the government's efforts to disseminate news and raise awareness about COVID-19, it remains the huge impact on Malaysia history. It is crucial to create the awareness of the engineering consultant to be prepared for the next wave, so that the enhancement on the engineering consultant readiness could provide effective strategies and solution to mitigate the impact of future epidemics or pandemics in Malaysia.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank MOHE FRGS Project No: FRGS/1/2022/TK10/UTAR/03/1 and the Institute of Postgraduate

Studies & Research (IPSR) Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman UTARRF Project No: IPSR/RMC/UTARRF/2021-C1/T03 for the fund contributions, and The Centre of Disaster, Risk and Reduction (CDRR), and the Belt and Road Strategic Research Centre (BRSRC) for the support to this study.

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## Success Through Error: Using Error Analysis of ChatGPT Output in English as a Foreign Language Learner Writing Instruction

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**Abstract:** Questions exist as to whether AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can aid learning. This study examined whether in-class exercises involving error detection in text generated by ChatGPT can aid students' foreign language writing. Participants were Arabic-English speakers who were classified as ranging from modest to competent English users according to IELTS standards. There were two conditions, each involving four sections of an English communication course, distributed across consecutive semesters and taught by the same instructor. In the treatment condition ( $n = 101$ ), students performed error detection exercises using text generated by ChatGPT. In the control condition ( $n = 112$ ), students performed the same exercises without ChatGPT. Then, they wrote a descriptive essay. It was hypothesized that if ChatGPT exercises enhanced students' confidence as writers, they would write longer essays. If ChatGPT exercises enhanced attention to detail, the exercises would increase writing quality (e.g., greater use of low-frequency and abstract words, and greater reliance on complex syntactic structures). In this study, students exposed to ChatGPT exercises used more low-frequency words and wrote more sentences but of shorter length than control condition students. The number of words did not differ, suggesting that ChatGPT exercises enhanced writers' attention to the shorter sentence length of the English language and its vast vocabulary. The results of this study suggest that ChatGPT exercises yield minor benefits for improving the writing of second-language speakers. Yet, extensive and broader exercises may yield more substantial benefits.

**Keywords:** Writing, English as a Foreign Language, ChatGPT, Arabic, Saudi Arabia

**Citation:** Waked, A., Ashraf, M. W., AbdelSalam, H.; El Alaoui, K., & Pilotti, M. (2024). Success Through Error: Using Error Analysis of ChatGPT Output in English as a Foreign Language Learner Writing Instruction. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 320-332), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In November of 2022, a controversial artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot, Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer (ChatGPT), was released by Microsoft's OpenAI. ChatGPT uses Large Language Model (LLM) functionality to generate written output intended to imitate human-like responses to prompts. ChatGPT has both an open access version, available online, as well as a paid version with several additional features available to subscribers. This application has gained international attention among instructors of all educational levels due to its ability to produce responses to human-initiated prompts that are accurate, informative, and lexically and semantically coherent in a wide variety of genres (Lo, 2023). As such, many educators are concerned about the possible ethical ramifications of the use of ChatGPT and other forms of LLM functionality. This is of particular concern for instructors of writing courses, the aim of which is to improve students' compositional abilities.

When used unethically, LLM functionality programs, such as ChatGPT, may impede student learning as well as lead to unearned, inflated grades. However, when used ethically, ChatGPT offers a variety of valuable learning opportunities to students. It can serve as a fast and reliable replacement to traditional search engines when determining answers to content-based questions. It can also be used to allow students to practice their linguistic skills by providing immediate feedback in the form of grammatical correction when their own writing is entered as a prompt (Huang et al., 2022). Indeed, ChatGPT can address a wide range of writing queries concerning syntax, semantics, language style, pragmatics, and format (Barrot, 2023). This may be of particular assistance in allowing students of writing classes the opportunity for sustained practice without fear of judgment, thereby potentially reducing writing anxiety (Beck & Levine, 2023). For educators teaching English-language writing to English as a foreign language (ESL) learners, it may have positive implications as a pedagogical aid within the classroom as well (AlAfnan et al., 2023). Text generated in response to prompts entered into ChatGPT can be used by writing instructors for in-class exercises such as error detection, correcting essay structure, and evaluating the appropriateness of generated content (Kohnke et al., 2023).

However, educators must also remain aware of the risk that ChatGPT may be detrimental to learning and yield serious challenges to instructors. For instance, the availability of ChatGPT may increase students' dependency on automation. This in turn may reduce their opportunities to develop, exercise, and practice critical thinking skills. More broadly, dependence on AI reduces students' development of academic agency, fostering a grade-oriented approach to learning. Students are known to display two basic and broad approaches toward their academic work (Pilotti, 2022; Pilotti et al., 2022): grade orientation (i.e., work whose goal is to receive a desired

grade) and learning orientation (i.e., work whose goal is to learn useful skills and acquire valuable knowledge). Grade orientation is recognized as counterproductive to learning and as discouraging of the adoption of advantageous study habits and ethical conduct (Daumiller & Janke, 2020; Kinne et al., 2022; Meyer et al., 2019). The danger of unwarranted dependency on automation intensifies when writing assignments do not require personalized answers that rely on critical thinking skills or do not incorporate particular lectures and textbook materials. Such writing assignments are easily completed by LLM Functionality programs, increasing the temptation of this form of plagiarism. For such assignments, it may be challenging for instructors to differentiate work produced by a student independently from work produced by AI (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023). As such, some academic institutions have temporarily banned students from using ChatGPT and other AI-based algorithms (Barrot, 2023). However, given the similarity of ChatGPT output to human writing, this can be difficult to enforce.

The extant literature on the possible uses of ChatGPT and other AI-powered tools is growing in two parallel directions. One developing genre of literature includes commentaries which describe the features of particular AI-powered tools. In these commentaries, reasoned arguments are often used to illustrate the potential benefits or pitfalls of each feature or set of features (e.g., Hong, 2023; Imran & Almusharraf, 2023). Empirical studies on the impact of specific uses of AI-powered tools on writing have also begun to emerge. These studies have provided evidence regarding the relative benefits, limitations, and pitfalls of these tools (e.g., Athanassopoulos et al., 2023; Baskara, 2023; Yan, 2023). For instance, Athanassopoulos et al. (2023) examined whether students' reliance on ChatGPT could improve vocabulary and grammar in German as a foreign language writing. In their study, students first were asked to write a message to a friend describing their favorite sport. They were then shown a grammatically improved version of their message with context-appropriate vocabulary as generated by ChatGPT. After reviewing this output, students were asked to write another message on a similar topic. Athanassopoulos et al. found that this exercise not only increased the length of the texts written by students (as measured by the number of words), but also the length of sentences in this writing, as is consistent with the syntactical structure of standard German writing. This exercise was also found to improve text quality as measured by the use of 'unique' words. These findings suggest that particular modes of use of ChatGPT can positively impact both the quantity and the quality of students' writing in a foreign language. Namely, notwithstanding its potentially nefarious uses, ChatGPT can aid the learning of a second language, including serving as a platform for practicing writing and offering timely suggestions for improvement.

However, when using ChatGPT as a pedagogical tool, it is important to remember that artificial intelligence is not comparable to human intelligence. LLM functionality programs retrieve information exclusively from what is available online. As such, these programs are prone to producing written output with the types of errors commonly made in human writing. For native speakers of English, learning to writing in their native language is a complex skill requiring a high working memory load along with repeated rounds of revision and error correction. However, with time and practice, native speakers of English may be able to detect the errors in ChatGPT output. This allows students to interact with the output in a way that not only improves their proofreading abilities but may also reinforce their own knowledge of the complex rules of English-language



writing. As with more traditional exercises in error analysis, this may assist writers in producing future writing of their own that is free of the errors they have detected (Karr, 2022). Writing in one's second or foreign language is even more complex due to factors such as age of language acquisition, age at which one first began writing and potential transfer effects from one's native language. This may make EFL learners even more susceptible to the temptation to rely upon AI tools such as ChatGPT. However, when EFL learners rely on AI tools such as ChatGPT, they are potentially less likely to have the ability to accurately assess ChatGPT output for errors and inaccuracies than their peers for whom English is their first language.

For EFL students, one issue of concern that may impact writing in one's second language is the similarity or difference of the learner's first language. This may impact the degree to which first language interference may complicate developing English-language writing skills. Diab (1996) described the phenomenon of language interference as the detrimental role that the innate knowledge of one's native language has on the ability to learn a second or foreign language. Due to unique differences between the morphosyntactic, orthographic, and phonological structures of English and Arabic, specific types of linguistic transfer may be more commonly found in the English-language writing of native speakers of Arabic. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the high level of the diglossic linguistic systems existing within the Arabic-speaking nations of the Middle East and North Africa. Diglossia may be defined as a linguistic environment in which a language exists in two distinct forms, one viewed as the higher-level form and the other as the lower-level form. In the situation of Arabic, the lower level form is the regional dialect of colloquial Arabic which is acquired naturally and used in informal situations. The higher-level form, MSA, is standardized throughout Arabic-speaking nations and is used in formal situations. Education in Arabic-speaking nations often takes place primarily in MSA with English language instruction introduced at varying levels of education (Daqar et al., 2018).

One key difference between MSA and English is that the base form of a root word in Arabic is often a verb consisting of three consonants which can be inflected to produce nouns as well as other verbs reflecting person, tense, number, and gender (Scott and Tucker, 1974). Differences in word order and the rules of subject-verb agreement may lead to some of the common errors found in the writing of native Arabic-speaking second language learners of English. Sentences written in MSA often begin with a verb and may only state a noun or pronoun once in a paragraph. As written MSA allows subject drop, this feature often crosses over into the English-language writing of EFL learners who are native speakers of Arabic. The comma (,) also plays a notably different role in writing in MSA as compared to its role in English-language writing. This form of punctuation often functions in the capacity with which the period (.) is used in English. As such, it is not uncommon for paragraphs written in MSA to be comprised of what a native speaker of English perceives to be a single sentence with main ideas separated by commas alone. All of these grammatical features of MSA may be found in the writing of native Arabic speaking students when writing in English (Khatter, 2019).

Grammatical errors found by Diab in his 1996 study of the writing of EFL learners who were native speakers of Arabic living in Lebanon included errors in subject-verb agreement, the use of appropriate modifiers in relation to singular and plural nouns, accurate use of prepositions, and the appropriate inflection of nouns to produce

both plural nouns as well as their associated adjectives and adverbs. For native speakers of Arabic living in Saudi Arabia, Alkhudiry and Al-Ahad (2020) found that writing errors primarily occurred in subject-verb agreement, verb inflection, sentence and word structure, spelling irregularities, and vocabulary. Khattar (2019) also found that the majority of errors in the English-language writing in Saudi Arabian EFL students were found in punctuation. All of these areas differ greatly between MSA and English, and, as such, are prone to appear as part of the transfer effects in the English-language writing of students who have primarily been educated in MSA.

The present study examined the impact of error analysis of ChatGPT output on English-language writing for EFL native speakers of Arabic. Participants included freshman students in an English-language introductory academic writing class. Participants proficiency in written English ranged from moderate to competent. As such, this study did not focus on writing errors, but rather on the quality and quantity of various factors in participants' English-language writing. The amount written (as indexed by the number of words, number of sentences, and their length) was intended to gauge their fluency (Maisa, 2018). The quality of their writing (as indexed by the use of low-frequency words, abstract words, complex syntactic structures, and coherent content) was intended to gauge the complexity of their writing (Johnson, 2017). The in-class ChatGPT output error analysis exercise aimed to help students identify and correct errors in their own writing. These were thought to potentially include grammatical form and structure, correct selection of vocabulary to convey intended meaning, and proper essay structure and format.

This study began in the fourth week of two consecutive semesters. It began immediately prior to the assignment of a descriptive essay on a topic of the students' choice. This was the students' first assigned essay in an introductory-level academic writing course. Instruction in the first three weeks of class focused on the form and structure of the three primary sections of a standard five-paragraph essay in English (the introduction paragraph, body paragraphs, and the conclusion paragraph) as well explicit instruction on morphosyntactic rules that differ between writing in English and MSA. Prior to beginning this assignment, the study began with analysis of an instructor-generated prompt for ChatGPT to write a descriptive essay in the standard five paragraphs structure. The prompt used was "Write a five-paragraph descriptive essay on haloumi cheese. Include an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion." Haloumi cheese is a popular Middle Eastern food with which all students were familiar. Students were then provided the output in the form of a Microsoft Word document and given 15 minutes to read the output and correct errors based on their both their own knowledge and information previously learned in class. The students and instructor then engaged in a class discussion in which students shared errors they had identified in the ChatGPT-generated output. Each error identified was then discussed as a class as to how it should be corrected. The types of errors discussed primarily included grammatical and semantic errors, errors in lexical cohesion, errors in the connectivity between consecutive paragraphs, and errors in the structure and form of the essay produced. The instructor also directed students' attention to specific areas of the output produced by the program and assisted students' detection and correction of errors that students had not identified. In her instruction, the particular strengths and limitations of ChatGPT as a "writer" were underscored and students' writing competence, as indexed by their sense of agency, was emphasized. In the

control condition, students were exposed to a similar practice prior to beginning their own assigned descriptive essay, but the text examined was intentionally generated by the instructor herself with a variety of intentional errors. These including grammatical and semantic errors, errors in lexical cohesion, errors in the connectivity between consecutive paragraphs, and errors in the structure and form of the essay. As per the ChatGPT condition, the class first engaged in a discussion of their own error detection and ways in which these errors could be corrected. The instructor then assisted in error identification and correction, and in the recognition of correct forms and formats of errors that students had not identified in their independent work.

This field study was guided by two assumptions about the impact of these particular ChatGPT exercises on students' foreign-language writing, one entailing their confidence in the process of writing, and the other involving their attention to the products of their writing. Specifically, the comparison between the treatment and the control conditions gave rise to two complementary hypotheses:

H1 If ChatGPT-driven error detection exercises enhanced students' confidence as writers, students would write longer essays (i.e., the number of words and sentences used) than those of the control condition.

H2 If ChatGPT-driven error detection exercises enhanced students' attention to their writing, the exercises would enhance the quality of the essays produced by students compared to those of the control condition. Aspects of writing affected would be the use of low-frequency (rare) and more abstract words, as well as the use of complex syntactic structures and consideration of text cohesion (quality measures).

## Method

### Sample and Sampling

Participants included 213 freshmen enrolled in one of eight sections of a communication course devoted to EFL academic writing. Students were freshmen who were native speakers of Arabic and foreign-language learners of English. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 years. To enroll in the course, students had to obtain at least a 6.0 total score and a 5.5 writing score (range: 0-9) in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Thus, the selected participants included EFL learners who were classified as ranging from modest to competent users of the English language. The course aimed to teach freshmen how to write in academic English by offering practice leading to compositions in four genera that are clear, concise, and semantically, syntactically, and structurally accurate.

Prior to beginning this study, participants were given a three-weeks period of class focused on the form and structure of the three primary sections of a standard five-paragraph essay in English (the introduction paragraph, body paragraphs, and the conclusion paragraph) as well explicit instruction on morphosyntactic rules that differ between writing in English and MSA. In the fourth week of the semester, four sections of this course received ChatGPT error-detection exercises (treatment condition:  $n = 101$ ), and four sections served as the control

condition ( $n = 112$ ). To ensure that information about the ChatGPT error-detection exercises did not spread to the control condition, two consecutive semesters were selected. The four sections assigned to the control condition were situated in the first semester and the four sections assigned to the treatment condition were situated in the ensuing semester. The course was taught by the same instructor with 17 years of university-level teaching experience. The instructor was bilingual in English and Arabic and had been exposed to both languages since birth. Institutional records suggested that the student samples in these two semesters were demographically similar, including the number of hours in which they were enrolled [ $F(1, 211) < 2.29, ns$ ]. The sample included only students who provided informed consent and completed all phases of the study as described below. Excluded from the sample were 29 students (11.65%) who did not complete the assignment or whose output was judged by SafeAssign as being more than 15% similar to other sources, including institutional databases, global databases, and the Internet. If content that was suspected to potentially be AI generated was found in more than 40% of students' essays, their submission would also receive a score of 0 unless the student was able to provide evidence that the work submitted was in fact their own writing. This percentage was selected due to the high instances of false identification of AI generated content among many AI detection programs (Sadasivian et al., 2023).

#### *Materials and Procedure*

The error-detection exercises used in all class sections included in this study were based on the premise that one key aspect of writing practice is helping students identify and correct errors in written communications. These exercises will in turn assist students in avoiding such errors in their ensuing writing. Such errors may include grammatical structure, meaning, and proper essay structure and form. The ChatGPT class exercises began with an instructor-generated prompt for ChatGPT version 3.0 to write a descriptive essay in the standard five-paragraph essay format. The prompt used was "Write a five-paragraph descriptive essay on haloumi cheese. Include an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion." Students were then given 15 minutes to read the output and identify errors. Following this, a class discussion ensued in which students discussed how to best correct the problems identified. The instructor then alerted students to further errors which had not yet been discussed and assisted the students in determining how they should best be corrected. Errors examined primarily included grammatical and semantic mistakes, errors in lexical cohesion, errors in the connectivity between consecutive paragraphs, and errors in the structure and form of the output produced. The particular limitations of ChatGPT as a "writer" were also highlighted. Conversely, students' agency in creating the content of their own writing was heavily emphasized. In the control condition, students examined text generated by the instructor with a variety of errors, including grammatical and semantic mistakes, errors in lexical cohesion, errors in the connectivity between consecutive paragraphs, and errors in the structure and form of the essay. As per the ChatGPT condition, through students' independent work, class discussion, and the assistance and guidance of the instructor, errors were identified, corrections were made, and attention was directed by the instructor to additional errors that had not been identified by students. Although comparisons could not be made between AI generated output and students' agency as writers in the control condition, students were praised for their abilities to identify these errors and were reminded of their agency in producing well-written compositions as EFL learners.

Beginning in the class immediately following this exercise in error analysis, after giving informed consent, participants wrote a descriptive essay on a topic of their choosing using the standard five-paragraphs essay format. They were directly informed that their work would be checked for plagiarism through SafeAssign as well as for AI generated content through an AI detection program. If their writing was found to be more than 15% similar to other sources, including institutional databases, global databases, and the Internet, it would be returned to them with a score of 0. If content that was suspected to potentially be AI generation was found in more than 40% of students' essays, their submission would also receive a score of 0 unless the student was able to provide evidence that the work submitted was in fact their own writing. This percentage was selected due to the high instances of false identification of AI generated content among many AI detection programs (Sadasivian et al., 2023).

### *Data Analyses*

The descriptive essay written by each of the 213 students was submitted to TextEvaluator® software (Chen & Sheehan, 2015; Sheehan et al., 2014) developed by the Educational Testing Services (ETS). This software calculated a set of indices that measured variables relating to both the quantity and the quality of these written products. These measures were submitted to one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Condition served as the between-subjects factor (the control group and the group taught using ChatGPT).

Quantity measures included a count of the number of words and sentences in an essay, as well as the mean number of words per sentence. Quality measures were organized into those at the word level, and those at the sentence level. All scores ranged from 1 to 100. At the word level, quality measures included a word unfamiliarity tally, which reflected the extent to which the writer used low-frequency words, and a word concreteness tally, which reflected the writer's use of concrete words. A low score for unfamiliar words and a high score for concreteness indicated low-quality text. Word unfamiliarity was based on two corpora. One of these consisted of 400 million words developed by ETS, and the other consisted of 17 million words developed by Zeno et al. (1995). Concreteness ratings used a method developed by Coltheart (1981). These were used to compute an index of concreteness (i.e., the property of a word whose meaning can be experienced through one's senses or actions). Words that refer to concrete concepts have a behavioral advantage, which allows them to be cognitively processed more quickly and accurately than abstract concepts (Connell & Lynott, 2012).

At the sentence level, quality measures included a syntactic complexity score and a lexical cohesion score, all of which ranged from 1 to 100. The syntactic complexity score tallied a series of indices, such as the mean length of sentences, the mean number of modifiers per noun phrase, the mean number of dependent clauses per sentence, and a measure of sentence depth. The score reflected the memory load imposed by sentences with varying syntactic structures (Yngve, 1960). The lexical cohesion score indicated the extent to which a textual product provides a coherent message rather than an array of unrelated sentences. It also measured word repetition across contiguous sentences and the use of connectives. Thus, a low syntactic complexity score and a

high coherence score would indicate a text that is less complex and easy to read.

## Results

Table 1 illustrates the mean of each quality and quantity measure along with the standard error of the mean. Students exposed to ChatGPT exercises wrote a greater number of sentences [ $F(1, 211) = 5.26, MSE = 119.15, p = 0.023, partial\ eta^2 = 0.024$ ] but of shorter length [ $F(1, 211) = 4.63, MSE = 78.24, p = 0.033, partial\ eta^2 = 0.021$ ] as compared to students assigned to the control condition. Students exposed to ChatGPT exercises also used more low-frequency words than students in the control condition. No other values reached significance [ $F_s \leq 3.71$ ].

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Control Condition		ChatGPT Condition		Sign.
	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	
<i>Quantity Measures</i>					
No. of words	466.464	14.691	491.911	15.470	
No. of sentences	25.813	1.031	<b>29.248</b>	1.086	*
No. words per sentence	<b>20.207</b>	.836	17.596	.880	*
<i>Quality Measures</i>					
Word Unfamiliarity	54.446	1.337	<b>64.178</b>	1.408	*
Word Concreteness	48.616	1.050	47.822	1.106	
Syntactic Complexity	61.250	1.045	58.327	1.101	
Lexical Cohesion	44.964	1.023	45.950	1.078	

Note: Significant group differences ( $p < .05$ ) are marked with an asterisk. The values in bold characters signify greater values.

## Discussion

This study examined the impact of student-centered error analysis of ChatGPT output on the writing of EFL students completing their first writing assignment in an introductory-level academic writing class. This exercise led EFL students to exhibit two advantageous features in their writing. First, they segmented their writing into shorter sentences as compared to students in the control group. This led to an increased number of sentences in students' writing, and thus to text that more closely approximated English writing conventions. Second, they adopted a greater number of low-frequency words, thereby improving the complexity (quality) of their written products. These findings, which were obtained through a between-subjects design and from a homogenous sample of native speakers of Arabic, suggest that exercises using ChatGPT output can assist EFL students in



produce writing that is more closely aligned with the conventions of English (e.g., shorter sentences in English).

Our findings parallel those of Athanassopoulos et al. (2023) who reported that the feedback of ChatGPT on students' who are foreign-language learners of German led them to write longer sentences, as is consistent with German syntactical structure. This study differs from ours in the homogeneity of participants as those in their study had a variety of linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, the impact of ChatGPT was measured through a within-subjects design (i.e., assessment before and after the use of ChatGPT-based exercises). However, the observed changes in students' writing indicated that ChatGPT-based exercises encouraged students to write sentences that more closely approximated the conventions of students' foreign language (Cooper, 1976). Similar to our findings, in which students in the testing condition were found to use an increased amount of low-frequency words, Athanassopoulos et al. also reported an increase in students' use of "unique" words following exercises utilizing ChatGPT. Although the exercises used by Athanassopoulos et al. were different from ours, both improved foreign-language learners' attention to their writing, leading to the generation of more conceptually complex words and sentences that more closely aligned with the syntactic rules of their foreign language.

## Conclusion

The results of the present study are promising as they indicate that ChatGPT can potentially serve as a pedagogical tool for improving students' attention to specific aspects of their writing, thereby offering a supportive learning environment (Yan, 2023). More extensive exercises with ChatGPT output may be able to impact key writing qualities of EFL learners, such as sentence complexity and coherence. Whether exposing learners to ChatGPT output (as per our study) is a more or less effective educational strategy than asking ChatGPT to improve student-produced text (as per Athanassopoulos et al., 2023) is a matter to be investigated. The specific limitations of our study are to be considered in future research. They include a homogenous sample of foreign-language learners with a writing competency above that of novices and a first language which might present challenges that differ from those faced by native speakers of Arabic. The breadth of the exercises and their duration of use are other limitations that are to be examined as independent variables in future research.

## Recommendations

Technological innovations cannot be ignored or discarded by educators. Irrespective of the opinion that an educator might have regarding ChatGPT and other forms of LLM Functionality, such AI tools will be used by students. As such, educators must work to foster an environment in which the ethical uses of AI as tools that can enrich students' learning opportunities is emphasized. Educators must demonstrate how various forms of AI can be used to help students critically analyze their academic tasks and products, including their writing. In order to discourage the use of AI tools as shortcuts for unpopular academic activities (Kim et al., 2023), educators need to emphasize the advantages of students' adoption of a learning orientation rather than a grade orientation



approach to education (Pilotti et al., 2022).

## Acknowledgment

We thank the members of the Undergraduate Research Society and the colleagues of the Cognitive Science Research Center for their helpful feedback.

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## Performance of Spatial Interpolation Methods for Monthly Rainfall: A Case Study in Peninsular Malaysia


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**Abstract:** Rainfall is a climatic factor that plays a significant role in hydrology applications and water resources management, particularly in dealing with the flood and drought scenarios. Conventionally, rainfall data was measured by the rain gauge. Therefore, the malfunction of the rain gauge is the main challenge to ensure a completeness of collected rainfall data. Hence, it is important to have an appropriate method to fill in the missing data. The objective of this study is to investigate the performance of Inverse Distance Weighting (IDW) and Local Polynomial Interpolation (LPI) for monthly rainfall in Peninsular Malaysia. The interpolated values from both approaches were compared with the ground observations. The performance of the approaches was evaluated using a series of statistical analyses, consisting of  $R^2$ , MAE and RMSE. Since it has a higher  $R^2$  as well as lower MAE and RMSE, the LPI shows a better performance than that of the IDW.

**Keywords:** Inverse Distance Weighting; Local Polynomial Interpolation; Missing data; Spatial Interpolation

**Citation:** Chin, R. J., Chai, V. H., Ling, L., Huang, Y. F., & Lee, F. W. (2024). Performance of Spatial Interpolation Methods for Monthly Rainfall: A Case Study in Peninsular Malaysia. In M. Shelley & O. T.

Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 333-341), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In hydrological modelling, rainfall data is considered as one of the most important parameters. Since the climate change has become an unavoidable trend, it shows its significance especially for the prediction of extreme events such as floods and droughts. However, due to the geographical constraint, especially in the mountainous areas, it is often resulting in an inadequate network of rain gauge stations, and thereby hindering comprehensive data collection. As a consequence, the available data is insufficient to fully capture the highly variable rainfall patterns and their distribution across different areas. This has become a major challenge in both developing and underdeveloped countries (Ceron et al., 2021; De Silva et al., 2007).

In light of the issue, it is essential to establish reliable methods for rainfall estimation in regions where direct measurements are lacking. Leveraging the data from nearby meteorological stations is the common method to fill in the gaps of missing data. It is crucial while developing frameworks for extreme events prediction, as well as carrying out the flood risk assessments and drought studies in an ever-changing global climate (Ceron et al., 2021; De Silva et al., 2007; Keblouti et al., 2012).

Spatial interpolation techniques have shown its importance in rainfall forecasting. In the context of environmental management, continuous geographic data, also referred to as spatial continuous surfaces, holds immense importance for effective planning, risk assessment and decision making. However, obtaining such data is not always a straightforward procedure. It can be a challenging yet costly task, particularly in hilly or aquatic regions. Field surveys are typically conducted to collect the environmental data from specific point sources. Despite varying objectives, both engineers and scientists share the common need for accurate and precise geographic continuous data, albeit for different objectives. Engineers utilise it to make confident and effective choices over a wide area, while scientists apply it to draw valid and well-founded conclusions (Ahrens, 2006; Jamaludin et al., 2021; Tanjung et al., 2020).

The importance of spatial continuous data for environmental variables has grown significantly, driven by the increasing capabilities of geographic information systems (GIS) and modeling techniques in conserving natural resources and protecting biodiversity. Consequently, the need to infer attribute values at unsampled locations has led to the use of spatial interpolation from existing datasets, allowing the creation of continuous spatial data (Fabian, 2014; Hong et al., 2005). Moreover, spatial interpolation becomes essential when the surface displays varying degrees of resolution, cell density, or inclination (Lam, 1983; Liang et al., 2021). Additionally, in cases where a continuous region contains different types of information and the available data is insufficient to fully cover the region of interest, spatial interpolation becomes crucial (Burrough et al., 2015; Lam et al., 2015).

This study aims to investigate the performance of spatial interpolation approaches for the rainfall in monthly scale. By leveraging GIS and modeling approaches, the research aims to address the challenges posed by data gaps and variations in spatial characteristics. It is expected to achieve a better understanding and utilization of rainfall information for environmental management and decision-making.

## Method

A number of 550 rain gauge stations in Peninsular Malaysia were identified for this study. The rainfall data of the respective stations were collected from Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) Malaysia. The study period of this study was 10 years, from year 2011 to year 2020. To ensure the consistency and reliability of the rainfall data before applying it for analysis, a thorough quality check process is required.

Due to the ability to provide a complete information on the rainfall pattern of a particular area, the rain gauge without missing data were considered acceptable to be applied in the analysis. However, further preprocessing procedure should be applied to the rain gauge stations with missing data. For this study, the rain gauge stations were divided into two groups based on extent of missing. The stations with less than 10% of missing data was sorted into a group, while the stations with more than 10% of missing data was labelled as another group. Burhanuddin et al. (2017) reported that the data with less than 10% of missing values is considered as good quality data. According to his findings, the rain gauge stations with more than 10% of missing data were excluded from the study due to their potential negative impact on the accuracy of the analysis.

Furthermore, Chow et al. (1988) proposed arithmetic procedure to repair the rainfall data. The arithmetic procedure was applied to estimate the missing observation for the rain gauge stations falling under category of less than 10% of data. By following the quality check procedures, it assists in ensuring the consistency and reliability of rainfall data for the study.

The arithmetic mean is a basic statistical technique that shows the simple average of a series of number. For the arithmetic mean calculation, it should start with the summation of all the numbers in a given dataset, and then divided by the total number of in the dataset. For the cases where the number are evenly distributed, the arithmetic mean is equivalent to the middlemost number, making it a useful representation of the central tendency of the data.

In addition, the arithmetic mean is suitable for the areas with uniform rainfall pat-terns. In such cases, every rain gauge station is given the same weight in the calculation, irrespective of their relative positions or other influencing factors. This approach helps to provide a fair representation of the overall precipitation in the region. The equation of arithmetic mean is shown in Eq. (1).

$$(1) \bar{p} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n p}{n}$$

where:

$\bar{p}$  = combined mean for the rainfall station

$n$  = number of the rainfall station

$i$  = individual rainfall station

In this study, the arithmetic mean approach was applied to the rain gauge stations with less than 10% of missing data for data repairing purpose. The missing values were identified and filled using the rainfall data from the nearest stations that exhibited similar characteristics. To facilitate a better comparison and analysis, the daily rainfall data was aggregated into monthly scales. After implementing the aforementioned pre-processing procedures, a total of 515 stations were selected in the study.

In this study, the tasks, include maps creation, geographic data compilation and mapped information analyses, were performed via the ArcMap10.8 (a geographic information system (GIS) software). Spatial interpolation is a technique that allows the rainfall estimation at a location without recorded data by leveraging the known readings from nearby weather stations. It involves generating a surface representation from a set of sample points, which can then be utilised for assessment and modelling purposes. Basically, the common assumption while applying the interpolation methods is, the points in close proximity will have higher correlations and similarities compared to those further apart. Li and Heap (2014) carried out a study on commonly used spatial interpolation methods, investigating their suitability and application for different variables.

Two spatial interpolation methods, which are Inverse Distance Weighted (IDW) and Local Polynomial Interpolation (LPI), were assessed in this study. The methods were selected based on their relevance to the study objectives and their ability to produce reliable rainfall estimates across the study area. In terms of IDW, the degree of correlation between neighbouring points is directly related to the distance separating them. This relationship is defined by a distance reverse function for each location, which plays a crucial role in the interpolation process. In IDW, it is a challenging task to specify the nearby radius and determine the appropriate power of the distance reverse function. It depends on the setting of the sufficient number of sample site (where the ideal number is at least 14), and an appropriate degree of dispersion at the local scale level. In addition, the accuracy of the inverse distance interpolator is highly influenced by the value of the power parameter. Overall, the effectiveness of the IDW is highly dependent on the selection of parameters such as nearby radius, power parameter, and distribution of sample sites in the study area. The equation that involves in IDW is:

$$(2) Z_o = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^s Z_i \frac{1}{d_i^k}}{\sum_{i=1}^s \frac{1}{d_i^k}}$$

where:

$Z_o$  = Predicted value at the unsampled site

$Z_i$  = Observed value

$D_i$  = The distance between the prediction and measured locations

$S$  = The number of measured sampling points within the neighbourhood



K= Power parameter defining the rate of reduction of weights as distance increase

IDW can be considered as an accurate interpolator, where it helps to avoid the division by zero issues at sample points when  $d_i = 0$ . Also, through this method, the maximum and minimum values of the interpolated surface are constrained to the data points. Although playing a significant role in rapid interpolation, IDW exhibits some limitations, such as susceptibility to outliers and data clustering. In addition, the major drawback of this method is the lack of implicit evaluation for the estimation accuracy.

On the other hand, LPI is a powerful method used to fit the polynomials within the overlapping neighbourhoods. The selection of neighbourhoods are based on a search neighbourhood criterion. The criterion offers the flexibility in choosing the form, size and organization. Using the LPI, the short-range variations can be captured effectively, and hence making improve its suitability to produce surfaces which is highly sensitive to the local changes. In addition, LPI has the ability to adjust the width of the neighbourhood and introduces a power parameter through a slider. The power parameters impose an effect on the weight assigned to each sample point in the neighbourhood, depending on its distance from the interpolated point. By adjusting the parameters, LPI can provide the surface that account for more localised variations.

To assess the performance of the spatial interpolation methods, statistical analysis plays an essential role. Three statistical metrics were identified and applied in this study, which are determination ( $R^2$ ), mean absolute error (MAE) and root mean square error (RMSE). The metrics collectively provide valuable insights into the model accuracy and reliability.

## Results and Discussion

The spatial interpolation was carried out using IDW and LPI. The result was then compared with the ground observation data in the monthly scale. Figures 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) show the comparison of monthly rainfall intensity in unit millimeter using IDW and LPI methods, presented in ArcGIS Map. In addition, the performance evaluation indexes, including  $R^2$ , MAE and RMSE, to assess the IDW and LPI was tabulated in Table 1.

Referring to Table 1, the  $R^2$  value for IDW approach range from 0.33 to 0.82 while the range is between 0.40 to 0.85 for LPI approach. In terms of methods comparison, LPI outperformed than that of IDW for every single month. From the perspective of monthly assessment, November and December show the highest  $R^2$  for both methods, recorded at a value larger than 0.80. Meanwhile, March is the month with the lowest  $R^2$ , showed a value of 0.33 and 0.40 for IDW and LPI respectively. Comparing the results in terms of MAE, the highest value is 2.01 and 1.87 for IDW and LPI respectively, in the month of December. Meanwhile, the lowest value is recorded at 0.80 in July for IDW, and 0.78 in March for LPI. A lower MAE is always favourable. Therefore, LPI is preferable than IDW, as its MAE is generally lower than that of IDW.

From the perspective of RMSE, the value ranges from 1.04 to 3.34 and 1.01 to 3.04 for IDW and LPI respectively. The lowest value is recorded in July while the highest value is recorded in December, for both approaches. In general, LPI shows a lower RMSE than IDW for every single month. After conducting the statistical analyses based on  $R^2$ , MAE and RMSE for the application of IDW and LPI methods on the monthly basis assessment, it is noticed that the LPI exhibits a better performance than that of IDW, as it has a higher  $R^2$ , as well as a smaller MAE and RMSE.

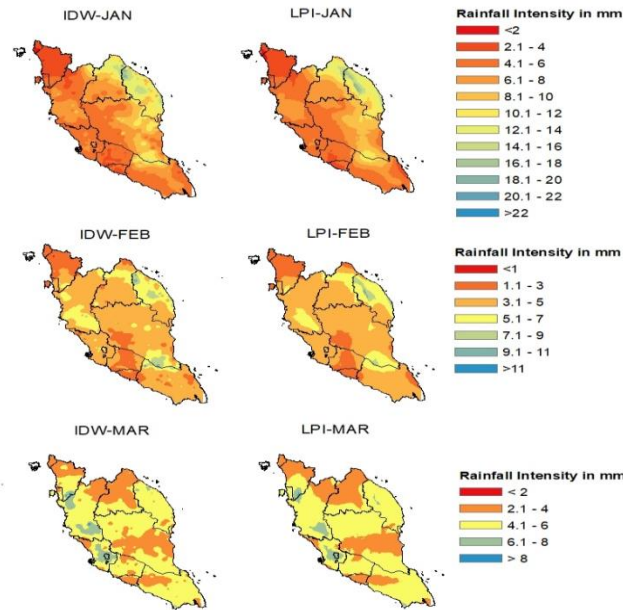


Figure 1. (a) Interpolation Results of IDW and LPI in Peninsular Malaysia from January to March

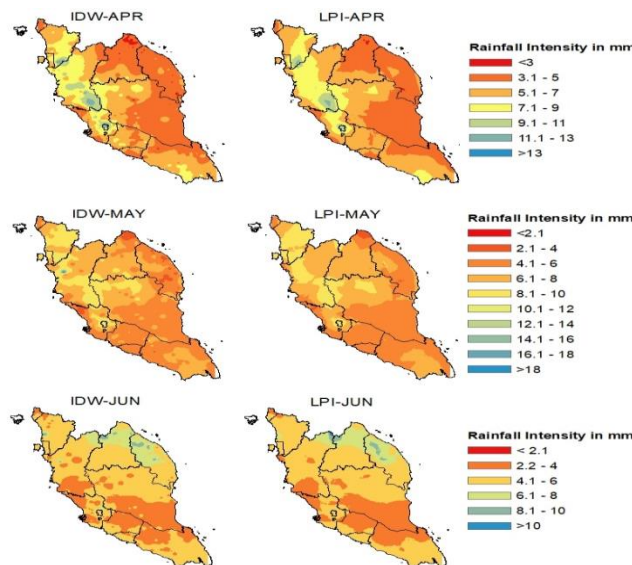


Figure 1. (b) Interpolation Results of IDW and LPI in Peninsular Malaysia from April to June

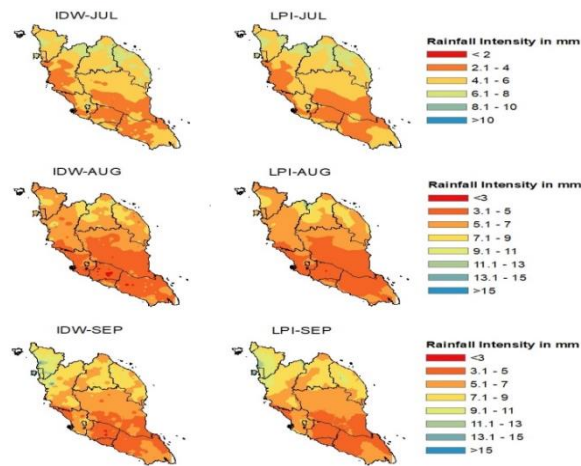


Figure 1. (c) Interpolation Results of IDW and LPI in Peninsular Malaysia from July to September

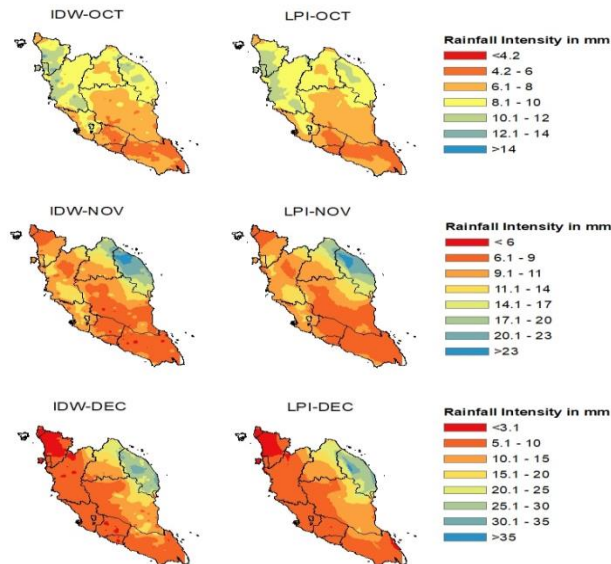


Figure 1. (d) Interpolation Results of IDW and LPI in Peninsular Malaysia from October to December

Table 13. Performance of IDW and LPI while comparing to ground based rainfall data in monthly basis

Month	IDW			LPI		
	R <sup>2</sup>	MAE	RMSE	R <sup>2</sup>	MAE	RMSE
Jan	0.65	1.44	2.19	0.70	1.31	2.01
Feb	0.38	0.87	1.33	0.46	0.80	1.23
Mar	0.33	0.82	1.13	0.40	0.78	1.04
Apr	0.46	1.16	1.60	0.52	1.09	1.48
May	0.38	1.11	1.58	0.40	1.10	1.53
Jun	0.45	0.81	1.07	0.45	0.80	1.07
Jul	0.46	0.80	1.04	0.49	0.79	1.01

Aug	0.46	0.90	1.27	0.47	0.89	1.25
Sept	0.70	0.91	1.25	0.70	0.89	1.24
Oct	0.61	0.93	1.29	0.62	0.93	1.26
Nov	0.82	1.37	1.91	0.83	1.31	1.82
Dec	0.81	2.01	3.34	0.85	1.87	3.04

## Conclusion

Rainfall data maps were generated in a monthly scale. Through rigorous statistical analyses encompassing  $R^2$ , MAE and RMSE, the efficacy of two different interpolation techniques, which are Inverse Distance Weighting (IDW) and Local Polynomial Interpolation (LPI), was evaluated. It indicates that the LPI approach outperforms the IDW approach. This conclusion was drawn because LPI has shown a lower MAE and RMSE value and a higher  $R^2$  while comparing with the IDW.

## Recommendations

In terms of future work recommendation, it is suggested that the study period can be expanded over a period of 10 to 15 years. This is to improve the data reliability and hence potentially mitigate the intrinsic performance errors associated with shorter duration. Additionally, it is advisable to explore other well-established methodologies, for example, triple collocation analysis. In summary, the future study could involve temporal expansion and methodological diversification, ensuring a more comprehensive and meticulous analysis.

## Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) Malaysia through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme project (FRGS/1/2023/WAB02/UTAR/02/1), and Malaysia Toray Science Foundation (4417/0005).

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# The Role of Civic Education in State Development: A Philosophical Approach

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**Abstract:** The need for humans to live in a community produced the state. The state and law are the subjects of philosophers of all times. From ancient times to the present, the state and law have come a long way. They started as undeveloped empirical concepts, always at the level of human societal relations. Over time, these relationships underwent tremendous change and expansion in form and content. With the development of the state, laws also developed, including the ever-widening field of social activity. To define the concept of the state and that of law, it is necessary to study their genesis, the concepts and interpretations of the philosophers of antiquity and those of our era. From the philosophical-political point of view, we can better highlight the evolution and configuration of the state, not only from the conceptual point of view, from the accepted rules and sanctions, but also from the philosophical, legal, economic, and moral points of view. This paper focuses on a detailed theoretical and practical analysis of the need and importance of educating people regarding the organization of the state, politics, and governance, as well as the role of the state in our time.

**Keywords:** Civic education, state development, politics and tolerance.

**Citation:** Keta, M. & Baça, F. (2024). The Role of Civic Education in State Development: A Philosophical Approach. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 342-348), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

A common feature of philosophers of all times is the visualization and presentation of their concepts and ideas about the state as a product of human society. Strengthening the system of democracy remains the duty of every citizen, state bodies, and educational structures for the education of youths. Since the basis of a state and the democratic character of a democratic society are determined by free and fair elections, it is a primary task of the state to educate citizens and other state and social structures regarding the democratic principles and norms associated with the conduct of these elections. Openly or indirectly, the presence of the state appears in almost every human activity of a country, from education, economic administration, social welfare, health, maintaining order within the country to territorial defense. The state plays a general and universal role: it shapes and controls



its organs; however, it does not modify or control but regulates, supervises, authorizes, or prohibits individuals or phenomena. Also, pronounced personal and private issues, such as marriage, divorce, abortion, religious worship, etc., cannot avoid the role and influence of the state as well as relations with the state. Politics is often understood as the rule of the state. Naturally, ideological debate and political parties tend to revolve around the function or role of the state: what should the state do, and what should be left to the individual and society? The nature of state power has today become one of the most fundamental issues of political analysis, where the debate about the state affects some of the most fundamental divisions of political theory.

All democratic changes are closely related to the presence, level, and aspirations of society. Sometimes, democratic changes go in the right direction, and at other times, they are realized for the benefit of a group of people or clans with certain interests. In both cases, they are presented to be for the benefit and in the name of the vital needs of the society itself. This is because true democracy originates from the people. Only the interests of the people justify all the socio-economic, political, and cultural upheavals of a society. The people are the true sovereigns who must hold the scepter of democracy in their hands because they are its source and producer. For this reason, the construction of an advanced society remains a permanent ideal for the construction of a developed democracy. In this study, we focused more on understanding the state and its functions and responsibilities. An understanding of the state is treated as an expression of the need that society feels for the existence of an organized power equipped with the appropriate means of coercion, protection, and support for the citizen as well as direction for the society. Political power, which is secured through the state, is not an end in itself but has been and remains the means to implement certain policies.

## **Methodology of the study**

The study relies on some philosophers' ideas in various publications written by Albanian and foreign authors. It is an examination of notions with a broader meaning. In other words, it is an attempt to have a general look at the way of handling the state and state-forming elements by philosophers who have dealt with this topic. The paper aims to verify the hypothesis that the state, one of the most important stages of people's socialization, is also the ground where the subsequent arguments for the rights of human society are examined.

## **State and society**

Building a democratic state is a product of citizen participation. While the essence of the rule of law is related to the protection of the rights of citizens and their freedom, it also constitutes the juridical-social guarantee of the state in the complex relations between state institutions and civil society, ordinary people, or those with outstanding intellectual merits. In the relationship between state institutions and the individual, despite common interests, sharp contradictions arise between them. In addition to the role of the regulator in an organized and modern society, the state simultaneously manifests limitations and even obstacles to the new and bold ideas of citizens and their elites with special interests and tendencies.



Machiavelli is one of the philosophers who analyzed and pointed out better than anyone else these hidden contradictions, which represent obstacles in the relationships that seek to build a new power with the old power and the people themselves. He pointed out the difficult circumstances that a new ruler has to face, as follows: *“The ruler in question is convinced that there is nothing more difficult to handle and more dangerous to rule than to become a ruler and try to introduce a new order. This is because when a new ruler comes, he has as enemies all those who have gained privileges from the old power, while those who expect to benefit from the new institutions will remain only lukewarm defenders. This insecurity of the lukewarm defenders comes from the little faith of the people to take the new propositions as true, as long as they do not see them realized and touch them with their hands.”* (Machiavelli, 2003, p. 10).

In this sense, the intellectual elites have a revolutionary character and seek qualitative changes, playing in society the role of an engine that seeks to increase the speed of society and the state machine. But with the state lacking flexibility, it has a tendency to prefer the status quo or a positional attitude. This is also due to the fact that the leaders of high state rank at any time and in any place issue rules and laws for themselves to enjoy privileges in relation to other layers of the population. Any change demanded by the intellectual elites and the discriminated working masses endangers their privileges. In this sense, the leaders of the state are on the opposite side of the barricade and the demands for change. They will seek to the end to use the power of state structures to limit and rein in the working masses and the intellectual elites. Not resolving these conflicts peacefully, at the right time and place, can lead to clashes or fierce matches between them. The election of people with high intellectual capacity into the leadership of the state would be a general good for both sides, which amounts to putting social developments on the two opposite sides of the barricade.

The problem of drafting and implementing laws has been the subject of the studies of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, *“who interprets them as a product of the state and gives him the role of an arbitrator who, through rules and sanctions, must create this product. Law, according to Aristotle, is the tool that makes ethical norms efficient”*. (Aritotele, 2003, 83). Through laws, the state must create legal awareness in society. The state is treated as an efficient means of enabling people to achieve their goals as human beings. Aristotle connects the existence of the state with the mission of fulfilling the moral and intellectual goals of human life. In this regard, Montesquieu's views also present a special interest in laws, the state, and the people who lead it. According to him, *“laws constitute the necessary connection that derives from the nature of things, that is, that all beings have their own laws.”* (Montesquieu, 2000, p.17). Just as there are God's laws, the material world has its laws; the higher beings have their laws; the animals have their laws; so humans have their laws.

Examining the views of Aristotle and Montesquieu regarding the characteristics of state leaders, one cannot fail to notice their commonality: the need to lead the state as an intelligent being. Jean-Jacques Rousseau associates the leadership of a democratic society with individuals who know how to draft laws, as follows: *“He who drafts the law knows better than anyone else how it should be implemented. A good leader of the state should not be influenced by personal interests in the exercise of state affairs, and the misinterpretation of laws by the*

*government is a lesser evil than the corruption of the legislator, which is a consequence of individual interests. In this case, the concept of the state is misinterpreted in its very essence, and any of its functions become impossible because the general will can no longer be that of proper governance.” (Rousseau, 2007, p.137).* From Rousseau's concepts come the lessons of sound morality that should characterize the heads of state institutions. By correctly applying the laws themselves, their drafters give their own example to the law, which is the sovereign before whom all members of society, from the top of the state pyramid to the base, are equal.

Even John Locke was an irreconcilable enemy of law-breaking policymakers. He states: *"In a government where the legislative bodies are permanent or in the hands of a ruler, there is a danger that they will think of themselves as distant from the common people and thus increase their wealth and power by taking advantage of the people that they consider more appropriate." (Lock, 2005, p.78).* Although the teachings of these philosophers of the European Renaissance refer to the conditions in which they lived, their foresight is still valid today, especially in the circumstances that democracy is going through in our country (Albania). Concerning power, John Locke says: *"People must agree to have laws, but the laws must be in synchrony with the rights that man possesses in his core." (Lock, 2005, p.81).* John Locke formulates law as follows: *"... as a guide, as a phenomenon that serves the general good of people through rules and norms. The essence of the law should be evident based on the protection and development of freedom. Under the influence of laws, people's freedom rests on the existence of a stable rule, while breaking this rule makes people lose their freedom because breaking the legislation makes them subject to sanctions and consequently lose their freedom." (Lock, 2005, p.79)*

Machiavelli's thoughts on law and the state also provide special interest. In his work titled "The Prince," he reveals his interpretation of the state and, especially, the person who leads it. According to him, the *"prince must possess some special skills: intelligence, foresight, the ability to react to disasters, to choose the best, and the ability to be a fox or a lion, as the case may be, considering the latter as the main virtue of a powerful one"*. (Machiavelli, 2003, p. 85). Machiavelli also does not exclude cases where an ordinary man, as he calls him, who does not meet certain criteria becomes a prince and ruler. He called such people incompetent because they are neither genius nor brave, and logically, they don't even know how to command when they come to power. Thus, they remain dependent on the will of those who have entrusted them with power. Such a situation is observed even today, on a larger and more general scale. Today, the intellect or intelligence of the leader is not primary, but the implementation of the orders of the one who placed him in that position. The relationship between the law and the state, as well as their functions, supports the principles of the rule of law.

The rule of law finds its support in the individual, while the individual finds in the rule of law the spaces of freedom. The democratic state rises to the mission of respecting the law as well as protecting and respecting human rights. The notion of human rights is understood in relation to institutions and the guarantee of human rights by the relevant institutions. In this sense, the term right should be seen as a natural continuity that man possesses from biological birth to his integration into democratic society. Thomas Aquinas, a thinker of the Middle Ages, sees the state as created by God with a function given by him. The main function of this state is to

ensure the general good of the people by maintaining peace and organizing the actions of citizens for a better life. So the state, with its function to achieve the common good, must also be the guarantor of achieving the well-being of the citizens.

Rousseau was a philosopher who dealt extensively with the relationship between the state and society. Analyzing the state's relationship with society, he asserts the superiority of the state over society, but not to the extent of enslaving the people to its orders. As an essential condition for the functioning of the state-society relationship, Rusoi emphasizes the respect of human rights by state institutions as well as the functioning of institutions respecting and implementing the law. Rousseau points out that a democratic state cannot coexist with people who would not support their government. A citizen who does not contribute to the proper functioning of his state cannot claim to have a good government. An individual who corrupts state officials cannot claim to eradicate corruption. An individual who violates the rights of another individual and extends his freedom by limiting the freedom of another individual cannot claim the normal functioning of the so-called rule of law.

#### *The role of citizen and society*

The essence of a democratic state depends on the establishment of a mutual relationship between the citizens and the state itself. This relationship, on the one hand, is characterized by the democratic spirit and climate, which lead to society's need for the establishment of democratic norms and laws, which are best fulfilled by a legal state that represents and fulfills the interests of the people. On the other hand, the relationship between citizens and the state can be identified with the right of the state to establish norms and laws and the obligation of the citizens themselves to respect these norms. In a state, true democracy rules only when the laws that govern it are drawn up by its citizens.

In light of the fact that the community of individuals constitutes society itself, we must see the indissoluble unity and mutual dependence between the individual and society. The distortion of this relationship in different areas of a person's life, especially in the economic area and the distribution of material goods, leads to the creation of irreparable hostilities between both parties. The drafters of laws are generally people mandated by the people, but in many cases, they are driven by the idea of getting rich quickly and the privileges they want to secure for themselves. Thus, it is noted that, no matter how many groundless contradictions the biggest political parties in Albania show among themselves regarding reforms in the legal or legislative field, when it comes to defining these privileges, they have always found a common language by providing themselves and their families with conditions that would be the envy of even the most developed countries in the world. Albanian democracy suffers from violations and distortions of relations between ordinary people and their chosen ones in all kinds of powers.

Even the ancient philosophers underlined the phenomenon that the individual can destroy order and the state, just as the state can harm the individual. Plato points out that *"The best way to know an honest man is to analyze*

*the nature of his state, and it is necessary to demand that everyone say justice in that state."* (Plato, 1999, p. 45). The history of the birth and development of the state faithfully reflects the historical eras that man had to go through in human society. Plato pointed out that *"The state is a natural institution because it reflects the structure of human nature. The origin of the state is a reflection of the economic needs of man. After a state begins to exist, because an individual is not self-sufficient, we all have many needs."* (Plato, 1999, p. 68).

An interesting point of view is presented by Aristotle's world view on the facts and circumstances of the conditioning of the universe by the individual. The view expresses the inseparable relationship between the state and the individual. Just as a building stands on a strong foundation, the democracy of society is at a satisfactory level when it guarantees the rights and freedoms of the individual.

In fact, the state of the state-individual relationship is one of the most convincing and objective ways to prove and show the degree of democracy in a country. Consequently, the happiest, most self-realized people with a higher level of well-being are those who live in the most developed and democratic countries. Aristotle points out the connection between the individual and the state when he states that *"He who is not able to live in a state, or he who does not need because he is self-sufficient, must be either a beast or a god"*. (Aristotele, 2003, p.12) From this conclusion, the function of the state to create material goods and human happiness at the highest level is self-evident.

The state is sovereign and exercises absolute and unlimited power, so it stands above all other institutions, associations, or groups in society. Based on this feature of the state, Thomas Hobbes portrayed the state with absolute and unlimited power as *"a great 'Leviathan', a gigantic monster, commonly described as a sea creature."* (Heywood, 2002, p. 109) Unlike the private institutions of civil society, state institutions are public. Government apparatus is considered public, while autonomous bodies are considered private, such as businesses, unions, clubs, families, etc.

Public organizations are responsible for making and implementing collective decisions, while private organizations or institutions, such as businesses, fulfill their personal interests. Habermas did not believe that the institutions of a state are reasonable, but that they should be forced by the public sphere to be so. The opposite point of view to that of Hobbes regarding the position of the institutions of the state is expressed by John Rawls, who highlights that *"The institutions of the state, if properly understood from the philosophical point of view, are themselves rational."* (Rawls, 2000, p. 28)

## Conclusions

In a democratic society, special priority is given to the education of citizens for the implementation of laws and rules. Such education should prevail in the consciousness of every citizen. The goal of this education begins with the recognition and implementation of the principles of the democratic state by citizens and society. These

principles are embodied in them in the form of legal consciousness and institutional consciousness. Moreover, every person should know both his rights and his duties towards the state and society, as well as what rights and duties the state institutions have towards him.

The democratic system creates great opportunities for the direct participation of citizens in the construction of a legal state, which means not only the drafting of laws but also their consequent implementation. Philosophical heritage teaches us that whatever form a government may take, it must be based on the concepts of justice and equality. In the democratic system, the essence of the state is that the force of law rules all its citizens, and thanks to these laws, they enjoy guaranteed rights. Only the members of a society equal before the law can build a prosperous democracy and society to shape their future.

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## Development of Skills for Pharmacy Students in Evaluating Randomized Controlled Trials Using CASP Checklist

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**Abstract:** One of the essential skills that pharmacy students should develop is the ability to evaluate randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to assess the clinical efficacy and safety of pharmaceuticals. This study aimed to enhance the RCT evaluation skills of fifth-year pharmacy students. It employed the CASP checklist application to assess clinical studies on new drugs. The teaching approach combined theory and hands-on CASP checklist application for RCT assessment, comprising four stages: 1) introducing principles and providing example RCT evaluations, 2) assigning individual students the RCT analysis tasks, 3) instructor feedback, and 4) collaborative group assignments for new drug evaluations using CASP. Student performance was evaluated with a rubric. The study identified notable improvements in students' RCT evaluating skills, with an initial average score of  $71.11 \pm 5.57\%$ . While room for improvement in understanding, summarizing, and clear expression of opinions exist, incorporating instructors' feedback led to a significant improvement ( $96.11 \pm 8.32\%$ ) in individual assignments. Group scores for new drug evaluations averaged over 80% ( $86.61 \pm 6.93\%$ ). These findings demonstrate that students developed RCT evaluation skills and enhanced understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. In conclusion, this teaching approach effectively improved students' RCT evaluation skills through the CASP checklist application, fostering their proficiency and understanding. This equips students with essential tools for future pharmacy practice and professional development.

**Keywords:** CASP checklists, randomized controlled trial, pharmacy student, critical thinking

**Citation:** Nawanopparatsakul, S., Watana, S., Taesotikul, T., Phuagphong, P., & Chinpaisal, C. (2024). Development of Skills for Pharmacy Students in Evaluating Randomized Controlled Trials Using CASP

Checklist. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 353\49-359), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In today's era of evidence-based medicine, pharmacists play a pivotal role in evaluating a plethora of documents and data concerning medications (Cameron et al., 2022; Faria et al., 2021; Patwardhan et al., 2012). The development of skills in reading and critically assessing research works stands as a cornerstone for lifelong learning (Khamis et al., 2020). As pharmacists navigate through various documents, they must sift through multiple information sources to ensure credibility, allowing for tailored recommendations adaptable to individual patient needs. Given the diverse array of patient variables, comorbidities, and complications, each treatment decision must be carefully considered to achieve the optimal outcome. Consequently, the ability to assess the reliability of research documents becomes imperative, empowering pharmacists to review, adapt, and apply information effectively for patient care.

At the forefront of evaluating medication efficacy lies the gold standard of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs). These trials not only serve as a benchmark for assessing medication properties but also aid pharmacists in evaluating the validity and quality of research. However, the process extends beyond mere efficacy assessment. Pharmacists must consider various factors such as drug pricing, adherence to treatment regimens, frequency of administration, side effects, drug reactions, and patient acceptance. Thus, the assessment of research reliability emerges as a pivotal determinant in guiding clinical decisions and utilizing data effectively for patient care (Styles & Torgerson, 2018; Tsourounis, 2000).

To aid in this assessment, the CASP checklist has emerged as a widely utilized tool (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2021). Tailored specifically for evaluating the reliability of research works, the CASP Randomised Controlled Trial checklist offers a structured approach encompassing various facets of research evaluation. From assessing the conformity of research works with RCT standards (Questions 1-3) to evaluating internal consistency (Questions 4-6), outcomes (Questions 7-8), and the clinical relevance and applicability of experimental methods for local settings (Questions 9-11). The CASP checklist provides a comprehensive framework for analysis. However, it's important to note that CASP checklists do not prescribe scores for individual questions; rather, they serve as guidelines for assessing the reliability and suitability of research works for practical application, emphasizing the importance of evaluator discretion.

Despite the availability of such tools and theoretical teaching methods, students often encounter challenges in translating their knowledge into practice (Saifan et al., 2021; Straus et al., 2013). While they may learn the theoretical aspects of evaluating RCTs and research methodologies, applying this knowledge to real-world scenarios remains a hurdle. This gap becomes evident when students embark on internships and realize a deficiency in systematically reading and analyzing research. Hence, this study aims to bridge this gap by



developing teaching methodologies focused on enhancing students' skills in evaluating RCTs using the CASP checklist. Additionally, it seeks to cultivate critical thinking skills essential for pharmacists in continuously analyzing disease and medication-related issues, ultimately aiding in optimal patient treatment. Thus, pharmaceutical students must be equipped not only with the ability to evaluate clinical study data but also with the critical thinking skills necessary to interpret and apply this information effectively in real-world contexts.

## Method

This study engaged fifth-year students enrolled in the "565 313 New Drugs" course during the 2022 academic year, totaling 18 participants. Ethical oversight was ensured through review by the Human Research Ethics Committee under certification number COE 65.0204-023.

To cultivate skills in evaluating RCTs, the teaching approach relied on the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP). Specifically, the CASP Randomized Controlled Trial Standard Checklist, comprising 11 questions, served as a tool to gauge the reliability and utilization of clinical trial data for assessing the efficacy and safety of medications. This checklist was downloaded from <https://casp-uk.net/checklists/casp-rct-randomised-controlled-trial-checklist.pdf>.

The teaching methodology encompassed 3 phases

*1) Preparation Phase:* This phase involves preparing the groundwork, setting objectives and outcomes, and planning the instructional approach among teaching teams. Scoring criteria (rubric scores) as per Table 1 was devised. Lesson plans were then structured to align with the identified learning objectives.

*2) Instructional Phase:* This phase focuses on the active teaching and learning process, where students engage with course materials and participate in guided activities.

Step 1: Students grasped the intricacies of the teaching format for medication assessment and outcome evaluation through lectures, practical examples of medication assessment, CASP utilization, and hands-on practice in medication assessment within the classroom setting.

Step 2: Individual RCT assessment tasks were assigned, prompting students to independently delve into the content, conduct research, and employ the CASP tool to assess the reliability of medication-related research.

Step 3: The faculty provided constructive feedback to each of the students on their work, suggesting enhancements to refine medication assessment skills and research reliability evaluation. Students subsequently re-evaluated individual medication assignments (with new clinical studies) using CASP.

Step 4: Students collaborated in small teams to present new medications of interest and their assessments. Discussions ensued within these groups, culminating in presentations tailored to meet predefined learning objectives. Faculty offered feedback and evaluated group endeavors.

*3) Evaluation Phase:* This phase encompasses the evaluation of student learning outcomes, provision of

feedback, and contemplation of the effectiveness of instructional methodologies employed. Firstly, teaching teams conducted assessments to appraise students' proficiency in RCT assessment, employing rubric scores to evaluate both individual and group performances. Secondly, students engaged in self-assessment exercises aimed at evaluating their comprehension and aptitude in RCT evaluation, both preceding and following instructional sessions. Lastly, students were invited to assess their satisfaction levels regarding the adopted teaching format.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD), were employed to present the findings. Student's t-tests were utilized to discern differences in assessment scores before and after faculty feedback.

Table 1. Rubric and Score Criteria for Assessing Pharmacy Student's RCT Evaluation Skills

Evaluation Criteria	Excellent 4 points	Good 3 points	Fair 2 points	Improvement needed 1 points
1. Is the basic study design valid for a RCT?	Evaluating the research design, research inquiries, population selection, and appropriate bias mitigation measures accurately and clearly.	Assessing pertinent data but not comprehensively covering all aspects.	Evaluating incomplete data, resulting in inadequate research appraisal.	Inadequate data compilation leading to an inappropriate assessment of the research.
2. Was the study methodologically sound?	Identifying and analyzing the research methodologies comprehensively and accurately, encompassing all pertinent issues.	Conducting analyses and evaluations correctly, albeit not addressing all aspects.	Erroneous analyses and evaluations.	Absence of analyses and evaluations.
3. What are the results?	Providing a comprehensive and accurate account of the research	Presenting research findings, albeit with unclear implications.	Offering research findings with incomplete implications and	Failing to present research findings and their

	findings and their implications, with completeness and precision.		lacking procedural steps.	implications.
4. Will the results help locally?	- Deciding on the applicability of research outcomes and data beyond the study population. - Demonstrating a clear grasp of the research principles or theories, with lucid summarization and understanding.	Showing an understanding of research principles or theories and data, with the ability to expound on their practical application.	Displaying an understanding of research principles or theories and data, albeit only partially addressing their underlying practical applications.	- Revealing a deficiency in understanding research principles or theories and data. - Absence of an application summary.
5. conclusion	Exhibiting a clear understanding, with the capacity to succinctly summarize and articulate opinions effectively, with practical applicability.	Capable of summarizing and articulating opinions partially, with some ability to elucidate applicability.	Demonstrating partial summarization and articulation of opinions, but lacking the ability to explicate applicability.	Inability to summarize and articulate opinions, coupled with an inability to explicate applicability.

## Results

### Development of RCT Evaluation Skills

Following theoretical lectures, students were tasked with individual assignments to study and evaluate RCT research papers. They independently delved into the content, aligning with the learning objectives, conducted research, and utilized the CASP tool to gauge the reliability of medication-related research. Subsequently, instructors provided feedback on students' evaluations of RCT papers, offering insights for enhancing medication evaluations and the credibility of research on new drugs. This feedback aimed to improve both individual assignments in subsequent sessions and group assignments. The evaluation scores of RCT evaluation skills, assessed using the rubric, are detailed in Table 2.

Following the lecture period, the average score for individual assignments was  $71.11 \pm 5.57\%$ . Students

identified clarity in summarizing and expressing opinions, as well as practical application, as key areas for improvement. Post-feedback and guidance from instructors, including insights for improvement, students' performance in evaluating new medication papers significantly improved. The average score surged to  $96.11 \pm 8.32\%$ , a statistically significant improvement. Notably, students effectively achieved the learning objectives in evaluating medications using the CASP tool.

Table 2. RCT Evaluation Skill Assessment Scores

	Assignment Scores	
	Pre-Feedback	Post-Feedback
Maximum (%)	80	100
Minimum (%)	55	75
Average $\pm$ SD	$71.11 \pm 5.57^*$	$96.11 \pm 8.32^*$

\*p-value < 0.0001

Upon refining skills through individual assignments, students undertook group tasks to comprehensively study and report on new medications, mirroring tasks performed as pharmacists in medication evaluations. The evaluation scores by instructors are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Group Assignment Scores in RCT Evaluation

Maximum	100
Minimum	76.60
Average $\pm$ SD	$86.61 \pm 6.93$

Students attained a maximum score of 100%, with an average of  $86.61 \pm 6.93\%$ . Evaluation of these new medication assignments revealed students' development of professional pharmaceutical evaluation skills in medication assessment post the course's teaching and learning process.

#### *Students' Self-Assessment*

##### *Self-Assessment Regarding Knowledge and Skills in RCT Evaluation*

Before the course's conclusion, students self-assessed their knowledge for RCT evaluation using the CASP. Table 4 outlines the results. Pre-course, most students exhibited limited knowledge in RCT evaluation, averaging  $36.67 \pm 10.29\%$ . Post-course, self-assessment using the CASP saw a remarkable improvement, averaging  $80.00 \pm 9.70\%$ . This denotes a significant enhancement in students' self-perceived knowledge for RCT evaluation.

Table 4. Self-Assessment of Knowledge for RCT Evaluation

	Students' Self-Assessment	
	Pre-Course	Post-Course
Average $\pm$ SD	36.67 $\pm$ 10.29*	80.00 $\pm$ 9.70*

\*p-value < 0.0001

Table 5. Self-Assessment Regarding Knowledge and Skills for RCT Evaluation

	Very High % (N)	High % (N)	Moderate % (N)	Low % (N)	Very Low % (N)
Please rate your level of knowledge and understanding regarding RCT evaluation using CASP11 after the instructional sessions.	38.89% (7)	61.11% (11)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Please rate your level of skill in RCT evaluation using CASP11 after the instructional sessions.	44.44% (8)	44.44% (8)	11.11% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Please rate your improvement in critical thinking and problem-solving skills after the instructional sessions for RCT evaluation using CASP11.	27.78% (5)	72.22% (13)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Please rate your ability to apply the acquired knowledge in your future studies and work after the instructional sessions for RCT evaluation using CASP11.	50.00% (9)	50.00% (9)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Overall benefits derived from the instructional sessions for RCT evaluation using CASP11	55.56% (10)	44.44% (8)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Table 5 reflects the students' self-assessment following the completion of the teaching and learning process. It illustrates that all students rated their comprehension and proficiency in RCT evaluation using CASP11 at high to the highest levels, reaching 88.88%. Their assessment indicates a significant enhancement in critical thinking and problem-solving skills, collectively totaling 100%. Moreover, they acknowledged the holistic benefits derived from the educational experience, including the practical application of acquired knowledge in their career.

#### *Students' Satisfaction with Teaching Format*

Students' satisfaction towards teaching management and skill development in pharmaceutical evaluation was gauged through a questionnaire, with results summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Students' Satisfaction towards Teaching Format

	Very satisfied % (N)	Satisfied % (N)	Neutral % (N)	Dissatisfied % (N)	Very dissatisfied % (N)
Satisfaction with	66.67%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%

	Very satisfied % (N)	Satisfied % (N)	Neutral % (N)	Dissatisfied % (N)	Very dissatisfied % (N)
Instructors	(12)	(6)	(0)	(0)	(0)
Satisfaction with	72.22%	22.22%	5.56%	0%	0%
Feedback Process	(13)	(4)	(1)	(0)	(0)
Satisfaction with	61.11%	22.22%	16.67%	0%	0%
Assignment Workload	(11)	(4)	(3)	(0)	(0)
Overall Satisfaction	72.22%	27.78%	0%	0%	0%
with Teaching Format	(13)	(5)	(0)	(0)	(0)

Students expressed highest satisfaction with the overall teaching format, particularly praising the feedback process at 72.22%. This was followed by satisfaction with the instructor team, and assignment quantity at 66.67% and 61.11% respectively. Additional feedback provided by students included

- Assignments were deemed appropriate.
- The course was enjoyable, with instructors lauded for their teaching prowess, knowledge provision, and adept analysis and selection of medications.

## Discussion

The objective of this study was to devise a teaching approach where instructors assumed the role of coaches to enrich the professional aptitude of pharmacy students in evaluating randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of novel medications, utilizing the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist as a tool for self-directed learning. The outcomes of the study were in line with the instructional goals established by the educators. Following evaluation by instructors, students exhibited heightened proficiency in RCT assessment, showcasing enhanced knowledge, comprehension, and analytical abilities. Self-assessment by students indicated further enhancements in RCT evaluation, critical thinking skills, problem-solving capabilities, and the aptitude to apply acquired knowledge in their prospective careers. Additionally, students expressed contentment with the instructional format, providing feedback on the suitability of the timeframe allocated for RCT evaluation using CASP, typically within 7-14 days.

Critical thinking encompasses several facets: 1) attitude, which involves the capacity for strategic planning, adaptability, persistence, self-correction, mindfulness, and the adept utilization of information; 2) knowledge, inclusive of foundational principles and those acquired through the learning process to navigate towards solutions; and 3) thinking skills vital for problem-solving and clinical reasoning, culminating in informed clinical decision-making (Alfaro-LeFevre, 2019).

Impediments to critical thinking encompass: 1) perception, where students harbor the belief that they possess the

acumen to resolve issues and may fail to grasp the importance of acquiring this skill; instructors are thus encouraged to guide students towards assimilating information, diverse knowledge, and honing thinking skills to enrich critical thinking; 2) metacognitive skills, where students arrive at conclusions without undergoing additional evidence assessment; and 3) fixed mindset, whereby students exude confidence in their abilities and intelligence, often perceiving critical thinking as an innate skill that requires no further development. However, critical thinking necessitates deliberate training and effort (Cone et al., 2013; Persky et al., 2019; Silberman et al., 2021). After instructional sessions, all students reported improvements in their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as evidenced in Table 5. This evidence indicates that the teaching methodology employed in this study, utilizing CASP as a tool, effectively enhances critical thinking among pharmacy students.

Furthermore, skill development necessitates repeated practice as well as feedback from instructors. Evaluation scores using a rubric scorecard revealed that students primarily needed improvement in comprehending, summarizing, and articulating clear viewpoints that could be practically applied. From the study results in Table 2, it was found that after receiving feedback, students significantly improved their assignment scores. Additionally, according to Table 6, students also expressed the highest level of satisfaction with feedback. Subsequent to receiving feedback on individual assignments and discussing improvement strategies, students showed observable advancements in their ability to work independently on new assignments. Moreover, group tasks involving the presentation of novel drug information received assessment scores exceeding 80%, underscoring the importance of effective and efficient feedback for instructors.

The development of teaching methodologies to augment knowledge and skills encompasses diverse strategies. In this study, we employed the following approaches: 1) fostering comprehension through clear articulation of learning objectives and instructors providing foundational knowledge on drug evaluation, alongside introducing the CASP tool for assessment, 2) practical application and analysis involved students identifying key issues, accessing problem-solving strategies, and engaging in self-analysis through structured exercises outlined by instructors, 3) essential feedback was provided through assessment scores using rubric scores, facilitating reflections on student work, exploration of future assignment ideas, and offering guidance for subsequent tasks, 4) encouraging lifelong learning through comprehensive hands-on practice, where students undertook self-assigned tasks post-feedback, followed by collaborative teamwork in full-scale drug assessments mirroring real-world pharmacy evaluation scenarios. Instructors evaluated student work, provided feedback, and offered suggestions and guidance for future tasks. Students self-assessed and applied knowledge and experiences gained from the teaching process for ongoing advancement. This teaching methodology is aligned with various research endeavors aimed at designing teaching methodologies to enhance students' learning skills (Askew, 2000; Patphol, 2018; Valdez et al., 2014).

This study was conducted with a small number of students, and the feedback process proved to be effective, leading to positive learning outcomes. Moreover, students were at a high academic level, displaying responsibility in their work. The workload assigned was appropriate, without being excessive. If this teaching methodology were to be applied in larger classrooms, instructors would need to consider suitable feedback



mechanisms tailored to the class size.

## Conclusion

The development of teaching methodologies to enhance knowledge and skills involves various strategies. In this study, we employed approaches such as fostering comprehension through clear articulation of learning objectives, providing foundational knowledge on drug evaluation, introducing the CASP tool for assessment, practical application, and analysis, essential feedback using rubric scores, and encouraging lifelong learning through comprehensive hands-on practice. This teaching approach effectively improved students' RCT evaluation skills through the CASP checklist application, fostering their proficiency and understanding, which equips them with essential tools for future pharmacy practice and professional development.

## Acknowledgments

The support for this study was kindly provided by the Center for Educational Innovation, Silpakorn University, through the Project on the Development of Teaching and Learning Innovations (Academic Year 2022).

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## Teaching With Purpose: Indonesian Educators' Response to The Challenges of Society 5.0

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**Abstract:** The central aim of this research was to uncover how educators in Indonesia live out their life's calling, striving to create a widespread positive impact not only for their students but also for the surrounding environment. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 educators from all over Indonesia. These interviews were systematically transcribed, coded, and analyzed to draw out thematic insights, providing a lens into the educators' experiences, challenges, and triumphs in the backdrop of the evolving landscape of Society 5.0. This super-smart society, characterized by the integration of technologies such as AI and IoT into daily life, necessitates a fresh educational perspective. The narratives from the educators highlighted their unwavering commitment to effecting transformation, showcasing positive progress in their personal journeys, their students' lives, and their immediate communities. Amidst the technological tide of Society 5.0, the study underscores the indomitable spirit of educators in effecting change. Recommendations, rooted in the voices of these educators, are proposed for policymakers, educational stakeholders, and future research.

**Keywords:** Indonesian educators, Society 5.0, Transformational impact, Educational challenges, Life's calling.

**Citation:** Nurhayati, S., & Musa, S. (2024). Teaching With Purpose: Indonesian Educators' Response to The Challenges of Society 5.0. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 360-372), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Indonesia, with its vast geographical diversity and socio-economic variances, faces distinct challenges in embracing Society 5.0 within its educational system (Musa et al., 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Nurhayati & Musa, 2020; Setiadi et al., 2023; Winarti et al., 2022). This period represents more than a technological shift; it is a comprehensive paradigm change. Indonesian educators find themselves navigating this new landscape, attempting to integrate advanced technologies into their teaching while maintaining cultural relevance and addressing local needs (Ghofur & Nurhayati, 2023a, 2023b; Iskandar et al., 2023; Marségi et al., 2023; Nuraeni & Nurhayati, 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Nurmalia et al., 2022; Octaviani et al., 2023; Sadiah et al., 2021;

Tiarawati et al., 2023). The concept of Society 5.0, originated in Japan, represents an advanced socio-economic vision where digital and physical spaces are integrated to create a human-centric society. This fusion, particularly relevant to the field of education, necessitates a paradigm shift towards technology-enhanced learning environments. In educational contexts, Society 5.0 underscores the importance of leveraging advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data to facilitate innovative teaching and learning processes. This review explores how these technological integrations are shaping educational methodologies globally and within Indonesia.

Globally, educational systems are undergoing transformative shifts due to the integration of cutting-edge technologies. Literature in this domain highlights the growing influence of AI and IoT in reshaping educational methodologies, steering them towards more personalized, adaptive, and student-centered learning experiences (Vongkulluksn et al., 2020). This pedagogical evolution favors collaborative, inquiry-based learning approaches, diverging from traditional, teacher-centered models. These advancements are not merely technological but also pedagogical, as they redefine the roles of educators and learners within the educational process. Turning to the Indonesian context, the education system is characterized by its efforts to incorporate technology and modern teaching methodologies. However, literature reveals that Indonesian educators face unique challenges in this adaptation process. These challenges include limited resources, disparities in technological infrastructure, and a pressing need for effective teacher training programs (Musa et al., 2022; Musa & Nurhayati, 2021; Nurhayati & Musa, 2020; Winarti et al., 2022). Studies highlight the varied readiness and capacity among Indonesian educators to integrate new technologies and pedagogies into their teaching practices, reflecting a complex landscape of opportunities and hurdles (Fauziddin et al., 2021; Hardiyanti & Alwi, 2022; Nuraeni & Nurhayati, 2023; Nurhayati, 2021; Rukanda & Nurhayati, 2023). This review identifies a significant gap in the literature concerning the specific experiences of Indonesian educators in the context of Society 5.0.

While there is a substantial body of research on the global impact of technological advancements in education, there is a scarcity of studies that delve into the personal experiences and perspectives of Indonesian educators. This gap highlights the need for qualitative research that can capture the nuanced realities of educators in Indonesia as they adapt to and navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by Society 5.0. While there is extensive literature on the global impact of technological advancements in education, there exists a notable gap in research specific to the Indonesian context, particularly in the era of Society 5.0. Studies often overlook the nuanced challenges and innovative practices emerging in developing countries like Indonesia, where the integration of technology in education is influenced by unique cultural, economic, and infrastructural factors (Zhan et al., 2022). This research aims to bridge this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of Indonesian educators' experiences. The primary objective of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Indonesian educators in adapting to Society 5.0, with a focus on the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ. The guiding research questions are: What are Indonesian educators' perceptions of Society 5.0's impact on their teaching practices? What challenges do they face in integrating new technologies into their educational settings? How do they overcome these challenges, and what innovative approaches are being adopted? This

study is pivotal as it explores the intersection of Society 5.0 and education within the Indonesian context—a perspective often overlooked in global discourse. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Indonesian educators' firsthand experiences, shedding light on how they are adapting to and navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving digital era. This exploration is particularly significant in understanding the unique strategies and solutions developed within a developing country's context, thus contributing new insights to the broader field of educational technology.

## Method

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, utilizing a case study method to explore the experiences and perspectives of Indonesian educators in response to the evolving challenges of Society 5.0. The qualitative case study approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their real-life context. Participants were selected using a purposive strategy to ensure a diverse representation of experiences across Indonesia's varied educational landscape. Twenty educators were chosen based on their geographic location, teaching experience, and the level of education they were involved in (primary, secondary, or tertiary). The diversity in participants' backgrounds aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies educators use across different contexts. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, conducted between April-September 2023. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and was carried out in Indonesian or English, based on the preference of the participant. Interviews were conducted virtually, using secure video conferencing platforms, to accommodate geographical spread and ensure participant convenience.

The interview protocol comprised open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about educators' experiences, challenges, and strategies in adapting to Society 5.0. Key areas explored included their understanding of Society 5.0, perceived impact on educational practices, technological adoption, and the support systems available to them. All interviews were recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim, and translated where necessary. Transcripts were then systematically coded. A thematic analysis approach was employed to identify and analyze patterns within the data. Initial codes were generated, categorized into potential themes, and then reviewed and refined to form the main thematic findings of the study.

To ensure data validity, the study employed several strategies. Triangulation was used by comparing and cross-verifying the data and findings from different participants. Regular debriefing sessions were held with a team of researchers to discuss and challenge emerging themes, ensuring a comprehensive and unbiased interpretation of the data. Additionally, participants were provided with summaries of their interviews (member checking) to validate the accuracy and resonance of the interpretations. The validity of the interview protocol was established through a pilot study conducted with a small group of educators not included in the main study. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the interview questions for clarity and relevance. The interview protocol was also reviewed by a panel of experts in qualitative research and education to ensure the questions were effectively

capturing the intended themes and information.

## Results

### **Analysis of Indonesian Educators' Perceptions of Society 5.0's Impact on Teaching Practices**

Indonesian educators perceive Society 5.0 as an era that brings both opportunities and challenges to their teaching practices. Their responses indicate a nuanced understanding that balances the integration of technology with traditional educational and religious values. Educators recognize the importance of incorporating technology into their teaching methodologies. However, they emphasize the need to align this integration with traditional values, particularly in religious education. One educator illustrated this approach, stating, "We have a program to eradicate religious and Quranic illiteracy... we always prepare Quran study sessions every Sunday". This response highlights a commitment to maintain the core essence of their educational philosophy while adopting new tools and methods.

The transition to Society 5.0 is not without its challenges for these educators. Many expressed concerns about practical difficulties, such as resource limitations and infrastructural constraints, which hinder the seamless integration of new technologies. One educator commented on the priority given to spiritual and moral development over technological advancement, noting, "Most teachers improve children in terms of their knowledge... we, the religious teachers, focus on the spiritual aspect. It's all about the heart from which various moral characters of students emerge". This sentiment reflects a cautious approach to adopting technological changes, ensuring they do not overshadow the fundamental objectives of education. The educators' reactions to Society 5.0 vary, with a noticeable generational gap influencing their perceptions.

While younger educators are more inclined towards embracing technological advancements, older educators, particularly those nearing retirement, show less interest in adapting to new technologies. This disparity underscores the diverse attitudes towards the impact of Society 5.0 on educational practices. A key insight from the interviews is the holistic approach to education that the educators advocate. They view Society 5.0 not just as a technological era but as an opportunity to enrich their teaching with a blend of modern tools and traditional values. The emphasis is on a balanced educational experience that develops students' technological skills alongside their moral and character strengths.

Despite various challenges, there is a noticeable commitment among the educators to continuous learning and adaptation. Many express a willingness to update their skills and methodologies to remain relevant in the changing educational landscape. As one educator put it, "In this digital era, I have to develop myself; if I don't follow the development, I will be far behind those who are already using digital methods or media". This proactive stance highlights their dedication to evolving their teaching practices in response to Society 5.0's demands.

### *Analysis of Challenges in Integrating New Technologies*

Indonesian educators face several significant challenges in integrating new technologies into their educational settings, as revealed in the interview data. A primary concern is the **resource limitations**. Educators are constrained by insufficient access to modern technology and tools, including a lack of computers and unstable internet connectivity. These resource constraints severely limit the ability to integrate technology effectively in teaching.

The **cultural resistance to change** emerges as another critical challenge. Many educators, particularly those more accustomed to traditional teaching methods, show a reluctance to adopt new technologies. This resistance is rooted in a strong commitment to traditional educational values, as one educator pointedly expressed: "Most teachers improve children in terms of their knowledge... we, the religious teachers, focus on the spiritual aspect". This indicates a cultural inclination towards maintaining established educational practices over embracing technological innovations.

A significant barrier is the **lack of technological literacy and training** among educators. Many express unfamiliarity with new technologies and a gap in their ability to integrate these tools into their teaching methodologies. An educator highlighted this challenge, stating, "In this digital era, I have to develop myself; if I don't follow the development, I will be far behind those who are already using digital methods or media". This gap in technological literacy underscores the need for enhanced training and development in this area.

Moreover, a **generational divide** is evident in the attitudes towards technology adoption. Educators nearing retirement are less inclined to adapt to new technologies, indicating a disparity in technology acceptance across different age groups. This divide can create inconsistencies in the adoption and implementation of technological tools in educational settings.

The challenge extends to **administrative and systemic issues**. Effective technology integration requires not just access to hardware and software but also significant changes in administrative processes and systems. The effort to train educators in using laptops for administrative tasks and in applications like SIAGA and EMIS for data management exemplifies this systemic aspect.

Finally, educators are challenged to balance the integration of technology with the preservation of **traditional educational values**. The focus of Indonesian education on moral and character development necessitates a careful approach to ensure that technology enhances rather than replaces traditional teaching methods. In conclusion, the challenges faced by Indonesian educators in integrating new technologies are multifaceted and complex. They encompass resource constraints, cultural resistance to change, a gap in technological literacy, generational divides, administrative complexities, and the need to balance modern methods with traditional educational values. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic strategy that includes enhancing technological literacy, providing adequate resources, and developing supportive policies that align with



Indonesia's unique educational ethos.

### *Overcoming Technological Challenges in Indonesian Education*

Indonesian educators are emphasizing the importance of self-development and continuous learning in response to the challenges of integrating new technologies. They recognize the need to stay updated with technological advancements, as encapsulated by one educator's statement: "In this digital era, I have to develop myself; if I don't follow the development, I will be far behind those who are already using digital methods or media". This approach underlines their proactive attitude towards personal and professional growth amidst rapid digital changes.

Collaborative learning and peer support have emerged as essential strategies for overcoming technological challenges. Educators are creating groups to share knowledge and skills, building a supportive community of learners. An example is the organization of monthly training sessions for peers to enhance practical skills, such as laptop usage for administrative tasks: "We took time once a month specifically to practice using laptops... every religious education teacher must be able to manage their administration without relying on others". This community-based approach not only improves individual competencies but also strengthens the collective capability of the educators.

Community engagement is a key strategy in ensuring successful technological integration. Educators are involving various stakeholders, including school committees and parents, to create a cohesive and supportive educational environment. This strategy is illustrated by the coordinated effort among different parties: "We synergize with many parties, from the principal to the school committee and parents... to coordinate and ensure every program runs smoothly". Such efforts ensure that technological initiatives in education are well-supported and effectively executed.

### *Innovative Approaches in Educational Technology*

Educators are increasingly using digital platforms like SIAGA and EMIS for effective data management. This shift towards digital administrative solutions is a significant step towards modernizing the educational system. The adoption of online teaching tools such as Google Meet and other self-directed learning resources represents a significant advancement towards interactive and flexible teaching methodologies. This integration signifies a balanced approach to preserving traditional teaching methods while embracing modern technology. The strategies and innovations employed by Indonesian educators showcase their commitment to overcoming the challenges posed by technological integration. Through continuous learning, collaborative training, community engagement, and the adoption of digital tools, they are paving the way for a more integrated and effective educational system. Their efforts represent a dynamic transition from traditional to modern educational methodologies, ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of education in an increasingly digital world.

## Discussion

### Analysis of Indonesian Educators' Perceptions of Society 5.0's Impact on Teaching Practices

The educators' emphasis on integrating technology while preserving traditional values aligns with Fang and Nie (2021) and Suharyat et.al (2022) study, which highlights a global trend in education where technology is seen as a complement, not a replacement, for traditional pedagogical approaches. Similarly, in the context of Indonesian education, our findings echo Nguyen et al.'s (2021) research on the importance of cultural and religious values in educational settings, even in the face of technological advancements.

The challenges identified by Indonesian educators, such as resource constraints and infrastructural issues, resonate with the broader challenges documented in developing countries by Papadopoulos et.al. (2021). These authors argue that such challenges can significantly hinder the effective integration of technology in education, a sentiment mirrored in our findings. The generational gap observed in the responses is consistent with findings by Wang et.al (2022) and Winarti et.al. (2022), who noted varying levels of technological adaptability among educators based on age and experience. This variation is a critical factor in understanding the diverse attitudes towards technology integration in educational settings.

Our findings on the holistic approach to education find parallels in the work of Saravanakumar et.al (2023), who emphasize the growing importance of a balanced educational experience that incorporates technological skills and traditional values. This approach is increasingly relevant in the context of rapid societal and technological changes. The commitment to continuous learning and adaptation among Indonesian educators aligns with the conclusions drawn by Adarkwah et.al. (2021). They highlight a global trend where educators are increasingly recognizing the need for ongoing professional development to keep pace with technological advancements.

The analysis reveals that Indonesian educators view Society 5.0 as a complex era that necessitates a careful balancing act between embracing technological advancements and preserving the core values of traditional education. While they recognize the importance of integrating technology to stay relevant, there is a clear consensus on the need to ensure that this integration enhances, rather than replaces, the fundamental aspects of moral and character development in education.

#### *Comparative Analysis with Current Research in Educational Technology*

The **resource limitations** faced by Indonesian educators, particularly inadequate access to technology and infrastructure, resonate strongly with global trends in educational research. Studies like Aljarrah et al. (2022) have highlighted similar challenges in developing countries, where limited access to technological resources impedes effective integration in education. This mirrors the issues faced by Indonesian educators in terms of insufficient computers and unstable internet connectivity, showcasing a common barrier in technology adoption across diverse educational settings.

The **cultural resistance to change** among Indonesian educators is a phenomenon that is not unique to Indonesia. Musa et.al (2022) notes that educators' resistance to technology integration is often rooted in traditional pedagogical beliefs or discomfort with new technologies. This parallels the Indonesian context where educators prioritize traditional educational values over technological advancements, as one educator revealed, "Most teachers improve children in terms of their knowledge... we, the religious teachers, focus on the spiritual aspect". This indicates a broader challenge in aligning traditional educational practices with modern technological approaches.

A key challenge identified is the **lack of technological literacy and training**, a universal issue in the realm of educational technology. Educators often lack the skills and training necessary to effectively incorporate technology into their teaching (Marsegi et al., 2023; Novitasari & Fauziddin, 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Winarti et al., 2022). This is reflected in the words of an Indonesian educator, "In this digital era, I have to develop myself; if I don't follow the development, I will be far behind those who are already using digital methods or media", highlighting the need for professional development in this area.

The **generational divide** in attitudes towards technology adoption in Indonesia mirrors findings by Taylor & Fazal et.al (2021), who observe that older educators tend to be less comfortable with new technologies compared to their younger counterparts. This is evident in the reluctance among some senior Indonesian educators to engage with digital tools, suggesting a need for tailored approaches to technology integration across different age groups.

**Administrative and systemic challenges** play a critical role in the successful integration of technology in educational settings. Akram et.al. (2022) emphasizes that without adequate administrative support and infrastructure, technology integration efforts can be ineffective. The Indonesian experience, where educators are trained to use laptops for administrative tasks and data management applications, aligns with this global perspective, underlining the importance of systemic support for technology integration.

Finally, the unique challenge in Indonesia of **balancing traditional values with modern technology** reflects a growing trend in global education. Barksdale et.al. (2021) argue for the integration of technology in ways that respect and preserve cultural and educational values. This is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where there is a strong emphasis on moral and character development alongside academic learning. The challenges faced by Indonesian educators in integrating new technologies into their educational settings find parallels in global educational trends. From resource constraints and cultural resistance to the need for enhanced technological literacy and systemic support, these challenges highlight the complexity of adopting technology in educational contexts. Moreover, the distinctive aspect of balancing traditional educational values with modern technological methods underscores the nuanced nature of this integration. This comparative analysis not only validates the experiences of Indonesian educators but also contributes to the broader discourse on technology integration in education, offering insights for policy development and strategic planning in similar contexts.

### *Overcoming Technological Challenges in Indonesian Education*

The emphasis on self-development and continuous learning among Indonesian educators aligns with current research highlighting the importance of teacher professional development in technology integration. Studies have shown that continuous professional development is crucial for educators to effectively incorporate new technologies into their teaching practices (Musa et al., 2022; Nurhayati, 2020; Rukanda & Nurhayati, 2023). This is consistent with the proactive attitudes observed in the educators, as one mentioned, "In this digital era, I have to develop myself; if I don't follow the development, I will be far behind those who are already using digital methods or media".

The collaborative approach adopted by educators resonates with recent studies that emphasize the role of collaborative professional learning communities in enhancing technological integration (Alemdag et al., 2020). By sharing knowledge and skills, educators can collectively navigate the complexities of digital technologies, as evidenced by the organization of peer training sessions.

### *Innovative Approaches in Educational Technology*

The use of digital platforms for administrative tasks reflects the global trend towards digitalization in education management (Marsegi et al., 2023; Musa et al., 2022; Novitasari & Fauziddin, 2022; Rukanda & Nurhayati, 2023; Winarti et al., 2022). This approach, as seen in the use of SIAGA and EMIS by the educators, is supported by research indicating the efficiency and accuracy improvements brought by digital administrative systems. The integration of online teaching tools like Google Meet is consistent with the global shift towards blended and online learning environments, a trend accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Iskandar et al., 2023; Nuraeni & Nurhayati, 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Nurmalia et al., 2022; Tiarawati et al., 2023). This shift represents a balance between traditional and modern educational methods, aligning with the educators' efforts to adopt technology while preserving essential pedagogical values. The strategies and innovations of Indonesian educators, as observed in the interviews, are in line with global trends and research in education technology. Their commitment to professional development, collaborative learning, community engagement, and the adoption of digital tools reflects an understanding of the complexities and opportunities presented by Society 5.0. These efforts contribute to the broader discourse on technology integration in education, showcasing a dynamic transition towards a more modern, efficient, and effective educational system.

## **Conclusion**

This research has illuminated how Indonesian educators perceive and navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by Society 5.0, particularly in integrating new technologies into their teaching practices. The educators' approaches, characterized by a strong emphasis on self-development, collaborative learning, and

community engagement, demonstrate a proactive and adaptive response to the evolving educational landscape. These strategies align with global trends in educational technology, reflecting a universal shift towards more integrated and digitally enhanced learning environments.

The study reveals that despite resource constraints and a cultural inclination towards traditional teaching methods, Indonesian educators are actively seeking ways to blend modern technological tools with established pedagogical values. Their efforts in adopting digital platforms for administrative efficiency and incorporating online teaching tools signify a significant move towards a more dynamic, interactive, and flexible educational methodology. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on technology integration in education, showcasing how educators in a specific cultural and socio-economic context respond to the challenges and opportunities of a digitally advanced society. The insights from this research offer valuable implications for policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners, highlighting the need for continued support, resources, and training to facilitate the effective integration of technology in educational settings. Ultimately, the study underscores the resilience and adaptability of educators in the face of rapid societal and technological changes, paving the way for a more modern, efficient, and effective educational system in Indonesia.

## Recommendations

To enhance technology integration in Indonesian education, it is recommended to focus on structured professional development for educators, ensuring they are proficient in both technology and pedagogy. This should be coupled with increased investment in digital resources, providing the necessary tools and infrastructure for effective teaching and learning. Additionally, fostering community engagement is crucial; involving educators, parents, and local stakeholders can create a supportive environment for technology adoption. Lastly, policy support is essential to facilitate the use of innovative educational technologies while upholding traditional values. These measures will collectively strengthen the educators' ability to navigate the challenges of Society 5.0, enriching Indonesia's educational landscape.

## Acknowledgements

The authors express sincere appreciation to the educators who participated in this study, whose contributions were indispensable to the research success.

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## Futures Literacy: The Need for and Contents of a Course

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**Abstract:** To create a Futures Literacy course. Background: A previously developed and tested Framework to develop IT courses for emerging technologies was used to develop a Futures Literacy course. A literature review was conducted to discover theories, models, and frameworks that could be used to create IT courses. A Course Development Framework was used to develop the contents and delivery options for a Futures Literacy course. This Futures Literacy course could be used as a basis to create and develop unique future literacy courses. Using the Course Development Framework assisted in ensuring learning theory, design and motivational model issues were covered. Practitioners could use this Futures Literacy course as a basis to develop unique future literacy courses. Support and encourage practitioners to develop better Futures Literacy courses. Future research could examine new and improved ways to develop and present Future Literacy courses.

**Keywords:** Futures literacy, framework, motivation, course development

**Citation:** Johnston, K., van Wyk, N., Schuler, J., & Eyre, B. (2024). Futures Literacy: The Need for and Contents of a Course. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 373-392), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

We are continually looking to the future, looking at trends, having visioning meetings, brainstorming ideas and so on to decide what to do next (Webb, 2019). Information Technology (IT) such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), 5G, Robotics, etc., contributes to the uncertainty of the future and the difficulty of making long-term strategic plans. What is needed are not once-off interventions and the development of five-year plans, but rather providing students, employees (and especially executives) with Future Literacy. Futures Literacy is a practical skill that individuals can acquire through a course (Miller, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). Many businesses and

organizations have or are looking at Futures Literacy, these include Accenture (2021), Bain and Company (Vohong, 2021), Deloitte (Briggs & Buchholz, 2020), Gartner (Burke, 2020), IBM (Butner et al, 2020), McKinsey (Conn & McLean, 2020; De Smet et al., 2021), Oracle (2020), UNESCO (Damhof et al., 2020; Miller, 2018, UNESCO, 2019) and WEF (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020). This paper looks at how a higher learning institute or a business could create such a course.

Before designing a course, many questions must be answered. Questions include the wh-questions; why, who, what, which, where, when, and finally the how question. In no particular order the questions can include: Which learning theories and design models will be used, how will the course be developed, what is Futures Literacy, why is Futures Literacy important, what are the phases of Futures Literacy, what areas influence Futures Literacy, who is the course to be designed for, what special resources if any are required, what is the syllabus and planned contents of the course, what is the learning outcome of the course, what prerequisites if any are needed, what activities are planned, and how will the course be delivered and assessed?

Before starting to research Futures Literacy, it was decided to look at learning theories and models that could be used to build the course.

## **Literature Review**

A systematic literature review process was followed as described by Brereton et al. (2007). Google Scholar was the main source of academic literature, and the filter “Since 2017” was used to focus on recent literature. Some older references were used particularly concerning learning theories and course design methods and models. Only papers published in English were included, and the main idea behind the literature review was to find best practices in course development. The following themes emerged from the literature review: learning theories, course design models, Bloom’s taxonomy, a course development framework, and Futures Literacy.

## **Learning Theories**

Learning theories attempt to explain how learning takes place in an individual, how an individual learns and acquires knowledge, and how an individual retains and recalls knowledge (Illeris, 2018; Sahin & Dogantay, 2018). As such, learning theories should influence course creation and delivery (Illeris, 2018). Many learning theories have been developed from a wide range of in-fluences (Illeris, 2018), three fundamental learning theories that are widely used are Behaviourism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism as described in Figure 1 (Stevens-Fulbrook, 2019).

The constructivism theory seemed the best learning theory for developing courses in areas that were emerging rather than established (Scoppio & Luyt, 2017), and constructivism “encourages active learning and builds on previous knowledge” (van Wyk et al, 2020, p.30). Constructivism theory takes cognisance of a learner’s

previous experiences and knowledge (Juvova et al., 2015).

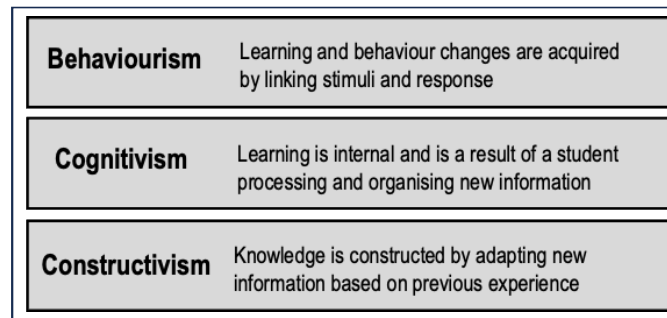


Figure 1. Three fundamental learning theories (Stevens-Fulbrook, 2019).

“Constructivism propagates an epistemological dimension for creative/artistic and spontaneous problem-solving processes to solve messy, problematic situations defined by ambiguity, volatility and distinctive-ness” (Pande & Bharathi, 2020, p.4). Pande and Bharathi (2020, p.4) defined three propositions of constructivism:

- “Understanding is in our interactions with the environment: This proposition is about the fact that what is learned and how it is learned are inseparable. The content, the context, the learner’s activities, and the learner’s goals are the key ingredients of an effective learning outcome.
- Cognitive conflict or puzzlement is the stimulus for learning and determines the organization and nature of what is learned: The stimulus for learning comprises what the learner attends to, what is the learner’s prior experience in developing an understanding of what is being taught and what is the eventual understanding developed in the learner.
- Knowledge evolves through social negotiation and the evaluation of the viability of individual understandings: A careful reconciliation is called for between the viability of one’s understanding (knowledge) and the viability of understanding the social environment of which one is part. Group activities provide both intra and inter-collaboration avenues to en-rich, interlace and broaden the understanding of a given phenomenon.”

It should be noted that Pande and Bharathi (2020) refer to a singular learning outcome.

### *Course Design Models*

Course design models are designed to help identify design flaws when designing courses and to connect theory to practice (Robinson et al., 2021). Just as with Learning theories, there are numerous course design models, three of which are ADDIE, ARCS, and ARCS-V, which were reviewed by van Wyk et al., (2020).

ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) is a popular and widely used course design model which follows the 5 steps which give it its acronym (Budoya et al., 2019; Ghani & Daud, 2018). ADDIE keeps the complexities of learning and instructional design to a minimum while facilitating the use of different learning methods (Alnajdi, 2018). ADDIE has been criticised for being inflexible, linear, and time-

consuming (Jung et al., 2018).

The ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) and ARCS-V (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction and Volition) models developed by Keller (2010, 2016) attempt to place the learner's motivation at the centre of the design (Chu, 2017), similar to constructivism. Keeping a person motivated to participate and engage in learning, is key to developing a successful course (Khan et al., 2019). To motivate learners, the ARCS model states that the course needs to “(1) catch and sustain students' attention; (2) state why the students need to learn the content; (3) make students believe that they can succeed if they exert effort; and (4) help students feel a sense of reward and pride” (Li & Keller, 2018, p.54). The ARCS model follows a four-step process of Define, Design, Develop, and Evaluate, which is very similar to the five steps of ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation).

Categories	Instructor's Self-Analysis	Instructor's Analysis of Learners
<b>Attention</b>	Am I excited about this learning experience and how I can make it interesting?	Are the learners going to be interested? What tactics will stimulate their curiosity and interest?
<b>Relevance</b>	Do I believe that this learning experience will be valuable for my learners?	Will learners believe it is valuable? What can I do to help them believe it is important?
<b>Confidence</b>	Am I confident in my ability to lead this learning experience effectively and interestingly?	Will the learners feel confident about their ability to learn this? What do I need to do to help them be confident?
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Do I expect to have positive feelings about this learning experience?	What can I do to help the learners feel good about their experience and desire to continue learning?
<b>Volition</b>	Will I provide effective supervision and support to the learners throughout this learning event?	What can I do to help the learners maintain their goal orientation and task-focus throughout this learning event?

Figure 2. Creation aid for motivational strategy design (Keller, 2016).

Keller (2016) found that ARCS did not account for learners who had persisted in their learning when their

motivation had faded or learners who abandoned their learning despite needing the results. As a result, Keller (2016) added a fifth category called Volition (power to make own decisions) to the ARCS model, creating the ARCS-V model. Keller (2016) provided the creation aid in Figure 2 for developers to assess motivation.

A course following the ARCS-V model should start by gaining the attention of the learners, then obtaining their agreement on the relevance of the course, and then giving them the confidence needed to complete the course (Keller, 2010; Li & Keller, 2018).

### *Bloom's Taxonomy*

Bloom's taxonomy is widely used to design and evaluate courses. Bloom's taxonomy is a hierarchy of thinking skills into six categories (Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating) (Fastiggi, 2019), and is useful in guiding the development of learning outcomes. Learning activities progress from the low-level thinking skills of remembering and understanding to ultimately creating new knowledge (Agarwal, 2019). Newton et al., (2020) analyzed 47 lists of Bloom's taxonomy verbs and constructed a master list of verbs for each category as shown below.

Knowledge (Remembering): Define, Label, List, Name, Recall, Repeat, and State.

Understanding (Comprehension): Classify, Discuss, Explain, Generalise, Locate, Paraphrase, Report, Summarise, and Translate.

Applying: Apply, Choose, Demonstrate, Operate, Prepare, Produce, Solve, and Use.

Analyzing: Analyze, Calculate, Categorize, Compare, Contrast, Differentiate, Discriminate, Distinguish, Examine, Experiment, Infer, Outline, Question, and Test.

Evaluating: Assess, Evaluate, Judge, Justify, and Rate.

Creating: Argue, Compose, Create, Design, Formulate, Plan, Revise, and Support.

### *Course Development Framework*

Using the constructivism learning theory, ADDIE course design model, and applying the ARCS-V model, van Wyk et al., (2020) created and tested a course development framework for emerging technologies as shown in Figure 3.

The van Wyk et al., (2020) Course Development Framework was used to develop a course on emerging technology, namely the Internet of Things (IoT). The IoT course was developed and has been successfully presented at a German university since 2019. Responses obtained from the students who attended the course were largely positive, despite them being asked to list both positive and negative comments (van Wyk et al., 2020). Although the Framework was designed to guide academics when developing a course for emerging technologies, it was thought the Framework could be used to develop a Futures Literacy course for students or employees.

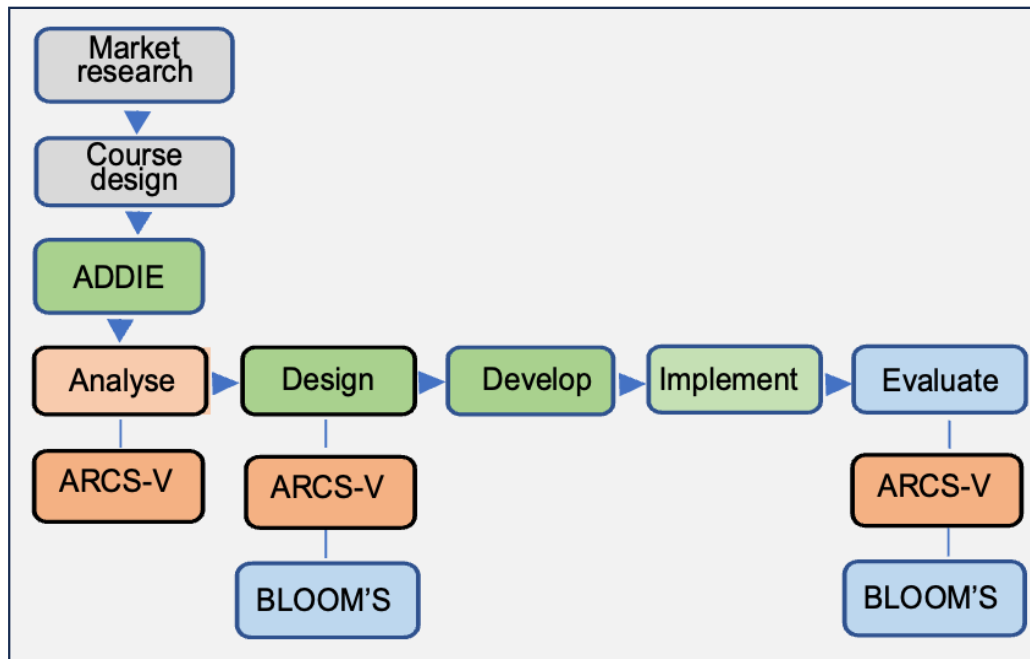


Figure 3. A course development framework for emerging technologies (van Wyk et al., 2020)

### *Futures Literacy*

Although the Framework was designed to guide academics when developing a course for emerging technologies, it was thought the Framework could be used to develop a Futures Literacy course for students or employees

### *What is Futures Literacy (FL)?*

Futures Literacy (FL) is a practical capability, a skill that individuals can acquire (Miller, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). Futures Literacy “allows people to better understand the role of the future in what they see and do. Being futures literate empowers the imagination, and enhances our ability to prepare, recover and invent as changes occur” (UNESCO, 2019).

“A future literate person has acquired the skills needed to decide why and how to use their imagination to introduce the non-existent future into the present. These anticipatory activities play an important role in what people see and do” (Miller, 2018, p.15). Stated simply, Futures Literacy is the skill to “know how to imagine the future, and why it is necessary” (Larsen et al, 2020, p.2). Futures Literacy as a capability was developed by UNESCO and academics to provide a means to approach challenges by “using the future to innovate the present” (de Boer et al, 2018, p.1), the capability or skill to use the future now (Balcom Raleigh et al., 2018). A growth mindset is needed to develop Futures Literacy, people with a growth mindset are those who believe that their intelligence can be improved with effort and guidance, and who view feedback as positive (Limeri et al, 2020).



*Why is a Futures Literacy course needed?*

No one knows what the future holds, we have to live and deal with uncertainty. We know the future is uncertain, what we don't know are the details of the uncertainty. Negative images of the future lead to despair, hopelessness, and wars, while positive images of the future inspire hope, collaboration and peace (UNESCO, 2019). One of UNESCO's aims is to be a global educational think tank on Futures Literacy (Jourdan et al., 2020). "Democratizing the origins of people's images of the future opens up new horizons in much the same way that establishing universal reading and writing changes human societies. This is an example of what can be called a 'change in the conditions of change'. A potent transformation in what people can know, imagine and do. Futures Literacy is such a change" (UNESCO, 2019). Futures Literacy aims to empower everyone to transform the future into something positive (Jourdan et al., 2020).

Figure 4 highlights why Futures Literacy is important, and the capabilities it aims to deliver, such as Innovation, Discovery, Choice etc. This is an important section to 'sell' the topic and to make Futures Literacy less vague, perhaps each point in Figure 4 needs to be expanded on.

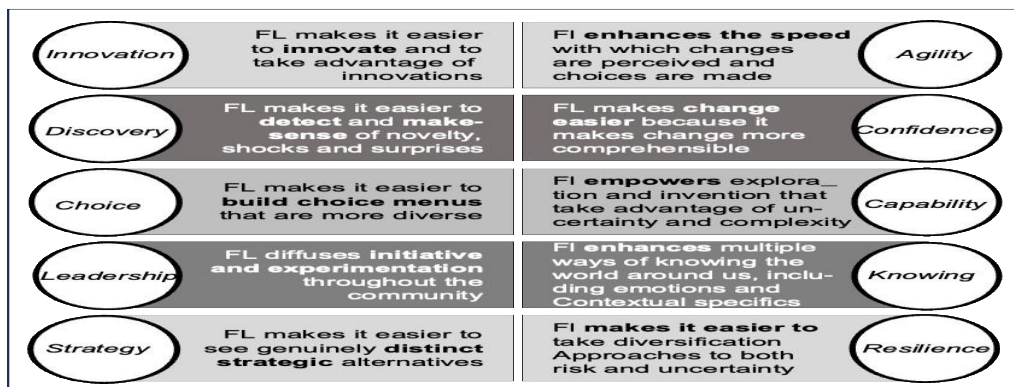


Figure 4. Futures Literacy (UNESCO, 2019)

*What are the phases or steps of Futures Literacy?*

A challenge to managers, educators, parents, and individuals is how to prepare to use the future more effectively and efficiently. One way is to introduce and push individuals to be competent in Futures Literacy (UNESCO, 2019). There are many Professors of History, but few Professors of the Future. Futures Literacy, a universally accessible skill that builds on the innate human capacity to imagine the future, offers a clear, field-tested solution to poverty-of-the-imagination" (UNESCO, 2019).

Figure 5 shows the first three phases (Reveal, Reframe and Rethink) of the learning cycle of Futures Literacy, it is important to tailor these phases to the local societal context (Miller, 2018). Phase four is to Repeat the process.

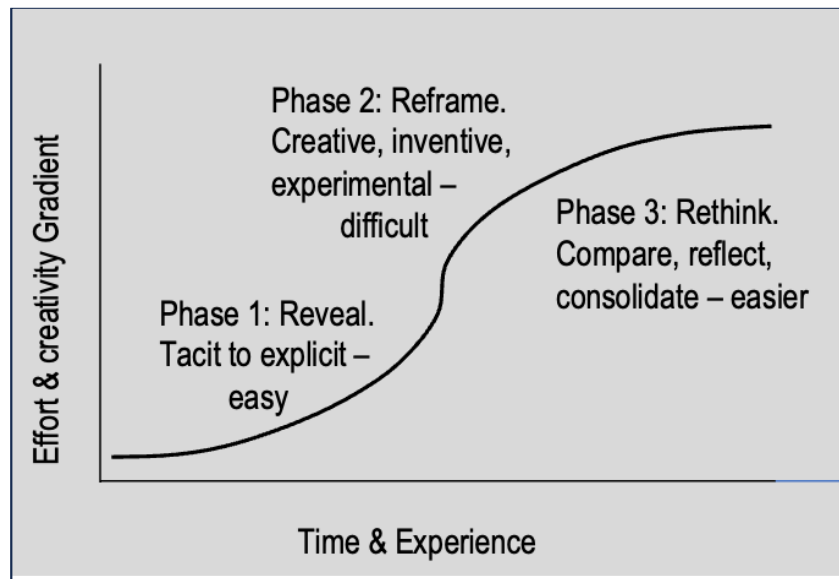


Figure 5. The first three phases of the learning cycle (Miller, 2018)

The four phases of the learning cycle of Futures Literacy are:

1) Reveal. Make anticipatory assumptions about the future explicit (clear and detailed) and observable, these assumptions are relatively easy to share (Miller, 2018). This stage is also referred to as Awareness (Toivonen et al., 2021).

2) Reframe. Unsettle and disturb the assumptions, by being creative, inventive, experimental, and questioning, and reframing an imaginary future. This is the most difficult phase as it is disruptive, it should embrace change, complexity, innovation, and uncertainty. People need to become comfortable with change, complexity, innovation, and uncertainty, and view them as resources rather than as threats (Miller, 2018). This stage is also referred to as Discovery (Toivonen et al., 2021).

3) Rethink. Compare, reflect, consolidate, and identify new questions and new ways to use the future in the present (Miller, 2018). This stage is also referred to as Choice (Toivonen et al., 2021). “By becoming futures literate, as individuals and organisations, it is possible to improve how we generate and consume futures, with the end goal of making more effective decisions to plan and prepare for the range of possible futures” (RISCS, 2020).

4) Repeat. Repeat the process.

*What areas influence Futures Literacy?*

Many subjects, ideas, concepts, and constructs influence Futures Literacy. We broke them down into the four broad areas of Science, Art, Design and Strategy clustered around Futures Literacy as shown in Figure 6, which

shows some of the complexity and interconnectedness of Futures Literacy. While this is not an exhaustive list, and many areas overlap, it covers areas a Futures Literacy course could touch on.

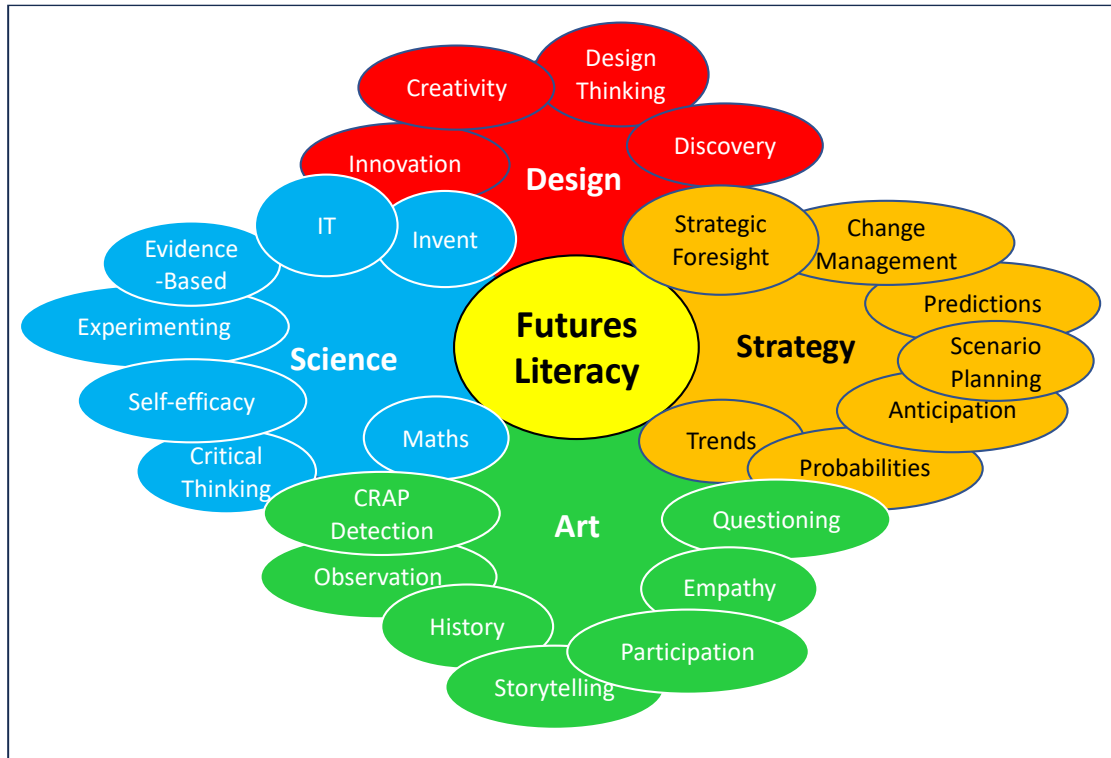


Figure 6. Broad areas supporting Futures Literacy.

Science. The Science Council (2021) defines Science as “the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.” The science includes critical thinking (de Boer et al, 2018), inventing (Bal-com Raleigh et al., 2018; de Boer et al, 2018), self-efficacy (de Boer et al, 2018), IT (and related issues such as AI, Automation, Big data, IoT, Edge Computing, 5G, visualization, deep learning, advanced data management and many more) (Jourdan et al., 2020; Kurki & Wilenius, 2016; Lively et al., 2021), evidence-based (de Boer et al, 2018; Lively et al., 2021), mathematics (Miller & Sandford, 2019), and experiments (Miller & Sandford, 2019). The physical and digital worlds are so intertwined and continually evolving that most people can engage with ever-increasingly complex IT (Briggs & Buchholz, 2020).

Art. “Art has always been a domain of specific application for philosophy, in the sense that art raises numerous questions of a philosophical nature” (Andina, 2017, p.2). Imagination and skill are required to create art, and art has always been used to express ideas and feelings. For this paper, art includes questioning (de Bo-er et al., 2018; de Smet et al., 2021), empathy (Cripps & Hood, 2017; de Boer et al., 2018), history (Bal-com Raleigh et al., 2018; Miller, 2018), participation (Toivonen et al., 2021) storytelling (Lively et al, 2021), and observation. Harvard Medical School requires students to complete formal training in art observation to improve students' observational skills. The students attend eight 75-minute observation exercises at an art museum followed by an

hour-long lecture (Naghshineh et al., 2008).

Design. Steve Jobs said, “Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. The design is how it works.” The design includes design thinking (Cagnin, 2018), innovation (de Boer et al., 2018), creativity (de Boer et al., 2018), and discovery (Balcom Raleigh et al., 2018).

Strategy. The strategy may be defined as “a cohesive core of guiding decisions” to use “resources and opportunities in uncertain environments” (Khalifa, 2020, p.39). The strategy includes Anticipation (Damhof et al., 2020; Miller, 2018), change management (Baker, 2020), scenario planning (Balcom Raleigh et al., 2018; Larsen et al., 2020), probabilities (Lively et al., 2021), predictions (Alonso, 2020; Briggs & Buchholz, 2020; Peters, 2020; Schwab & Zahidi, 2020), strategic foresight (Baker, 2020; Burt & Nair, 2020; OECD, 2021; Sarpong, Eyres & Batsakis, 2019), and trends (Accenture, 2021; Burke, 2020; Cleary, 2020; Lively et al., 2021).

*What would be the learning outcome for a Futures Literacy course?*

Most educational engagement is neither inclusive nor equitable, and “is still largely problem-oriented and geared towards predetermined learning outcomes” (Jour-dan et al, 2020, p.60). This prevents courses from engaging with multiple aspects relevant to the learners, to address multiple possible futures. Pande and Bharathi (2020) refer to a singular learning outcome, and this idea of a single learning outcome is supported by Robinson et al., (2021).

The learning outcome for a Futures Literacy course is that participants would be future literate and able to answer the question, “What is the future and how do I use it?” (Miller 2018, p. 6). Breaking this down slightly, “being futures literate is the capacity to identify, design, target and deploy AA” (Miller 2018, p. 24), where AA is anticipatory assumptions.

## Research Methodology

The research methodology was a literature review to answer the questions identified in the Introduction to develop a course in Futures Literacy. The research methodology followed the methods described by Saunders et al., (2019). Figure 7 provides a summary of the research methodology followed.

Purpose	Exploratory
Philosophy	Interpretivist
Approach	Inductive
Time Horizon	Cross-sectional
Strategy	Qualitative

Figure 7. Summary of research methodology.

## Course Development

The course will follow a constructivist learning approach, which puts the participant at the centre of the learning activity. Constructivism is ideally suited to Futures Literacy, as Futures Literacy is ambiguous, messy, volatile and problematic, and needs creative and spontaneous problem-solving processes. Learning is an active approach in which participants find, contextualize and process information to construct knowledge. The three propositions of constructivism are:

- "Understanding is in our interactions with the environment"
- "Cognitive conflict or puzzlement is the stimulus for learning and determines the organization and nature of what is learned," and
- "Knowledge evolves through social negotiation and through the evaluation of the viability of individual understandings" (Pande & Bharathi, 2020, p.4).

Each of the constructivism propositions is included in the course. Participants are expected to draw on their own experiences, interact and draw on the personal experiences of fellow participants, interact with academia, and the environment to source information and develop knowledge as part of the Reveal phase of Futures Literacy.

The Reframe phase of Futures Literacy will create and deal with cognitive puzzlement and conflict, while the Rethink phase will deal with the evaluation and negotiation of individuals' understandings.

The following approaches will be followed to ensure participants are active in constructing knowledge.

- Supported learning - providing scaffolding and bite-sized chunks plus feedback. Participants are provided with literature and videos of topics.
- Exploratory learning - participants are encouraged to explore and discover new knowledge, and to source literature and videos.
- Collaborative learning - participants obtain multiple perspectives and critical thinking skills and collaborate.
- Problem-based learning - participants are encouraged to raise problems, ask questions and then attempt to solve the problems and answer the questions.
- Evidence-Based Management (EBM) or practice, uses four main sources of evidence: Scientific literature, Professional expertise, internal Organizational data, and Stakeholders' values and concerns.

The EBM approach consists of Ask, Acquire, Appraise, Apply and Assess (Wilson et al., 2021).

It is important to stress that all details and figures from this point are for illustration and to repeat that a Futures Literacy course should be built by taking cognisance of the learners' previous experiences and knowledge (Juvova et al., 2015), their social situation and environment (Pande & Bharathi, 2020), and it must be relevant to the particular learners.

The single learning outcome is the capacity to identify, design, target and de-plot anticipatory assumptions (Miller 2018). Each course could have unique learning objectives depending on the situation and the participants. The skills participants need to develop, and the attitudes they need to possess make up the learning

objectives (Robinson et al, 2021). Participants may already possess certain skills such as presentation skills and thus would not be included, while they might need to develop a skill such as visual literacy and need to enhance skills such as storytelling and CRAP detecting.

Additional issues to be covered could include “What is your why?”.

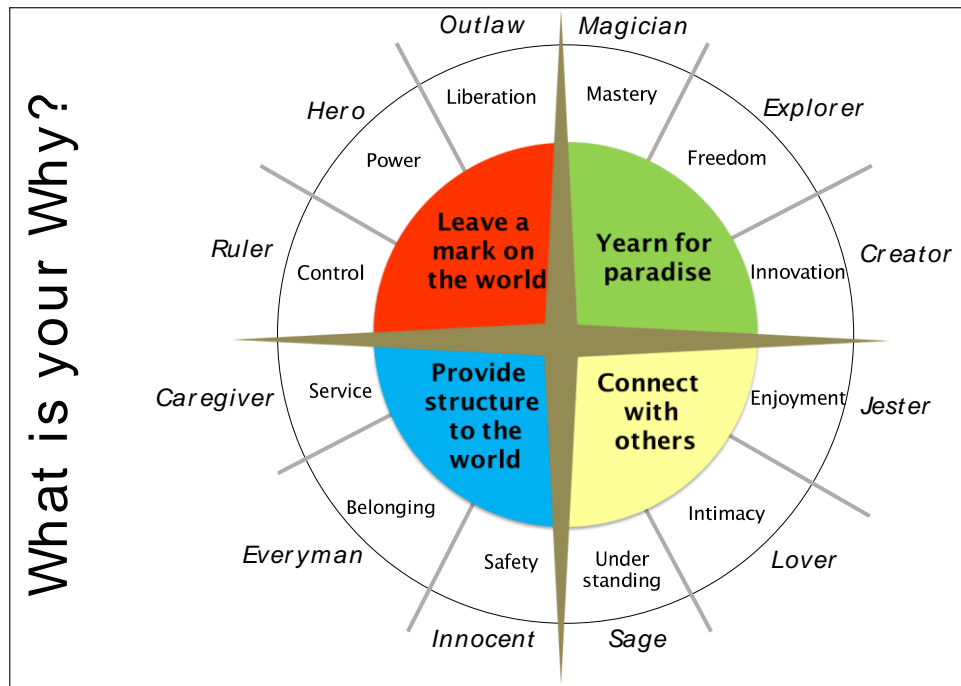


Figure 8. What is your Why? (Eyre, 2019).

Course Description Futures Literacy			
Course Scope	Equipment Requirements	Syllabus	Course Topics
<p><b>Course Length</b> 8 weeks</p> <p><b>Course Description</b> The course firstly aims to introduce individuals to FL, and secondly to develop FL capabilities and skills.</p> <p><b>Prerequisites</b> No special prerequisites apart from a growth mindset</p>	<p><b>Required IT</b> All participants are expected to have a mobile device with stable internet connection. The mobile device must be ON in all activities, and need to last throughout a session without needing to be charged.</p>	<p><b>No text books</b> A range of articles, readings and videos may be provided. Participants will be required to search for and find information relevant to the topics under discussion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Art</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Design</li> <li>• FL</li> <li>• Reveal – understanding</li> <li>• Reframe – cognitive puzzlement and conflict</li> <li>• Rethink – evaluation and negotiation</li> </ul>

Figure 9. Course Description.

Other ideas such as Leadership Canvas (Eyre, 2019) should also be used. The Course Development Framework in Figure 3 was used to build a Futures Literacy course. Figure 9 shows the Course Description for the Course, including possible topics or modules to be covered.

This should ideally be a course for postgraduate students, or employees who have had several years of real-world work experience. Figure 10 shows possible assessments and grading values, there will be no examinations or tests on the course. There should not be a rigid approach to how the students (or employees) deliver activities.

Contributions will be assessed on a simple 3-point scale based on the following criteria:

- 3      Excellent, demonstrates knowledge, understanding, insight, and or creativity.
- 2      Good answer, most points covered, shows some knowledge of the subject matter, perhaps some application.
- 1      Shows some knowledge of the subject matter, no application.

Questions and Answers in seminars	10%
Sourcing of Videos and literature	10%
Reflection	10%
Demonstration of “insatiable curiosity”	10%
Human & Social Capital Metrics	10%
Project Presentation	50%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 10. Course assessments and grading values.

An alternative is to require participants to demonstrate an “insatiable curiosity” (as Kipling put it) of the world around them, wide reading, and the ability to observe phenomena and interpret those observations. Ways to test that could be to require participants to attend a live orchestra performance, a ballet, opera, sports event, play, or art gallery or even require them to spend an hour in a class of preschool kids. Participants must then describe what was going on - in the class, on the stage, in the orchestra, in the audience, in administration, in preparation, in marketing, in finance etc. (A.Hooper, personal communication, June 16, 2021).

Human and Social Capital Metrics could follow the Cartedo (2021) model:

- Problem-solving (0-5)
- Research, analysis, Decision making.
- Ideation (0-5)

How participants generate ideas and solutions through Questioning, how they reveal their Point of View (POV), how they then REFRAME ideas through Sketching, Prototyping, Brainstorming, Brainwriting, Worst Possible



Idea, etc.

- Collaboration (0-5)

Communicating clearly, actively listening, taking responsibility for mistakes, sharing evidence, and respecting the diversity of colleagues.

- Communication (0-5)

Listening and Comprehension, Presentation, asking questions, answering questions, evidence, use of digital media and visual displays, body language (eyes, voice, posture, gestures).

- Empathy (0-5)

Could use Vossen et al.'s (2015) questionnaire and or observation to assess Cognitive (understanding how another person feels) and Affective empathy (sharing the feelings of another person).

- Critical Thinking (0-5)

Key critical thinking skills are analysis, interpretation, inference, explanation, self-regulation, open-mindedness, and problem-solving. How they use the RED model (Recognise assumptions, Evaluate Arguments, Draw Conclusions).

Various methods such as Strategic Foresight, Design Thinking, Critical Thinking, CRAP Detection and Questioning from the four broad areas in Figure 6 could be explored and explained. Skills could be developed in the three levels (cognitive, emotional and active). Participants could then select one or more methods and skills to Reveal, Reframe and Rethink an issue (such as listed in Appendix 1) with one or more technologies (such as listed in Appendix 2), and finally, participants could present the results.

Module X: Reveal-Understanding			
Blooms' Taxonomy: Remember   Understand   Apply   Analyse   Evaluate   Create			
ARCS-V: Attention   Relevance   Confidence   Satisfaction   Volition			
<b>BLOOMS</b> Remember	<b>Learning Outcomes</b> List issues around the area of focus	<b>ARCS-V</b> A R V	<b>Resources</b> Videos on Reveal and or anticipatory assumptions – sourced by students
Apply	<b>Prepare</b> clear and detailed anticipatory assumptions about the future	A R V	Links to further information, models, theories, best practices etc.
		R C	Slides by Lecturer
<b>ARCS-V</b> A R C S	<b>Activities</b> Post readings and videos onto LMS	<b>ARCS-V</b> A R C S V	<b>Assessments</b> Class exercise: Students to develop individual anticipatory assumptions
A R C S	Post own anticipatory assumptions on LMS	A R C S V	Participation in class: Students will be paired into teams to develop anticipatory assumptions
A R C S V	One student to be Scribe – to ensure all discussions etc recorded and posted on LMS		

Figure 11. Example of Reveal Module

Figure 11 shows an example of one of the course modules (Reveal module) –one needs to be developed for each module. The blue blocks show Bloom’s Taxonomy levels for each part of the learning outcomes, while the orange blocks show the ARCS-V criteria for each of the chosen activities, assessments and course content.

“The course activities should provide a choice of themes or ask the students to choose their ideas as a development project and in doing so, provide satisfaction by seeing their ideas brought to reality through the course-work,” (van Wyk et al., 2020, p. 38). Participants should also be involved in selecting and changing activities, in the IoT course, for example, participants asked for guest speakers, pop quizzes, and a programming aspect to be added to the course. The course needs to develop activities that make use of the learner's existing skills and experiences (Arghode et al., 2017). The appendices contain examples of possible exercises and possible technologies to consider.

## Conclusion

Many educators forget the purpose of education. The purpose of education should be to increase the survival prospects of the group, by expanding individuals’ capacity and desire to find meaning, truth and enjoyment in life. Educators often use outdated syllabi, with little discovery or questioning, they don’t seek truth, and they seek obedience to whatever serves their political masters’ cause. Survival is adapting to change, but many educators are devoted to conserving old ideas and concepts, to looking backwards as we hurtle into the future.

Many students fail, some fail to achieve the required marks, while others fail to develop to their full capacity. Students are taught to be afraid of failing, of disappointing, of displeasing, of making mistakes, and of being wrong. As John C. Maxwell said, “Fail early, fail often, but always fail forward”. Failing forward is about iteration, about risking failure, knowing it’s okay to fail. Sadly, many things in education are boring, trivial, dull and make limited demands on one’s intelligence. Students should not be encouraged to work for petty rewards such as gold stars and marks, or for the ignoble satisfaction of feeling better than someone else. Futures learning aims to develop each student's capacity to create their own view and understanding of their future.

## Conclusion

Learning theories and design models were examined, and a course development framework was found on which to build a Futures Literacy course. Futures literacy was defined and its importance was clarified. A possible syllabus, learning outcomes and planned contents of the course were defined. An IoT course was designed that used a Course Development Framework that in turn used constructivism, ADDIE and ARCS-V to put the learner at the centre of the course and to build on the learner's knowledge and experience (van Wyk et al, 2020). The course has run successfully twice a year since 2019.

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## Appendix 1: Some possible exercises.

Anticipating how to fix poverty, inequality, discrimination, bias etc.

Anticipating the future of education

Anticipating the future of work

Anticipating the future of health  
Anticipating the future of the environment  
Anticipating the future of ownership  
Anticipating alternative futures  
Anticipating future technologies  
Anticipating how we share space (land)  
Anticipating future explorations  
Anticipating future governments (and the relationship between citizens and governments)  
Anticipating future prevention, detection and punishments  
Anticipating ethics in the future  
Anticipating energies of the future  
Anticipating the future of gaming  
Anticipating creating one's future  
Anticipating the role of management – to include “improving society” and “innovation.”

## **Appendix 2: Some possible technologies to consider.**

Artificial Intelligence (AI)  
Chatbots  
Cyborgs (man-machine systems)  
Energy storage  
Generative AI  
Gene therapy & edible tech  
Human-powered wearables  
Internet of Things (IoT)  
Robotics  
Self-driving vehicles  
3D printing




## Examining Primary Teachers' Concerns, Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, Intentions, and Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Pedagogy in English Literacy Classrooms for Bilingual Dyslexic Students in the UAE

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**Abstract:** The United Arab Emirates has embraced inclusive education across all academic levels since 2006. However, the degree of teacher acceptance of inclusive practice varies. This mixed-methods case study investigated 48 primary school teachers' concerns, self-efficacy, attitude, and intentions on inclusive pedagogy in English literacy for bilingual dyslexic students aged 5-11. It also identified challenges faced by teachers in mainstream classes. Using correlation analysis, results showed negative associations between teachers' concerns and efficacy, attitude, and intentions for inclusive practices. On the other hand, positive associations were found between teacher efficacy, attitude, and intentions for inclusive practices. Challenges included reconciling the bilingual curriculum for dyslexic students, providing individual support, and managing large class sizes. The teachers underscored prioritizing inclusive support from inclusion champions, offering ongoing professional development, having an additional teacher or skilled assistant in the classroom, and reducing the student-to-teacher ratio in each class as few of the key success factors in inclusive education.

**Keywords:** inclusion, dyslexia, bilingualism, teacher challenges

**Citation:** Ogdol, R. E., Adorna, J. R., Alteneiji, A., & Capate, R. N. (2024). Examining Primary Teachers' Concerns, Self-Efficacy, Attitude, Intentions, and Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Pedagogy in English Literacy Classrooms for Bilingual Dyslexic Students in the UAE. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 393-427), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Inclusive education has been recognized worldwide as a fundamental human right which all people should be entitled to, regardless of their circumstances. However, even though nearly 240 million children all over the world live with disabilities, only a small fraction of them receive education due to their disabilities (Shelton & Gezer, 2023). These children are still denied an equal chance of quality education (UNICEF, 2021). This distressing statistic highlights the urgent need for inclusive education policies and practices that take all students into consideration, whether they are gifted or challenged, disabled or not, male or female, or whether they are from different ethnic or linguistic backgrounds.

According to Ydo (2020), the fundamental principle of inclusive education is that every child, regardless of their differences, can learn in the same classroom with his or her peers. It is a social model which contends that disability is a result of societal inequalities and not the deficiencies of the individual. Involving students with different learning styles and needs in an inclusive classroom allows them to develop and achieve their full potential with the help of their peers and teachers. Research shows that inclusive environments can be a source of academic enhancement and social-emotional development for children with and without disabilities (Dell'Anna et al., 2020). Classrooms that are inclusive help to build empathy, respect diversity, and ensure the students are ready to face the world with its increasing diversity. Moreover, inclusive education corresponds with the global development targets that emphasize quality education for all people as a means of equality and social justice.

Over the past years, the concept of inclusive education, with an aim in promoting equity in education, has gained notable momentum and progress worldwide, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Inclusive education is one of the key foci of the country's educational policies. The UAE has introduced inclusive education as part of its profound commitment to giving each student an equal opportunity to learn, regardless of disability or non-disability. This approach certainly will create a learning environment where each student feels valued, recognized, and supported within mainstream education (Arif & Gaad, 2008).

The purpose of the UAE to incorporate inclusive education is based on the idea that diversity should be honored and welcomed within society (Alborno & Gaad, 2014). The idea of inclusive education in the country reflects the stand of the UAE leaders and the attitude of the whole community towards diversity and tolerance. This dedication goes beyond the four corners of the classroom and encompasses all aspects of its community.

Gaad (2004) articulated that preparing for and implementing effective inclusive education is not just a physical placing of students with disabilities into regular classrooms but also creating a learning environment where all learners are supported. It is a comprehensive model which has modifications in the curriculum, support services and teacher training to make sure that students with disabilities are treated equally with their peers in the education system. Furthermore, the UAE's efforts for inclusive education are aligned with the global trends and

the best practices for special education. Alghawi et al. (2017) further detailed that the UAE government is trying to achieve this by building a diverse educational system that will not only provide a learning environment that is accessible to all but also one that will encourage empathy, understanding and respect among students. It is evident that the government is dedicated to inclusive education through its numerous activities such as the allocation of resources, the formulation of inclusive policies, and the regular campaigns to educate people about the importance of diversity in educational settings. This very promise is a manifestation of the UAE's goal to create a society that gives everyone an opportunity to become the best version of themselves and to be a part of the country's progress. This policy, to be implemented by the UAE, will help raise the level of social integration and reduce the level of stigmatization of people with special needs or disabilities. Additionally, it reflects a government commitment towards meeting international standards such as the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 which focuses on ensuring quality inclusive education for all (UNDESA DISD, n.d.).

However, the process of introducing high-quality inclusive education is not without its own challenges. Teachers who are the most effective in implementing inclusive education are the ones who face multiple challenges and difficulties in the course of their work. As for the main issues and challenges that teachers face, they may include lack of training and knowledge in inclusive education, insufficient resources and support, dealing with the different needs and capabilities of students in the classroom, addressing behavior problems, adapting curriculum and instructional materials to the needs of the students, making sure that all students have equal opportunities, and working together with other professionals (Glazzard, 2011).

Abongdia et al. (2015) stated that teachers' concerns and challenges can be decisive factors in the degree of their self-efficacy, attitude, and intentions use inclusive pedagogy. The lack of proper addressing of these concerns and challenges may decline teachers' confidence and make them doubt their ability to implement inclusive practices effectively. This decrease in the confidence of teachers may, in turn, impact their view of inclusive education. This argument is supported by Alghazo & Gaad (2004) which emphasized that teachers may become more reluctant or unwilling to adopt inclusive education if they are not sure about their skills or do not have enough support to meet different needs of students. Teachers who experience a lack of professional development, training and resources may struggle with how to adjust the curriculum and the instructional materials to be responsive to the various needs of their students. On top of this, the extra task of supervising behavior problems and making the children feel welcome and included in the classroom can also lead to the teachers being overloaded.

Moreover, the challenge of collaboration with other industry professionals, such as special education teachers, speech therapists, and counselors, is another layer of complexity to effective implementation of inclusive education. Teachers and other professionals express difficulty to allocate time for meaningful discussion about transformative inclusive pedagogy due to time constraints. The excessive volume of administrative tasks they face hinders their profound desire to explore effective inclusive pedagogy. The school management should be aware that an environment with proper collaboration among school professionals is critical to the provision of services that meet the diverse needs of students, whereas inadequate communication and coordination among

professionals can prevent the smooth integration of services (Horne & Timmons, 2009).

Hammond & Ingalls (2003) elaborated on the notion that if educators continue to face such challenges, this may potentially lead to a decline in their self-efficacy and confidence. Consequently, this could also influence their attitudes and willingness to completely adopt and embrace inclusive pedagogy. Recognizing the complex nature of these problems and giving specific aid to teachers to allow them to cope with these challenges is highly important. Through the holistic consideration of these issues and challenges, and the provision of ongoing professional development and resources, teachers can be more equipped to develop a more positive and confident mindset, which will in turn lead to the successful implementation of inclusive education.

While there is a consistent demonstration of the continued dedication to creating a more equitable and inclusive education system for all students in the UAE, there seems to be a lack of comprehensive literature discussing how self-efficacy, attitude, and intentions of the teachers to implement inclusive pedagogies are affected by the concerns they encounter in schools and classrooms. Moreover, there is a need to explore the challenges that teachers are dealing with in teaching in a mainstream classroom, where students with and without disabilities are present, is also required. These factors need to be deeply considered to adequately provide the teachers the necessary support and resources to enable them to effectively implement inclusive education practices in the country.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to address the complex relationship between primary teachers' concerns and their self-efficacy, attitude, and intentions towards the implementation of inclusive pedagogy in English literacy classrooms for bilingual dyslexic students in the United Arab Emirates. Through the exploration of these factors, the study seeks to reveal the underlying issues and impediments that teachers may face in supporting the implementation of the inclusive pedagogy. To determine the impact of teachers' concerns, its linear relationship or association with self-efficacy, attitude, and intentions were measured through correlation coefficient.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study holds considerable significance within the field of primary and inclusive education. The results shed the light on essential approaches that lead to a more developmentally-appropriate, supportive, inclusive, and equitable educational environment in the UAE. In addition, the results of the study could be highly significant and beneficial to the various stakeholders in primary education as follows:

### *Students*

It is the main target of this research that students should get to know the issues and the concerns which are faced by primary teachers while implementing inclusive pedagogy for bilingual dyslexic students in English language classrooms in the UAE. Through this exploration of teachers' self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions, students

can acquire invaluable information that will help to explain the dynamics of their learning environment. This research therefore can be a stepping stone towards the improvement of those support systems which are customized to the needs of bilingual dyslexic learners and as a result the classrooms will be more welcoming and comfortable. This study may possibly result in an improvement of the educational experience and outcomes of students with dyslexia, thus allowing the primary education to be more equitable and inclusive in the UAE.

#### *Teachers*

This study holds great importance to teachers as it covers the intricate associations between their concerns, self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions relevant to implementing inclusive pedagogy for bilingual dyslexic students in English literacy classrooms in the UAE. In this sense, the research by identifying the issues and barriers that teachers may encounter in such a situation, provides precious information for the purposes of professional development programmes that would meet the particular needs. Knowledge on how concerns affect self-efficacy and attitudes allows teachers to face challenges, improve their confidence and improve their teaching abilities to support the diverse learning needs of bilingual dyslexic students. In the end, the results of this study may contribute to a much more open and tolerant teaching atmosphere, facilitating better learning outcomes for all students in the UAE.

#### *Management, Curriculum Developers, and Policymakers*

This study is of great interest to management, curriculum developers, and policymakers as it focuses on the critical intersection of primary teachers' concerns, self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions towards inclusive pedagogy for bilingual dyslexic students in English literacy classrooms in the UAE. Through the analysis of these factors, the study offers important information that can guide the creation of policies, curriculum frameworks, and professional development programs to promote inclusive practices in educational institutions. The knowledge of how teachers' concerns influence their capability and aspiration to implement inclusive pedagogy is critical in the development of focused interventions and support systems that help educators to overcome the challenges and improve their teaching practices. In the end, findings of this study have the ability to foster systemic changes that will ensure equal access to quality education to bilingual dyslexic students and in turn improve the education system in the UAE.

#### *Parents*

This study is particularly relevant to parents since it provides information about the factors that affect primary teachers' ability to implement inclusive pedagogy for bilingual dyslexic students in English literacy classrooms in the UAE. Through comprehension of the influence of teachers' concerns on their self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions, parents can understand the obstacles their child's teachers might encounter in delivering effective support. This learning empowers parents to work together effectively with the teachers and school management in establishing strategies to address these concerns and develop a more supportive and equitable learning

environment for their children. Ultimately, the results of this study could foster stronger partnerships among parents and teachers, which would surely result to improved educational achievements and outcomes, and better support system for bilingual dyslexic learners in the UAE.

## Literature Review

The section provides an overview of previous research on concepts and approaches for inclusive education. In addition, it covers the impact of teachers' concerns on their attitude towards inclusive education, self-efficacy, and intentions of implementing inclusive pedagogy. Lastly, it introduces the theoretical foundation that guides the study by providing a structure for comprehending, analyzing, and interpreting data.

### Learning for All: The Concepts of Inclusion in Education

Inclusion in education, as described by Armstrong et al. (2009), is the practice of making certain that all students, regardless of their different backgrounds and abilities, receive quality education and are actively participating in the learning process. This argument was also supported by Ralić et al. (2020) who underscored that inclusive education is more than just access to education for all students, it is also concerned with creating a supportive and friendly setting where every student is valued and encouraged to learn. This approach acknowledges and honors the individual strengths and difficulties of every student, fostering the feeling of inclusivity and tolerance in the classroom.

Inclusion in education also encompasses the use of different teaching approaches and materials to cater for distinct learning styles and abilities (Mena et al., 2021). It encourages teamwork among students, teachers and parents; therefore, nobody's needs are left out and all students have the opportunity to achieve academically, socially and emotionally. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of creating a positive and inclusive school culture, which values diversity and respect among students and staff (Yasin et al., 2023). This also includes addressing systemic obstacles and biases that can prevent a student from gaining relevant learning opportunities. Carrington & Elkins (2002) specified that this might entail promoting policy changes, providing teacher training to enhance knowledge and understanding of diverse learners, and working to eliminate discriminatory practices within the education system. An inclusive environment in education is the product of a change of the way of thinking and dedication to equity and social justice. It is all about recognizing and valuing the unique contributions of every individual to the learning community and actively working to develop a learning environment where every student is seen, heard, and supported.

Inclusive education is more than only addressing the needs of students with disabilities or special needs; it is about celebrating the richness of diversity in all its forms and fostering a culture of belonging where all students can succeed (Kozleski & Yu, 2016). This encompasses recognizing and appreciating the different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversities that exist in the school community and providing chances for students to pick

up each other's life experiences and outlooks. St-Amand et al. (2017) further explained that the primary purpose of inclusion in education is to establish an educational setting where all learners can reach their maximum capacity and acquire a sense of control over their learning process. It is the development of empathy, tolerance, and respect for each other and teaching students to be successful in a multi-cultural and interdependent world. It involves promoting equity in education by supporting policies and practices that cater for the diverse needs of all students including those from the minority or underrepresented groups. Ultimately, inclusion in education is a concept that aims at creating a learning situation in which all students are appreciated, respected, and allowed to excel.

### *Inclusive Pedagogy: A Transformative Approach towards Equity in Education*

Inclusive pedagogy is a transformative approach that aims at achieving equity in education by ensuring that all students, regardless of their origin or abilities, have access to quality education (Santos et al., 2020). It is not only about getting access, but also about embracing and appreciating the diversity of the students in the classroom. Inclusive pedagogy promotes educators to establish a classroom that is respectful to all students and where all students feel valued and empowered to participate in their learning. Lawrie et al. (2017) discussed that this approach acknowledges that every student has a different point of view and life experience and wants to use this diversity to make the learning process more interesting for all.

Inclusive pedagogy also promotes the use of various teaching methods and materials that cater for the varied learning styles, needs, and choices of the students. This may involve embedding multicultural perspectives in the curriculum, varied modes of representation and expression, and differentiation in assessments to cater for different abilities. Inclusive pedagogy aims at removing obstacles for learning and guaranteeing academic achievements for all students by adapting the teaching practices for different types of learners (Rix et al., 2009). This argument was further substantiated by Florian et al. (2010), explaining that inclusive pedagogy encourages educators to critically analyze their own personal biases and stereotypes, and to work towards creating a prejudice-free and stereotype-free learning environment. This involves encouraging open and honest dialogues about social justice, equity, and inclusion, and fostering empathy and understanding among students. By creating a respectful and accepting culture, inclusive pedagogy aims to offer fair learning opportunities and to foster a feeling of belonging and community in the classroom.

Inclusive pedagogies can be brought into the classroom using many approaches and practices that give priority to the diverse needs of students. Educators can use differentiated instruction, which enables them to adapt their teaching to students' strengths, interests, and learning styles (Penner, 2018). This method is not only suitable for different types of learners but also contributes to the development of a personalized and inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, Mirawati et al. (2022) underscored that collaborative learning activities and group projects can create a community and shared learning experiences among students, which removes the barriers and promotes mutual understanding and respect.



Inclusive pedagogy includes Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL supports a teacher to come up with a variety of instruction modalities in the classroom to tap into different students' learning styles (Meo, 2008). An instance is when a teacher will present the content through a video, lecture and a hand-out to ensure that you get to understand in a way that suits your style. On the contrary, they would enable students to perform tasks such as writing, visuals and speeches depending on their strengths and needs. Doing this research activities also can lead to breaking such walls and offer equal opportunity for those students who are different (Jando et al., 2017). Studies reveal that UDL proves quite effective in academic success as well as learning engagement for these students and for others.

Alrawi & Alkahtani (2021) highlighted another crucial point to mention is that culture responsive teaching practices are part of inclusive pedagogy. It is the process of integrating the cultural backgrounds, traditions, and histories of the students into the curriculum so that the students can perceive themselves in their learning experiences. Thus, the educators acknowledge and respect the personal identities and perspectives of their students, making the learning environment more inclusive and empowering. In addition, Hallqvist (2014) detailed that the offering of open discussions on social matters and current events may also contribute to the creation of an inclusive classroom by allowing students to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, and in the process, to foster empathy, comprehension, and critical thinking. Teaching that is culturally responsive embraces the students' cultural richness in the form of background, identity, context, and perspective. It combines these elements in the classroom curriculum and in the classroom culture. We can take an example, when the text with the main characters of different cultural background and eras are demonstrated, the students can express themselves freely. Teachers act as organizers for the group: they set the platform for sharing and modeling as students explain their cultural experiences about the subject at hand. This builds on an assemblage of an equitable environment where students are the best of themselves, cared for, giving opinions, and involved (Ydo, 2020). The research shows the effectiveness of the culturally relevant strategies in reduction of the dropouts and literacy rates in the minority group students.

Griner & Stewart (2012) explained that customized instruction could be interpreted as the teacher creating training methods tailored to the student's own needs. Teachers can design tiered activities that revolve around some levels of complexity, offer texts of different reading levels, set up learning stations for several learning modes, and let students have a choice of assessment methods. Research supports the idea that differentiated instruction can result in several positive outcomes for student achievement as it helps students in learning at the level matching with their learning characteristics.

Students are greatly influenced by inclusive pedagogies (Inclusive Education - What Does the Research Say?, 2017). Since this exhibits a positive and tolerant classroom environment, students feel appreciated and respected. Consequently, learners are more engaged in their learning, have the liberty to communicate and express themselves, and a greater sense of belongingness to their school community. Peer supports aid to developing social skills and relationship building. Diversity, awareness, and empathy are shaped by people's exposure to cultural differences (Carter et al., 2015). The argument was supported by Carter et al. (2007)

mentioning that accommodations that are given to disabled students reduce stigma, make them more self-assured, and aid them in achieving their best. Acknowledging and incorporating respect, dignity and welcoming character as essential elements enhances productivity. Building a community of equal chances for people with barriers is a necessary step for individuals with limitations. Finally, access to education is the key that opens the door to equal opportunities in the future for everyone (Medina-García et al., 2020). Hence, an inclusive system encourages all-around development of students. Inclusive pedagogies also enhance academic performance, as they cater to the varied learning requirements of the students, thereby increasing motivation, participation, and achievement at all levels. Furthermore, inclusive pedagogies foster understanding and empathy and help students acquire essential social and emotional competences, which will make them active and responsible citizens of the diverse and inclusive society.

*The Impact of Teachers' Apprehensions on their Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Intentions of Implementing Inclusive Education Practices*

Teachers are the key players in the success of inclusive education practices. However, they are confronted with a myriad of concerns or worries in the classroom that affect their attitude, self-efficacy, and intentions. Florian et al. (2010) emphasized that the apprehensions teachers have can significantly affect their interactions with students, parents, school administrators, and other stakeholders. Teachers' apprehensions across various subjects significantly contribute to their capacity to learn as well as offer students appropriate support in the classroom (Helsing, 2007). Teachers are faced with so many concerns in the class ranging from trying to cater to everyone, responding to behavior issues, and having almost no breaks and resources for proper planning. That teachers should accommodate the gifted and the challenged learners at different levels of learning and debilities. It is probable that it will be a challenge, especially in cases of large classes. Teachers also need to manage the balance between rules of play, classroom rules and relations between the students (Yang & Chao, 2021). It is a challenge that the imbalance between these factors in the class can sometimes disrupt the learning process. A fundamental challenge that is faced by the majority of teachers is that there always seems to be less and less planning time provided to prepare high-quality lessons, and to make modifications for diverse learners. Mahvar et al. (2018) stated that the successful adoption of inclusive education is very much dependent upon teachers being equipped with support, training, and resources which they can use to promote effective learning for all the learners.

Another teacher concern is handling, communicating, and establishing sound relationship with the students' parents. Mag et al. (2017) highlighted that the teachers reach out to the parents regarding the student's progress and any difficulties that they are facing and those regarding behavioral issues. Even though most parents are understanding, still, there are some who might doubt teachers' practices and profess their skepticism of our concerns about students' mental health. The teachers try to achieve a balance between playing the role of a children's supporter and remaining a cohesive partner of parents. The teacher-parent lack of communication and interactions are key barriers to team effort that should be in place for fostering inclusion (Dewi & Rapisa, 2020). Should the parents have an attitude that special classes are not useful, they might not indeed push their kids to

work hard or provide necessary resources.

Another pertinent point to add to teachers' concern is the support they receive from school administrators (Scarlet, 2021). In the communication process, teachers, on their part, highlight the need for the support team in the field of education, the optimal size of classes, free planning time and the opportunity to attend trainings. Supporting personnel in the school serves as the backbone of inclusive schooling. Thus, administrators of educating schools should ensure that the educators are given enough staffing help, supportive services, and training on differentiating instruction and dealing with students who have different needs (Motitswe, 2014). If educators feel like they are being made to bear the added burden of administration, teacher burnout is more likely to be the result. Once this phenomenon happens, the capacity of the teacher to bring about the required mental health and inclusion is greatly limited. Teachers can give useful feedback and input as this is the way to make administration understand how they should improve inclusion implementation.

Conrad & Brown (2011) explained that the chances of inclusive education to result in success strongly depend on the solution of these usual problems which classroom teachers have. Learning that meets the needs of all learners will be possible when teachers are accepted and are given access to the required support, resources, empowerment, and respect. The teachers, students and school administration are the main people of this collaborative and supportive approach.

Dignath et al. (2022) described teachers' self-efficacy in the context of inclusive teaching involves educators' belief in their capacity to effectively deliver learning to all students belonging to different needs population in the general education setting. This is where the coordination of support and services, differentiated instruction, effective classroom management, effective collaboration across fields and creating a comfortable environment for all students comes into the picture. Malinen et al. (2012) elaborated that teachers with high self-efficacy feel that any obstacles arising from inclusion do not worry them and are certain of their capability to effectively teach any student in an inclusive setting, whereas teachers with low self-efficacy question whether they can successfully teach all students in an inclusive setting.

The teachers whose whole career was built in a way that used to exclude the students with special needs, certainly face some apprehensions about the implementation of inclusive education (Thomas, 2020). They could be negative about feeling prepared enough, receiving supervision and leadership, having access to resources, as well as time allocated for talks and discussions. Teacher self-efficacy is influenced by the multiple dimensions of inclusion which is, in turn, negatively associated with teacher burnout. It may be punctuated with thoughts like 'I am not sure that I am ready to the whole responsibility by myself, ' how to deal with kids who are not satisfied with the classes?' and 'what if someone needs more assistance? '. If teacher concerns are not addressed well, teacher suspects the situation being impervious to any effect leading to a withdrawn sense of self-efficacy (Lev et al., 2018).

Loghmannia et al. (2018) explained that while educators who have the fewest worries about inclusion are very

likely to have the confidence necessary to carry it out effectively, those who harbor several concerns are less likely to have the confidence for successful implementation of inclusive education. The statement is backed by Artino (2012), stating that when teachers' particular concerns are getting recognized and solved diligently by proper professional development, example, leadership support, co-teaching arrangements and adequate planning time given, the problems will be minimized while self-efficacy will be increased. Teachers who feel supported in the advent of a more inclusive approach to instruction are not distracted from devising ways to educate effectively and promote growth in their students. Their confidence plays as an engine that doesn't give up despite the hardships. Thus, terms such as 'special education' and 'regular education' would become obsolete regarding the perception of educators as all would be capable of teaching all students in inclusive classes (Thomas, 2020).

The signification is the fact that unaddressed teachers' concerns will cause reduction of teachers' self-efficacy towards inclusive education. District and their directors should develop the practice of targeting and solving teacher issues as a way of strengthening the teachers' skill and optimism on delivering quality education.

Teacher attitude towards inclusive education is the attitude which looks at how teachers tend to look at or perceive inclusive education as a tool that brings students with disabilities and exceptional needs into the mainstream education classroom setting (Hsien et al., 2009). The provision of highly trained teachers, competent to deal with students with different needs and including them in the mainstream education curriculum, is a part of the inclusive education system. Mulyadi (2017) described teacher attitude about inclusive education is an essential aspect of teaching which includes teacher's beliefs that they have the capacity to provide suitable and correct accommodations and modifications for disabled students and furthermore, their conviction about the educational and social benefits of inclusion for all students.

Jordan et al. (2009) underscored that observably, the teacher's anxiety affects and brings up their disposition and methods for the inclusive class. Teachers who have many criticisms and reservations regarding the inclusion are more likely to have negative views and are less sympathetic to the positive aspects of the inclusion. This statement is supported by Monsen et al. (2013), mentioning, that the stressor that is usually faced by teachers when dealing with special needs students involves the lack of resources, time and help from other staff members to provide specialized instruction of students with additional needs, while also meeting the needs of the rest of the class. Moreover, teachers complain about lack of proper training, knowledge, and competence required for tailoring the instruction, dealing with the behavior matters, promoting social interaction, and making correct arrangements for students with disabilities (Tristani & Bassett-Gunter, 2019).

More experienced teachers who have a great deal of concern are at higher risk of going through frustration, overload, and stress when faced with the challenge of including learners with an additional need as requirement in their classes (Forlin et al., 2008). They could be more aggressive against the students with special needs if they are not prepared to take the responsibilities on their shoulders. They may be more radical or conservative, tending to assume that classes, factors, and people are separated and heterogeneous, hence, dissimilar to

inclusive models. Through a process of teachers' concerns being alleviated via greater support, training, and resources, their mindset can transform to become more welcoming and sensitive towards inclusive teaching approaches. Teachers' tendencies to be knowledgeable, self-confident, and driven can become even stronger through effective addressing of their doubts and questions, as they will feel empowered to work for the inclusion of all children (Martínez et al., 2021).

The above-mentioned arguments explain how higher levels of teacher being concerned versus inclusion pose a challenge to them and they, therefore, become resistant and skeptical of inclusion. On the other hand, lower or decreased concern shifts the teachers towards being more positive and supportive of inclusion. The extent of teachers' concern influences the teacher's looking in various perspectives without any constraints.

Teacher intention about inclusive teaching means that the teacher has a plan and commitment to employ instructional strategies and techniques that achieve the objective of educating all students with different backgrounds and learning needs while they are in the same classroom (Penner, 2018). These transformations are possible through redevelopments of the curriculum, assessment, and conducting of classes according to the individual needs of the learner regardless of what disabilities they have or what additional needs they may have.

Sijuola & Davidova (2022) mentioned that the extent to which educators have concerns about the application of inclusive education methodologies in their classrooms can greatly influence their reasoning and enthusiasm to use it. It is likely that a teacher with many worries, for instance, about their own knowledge, skills, and confidence in implementing the instruction, is going to be more bold or resistant in trying this new form of instruction. Providing services also to the teachers with concerns on how to manage a mixed-ability learning group, different learning needs and the lack of appropriate supporting resources and services is less likely to be easily adopted. Teachers who feel more secure and believe in their competency were shown to be more likely to value the importance of inclusive teaching by developing good intentions and attitudes regarding this (Woodcock & Jones, 2020).

Woodcock & Hardy (2017) added that it is important to prioritize the focus of training, which involves equipping teachers with up-to-date knowledge and foundational principles. This is essential for transitioning towards a more inclusive and supportive teaching approach. This is done by the extensive time and the provision of support for them to learn, strategize adaptations, and develop confidence in by use of new instructional skills which tackle their fear. González-Gil et al. (2013) also explained that school leaders should advocate for teachers to have access to tools such as instructional assistants, different types of learning resources, assistive technologies, and planning time to meet the varying learning needs. Common belief among the teaching staff that everyone can contribute to the classroom and a collaborative culture that supports inclusion not only school-wide but also in the classroom makes it possible for teachers to implement the most effective inclusive teaching methods. Adequate training, resources, and support may lead to these teachers' concerns being solved eventually, and, thus, when they focus on all students in the inclusive classrooms, their intention to succeed will be high (Martínez et al., 2021).

## Theoretical Framework

In the field of inclusive education, one of the prevalent theory is the Social Cognitive Theory suggested by Albert Bandura (Nabi & Prestin, 2017). In this theory, teachers' concerns about inclusive education, as well as everyday worries they experience in school, can have a major effect on their attitude towards inclusion, self-efficacy and intentions to implement inclusive pedagogy. Apprehensions of teachers about inclusive education may result in a negative attitude to accommodating diverse learners in the classroom. These fears may be as a result of lack of resources, support, or training, which can affect their confidence in their capacity to teach all students (Peter & Nderitu, 2014).

(Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020) also elaborated that teachers' self-efficacy, which is the belief of the teachers in their own capacity to implement inclusive practices, is closely related to their concerns and attitudes towards inclusive education. If teachers are not confident in their capacity to change their teaching styles to suit the needs of the diverse learners, they will be less likely to adopt inclusive pedagogy. Teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive education is influenced by factors such as previous experiences, professional development opportunities, and access to resources, all of which affect their intentions to effectively implement inclusive practices in their classrooms (Dignath et al., 2022).

Furthermore, teachers' readiness to implement inclusive pedagogy is determined by their fears, beliefs, and self-efficacy (Specht et al., 2015). If teachers perceive inclusive education as too challenging or complicated because of their anxieties, they may be unwilling to participate fully in the incorporation of inclusive practices. Conversely, teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion and high self-efficacy are likely to have strong intentions to integrate inclusive pedagogy into their teaching practices (Yang & Chao, 2021). The concerns of the educators should be resolved, self-efficacy should be escalated, and positive attitudes towards inclusion in education should be established to support the successful implementation of inclusive pedagogies in the classroom.

The theory focused on self-control and goal setting in behavior. When it comes to inclusive education, teachers who are involved in goal setting and self-regulatory practices are likely to diminish their concerns and fears and thus, enhance their self-efficacy and attitude and intention towards implementation of inclusive education practices (Woodcock et al., 2023). It implies that professional development and support programs that are aimed at enhancing teachers' self-regulation skills and goal-setting abilities will help them to overcome their fears and worries, thus, creating an inclusive educational environment.

This study utilizes Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory to determine how teachers' concerns about inclusive education and everyday problems they face in the school impact their attitudes about inclusive education, self-efficacy, and intentions. Bandura's theory enables the researchers to investigate cognitive and affective



processes that determine teachers' reactions to inclusive education. This framework offers a holistic perspective to analyze the relationship between teachers' concerns, their self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices, and their orientation to inclusive education. Using this approach, the study seeks to provide an understanding of the determinants of teachers' attitudes and intentions towards inclusive education, thus, providing useful implications for professional development and support programs designed to promote inclusive practices in educational settings.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the background, problem statement, and literature review, the following research questions were framed for this study:

- Is there a significant relationship between:
  - a) teacher concerns and self-efficacy to implement inclusive pedagogy?
  - b) teacher concerns and attitudes towards inclusive education and its implementation?
  - c) teacher concerns and intentions to adopt inclusive teaching practices?
  - d) teacher self-efficacy and attitudes?
  - e) teacher self-efficacy and intentions?
  - f) teacher attitude and intentions?
- What are the main challenges that teachers experience when implementing inclusive pedagogy in mainstream classroom settings?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a case study research design within the field of education to examine the relationship between teachers' concerns and their 1) self-efficacy to implement inclusive pedagogy, 2) attitudes towards inclusive education, and 3) intentions to adopt inclusive pedagogy among elementary English teachers within a private bilingual school setting in Dubai. In addition, the research investigated the primary challenges that the teachers faced when they sought to incorporate inclusive pedagogical practices in regular classrooms.

This case study used a mixed-methods model. The researchers collected, examined, analyzed, interpreted, and drew inferences by merging the qualitative and quantitative approaches. This methodological pluralism enabled the researchers utilise and leverage the gathered data extensively and synergistically.

### *Site and Participants*

The study was conducted in a private bilingual, English and Arabic languages, IB curriculum school in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. With a focus on implementing inclusive pedagogy in mainstream English literacy classes



with bilingual dyslexic students in the primary years, the researchers used the purposive sampling, selecting all the grades 1-5 English teachers assigned in classes with bilingual dyslexic students regardless of the ethnicity, gender, age, highest qualification earned, years of experience, and other confounding variables.

There were 49 elementary English teachers in the school. However, out of the potential participants, only 48 consented to take part in the research as 1 was on maternity leave during the administration of the study.

#### *Data Collection Tools*

##### *Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale (CIES)*

The researchers utilized the CIES to measure the participants' degree of concern on implementing inclusive teaching practices stemming from the challenges that he or she faces in everyday classroom (Sharma & Desai, 2002). There are four factors considered in the tool. The first were concerns on resources, which are in terms of resources and financial support. Second, were the concerns of acceptance and tolerance, which encompassed, but not limited to, the acceptance of regular students with special needs students. Third, were the concerns of academic success and standards locally and worldwide. Finally, the fourth factor was the worry about the teachers' administrative and teaching workload in a mainstream school setting that implements inclusive education. The scale contains 21 items. Each item can be answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale classification with responses varying from extremely concerned (4), very concerned (3), little concerned (2), to not concerned at all (1). The CIES provides a total score which is calculated by summing the value of responses on each item. The total score is valued between 21 and 84. A higher score of CIES means that a respondent is more worried about his or her ability to implement inclusive pedagogy.

##### *Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale*

The TEIP scale evaluates teachers perceived self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices (Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin, 2012). It evaluates teachers' self-efficacy in teaching students with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms. Teacher's self-efficacy considers 3 factors: 1) efficacy to use inclusive instructions, factor related to a participant's perceptions of his or her teaching efficacy in using inclusive instruction, 2) efficacy in collaboration, factor related to an individual's perceptions of teacher efficacy in working with parents and other professionals on topics about inclusive education, and 3) efficacy in managing behaviour, factor related to self-perceptions of The scale consists of 18 items with a six-point Likert scale from 1, strongly disagree to 6, strongly agree. The total score can be calculated by summing the responses for each item and ranged from 18 to 108 with higher scores indicating that participants have a high sense of perceived teaching efficacy for teaching in inclusive classrooms.

##### *Attitude towards Inclusion Scale (AIS)*

The AIS was developed to assess the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion. It includes ten seven-point Likert

items, with responses ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree. This scale is used to assess the beliefs, perceptions, support, and attitudes of teachers about the inclusion of students with diverse needs in regular classrooms. It includes a set of statements or questions about inclusive practices, and teachers are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement on a scale (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016).

#### *Intention to Teach in an Inclusive Classroom Scale (ITICS)*

The ITICS, as Sharma and Jacobs (2016) described, was formulated in a manner to depict the educator/s intentions to each in an inclusive classroom, or in a mainstream class that have special needs students. The questions focused on the teaching in relation to working with students who need additional support. The items in this scale were more action oriented rather than belief oriented. This scale also employed a 7-point Likert-type response format in which the scores varied from extremely unlikely (1) to extremely likely (7). Constructs of the ITICS are the intention to implement curriculum changes, and intention to consult with others.

#### *Interview*

An interview was conducted to determine the factors which serve as challenges when teachers bring about inclusive learning in the mainstream classroom. The teachers were asked one open-ended question where teachers were asked to cite all the difficulties that they have faced or still have as they try to teach in a class where both dyslexic and regular bilingual students are together. This way, teachers were able to explain in more detail what the exact obstacles were when it comes to adapting the curriculum, inventive methods of instruction, social and behavioral issues, management issues, and any other part of mainstream education that entails implementing inclusive educating strategy. The qualitative data garnered from this level of enquiry provides ideas on ways teachers can be assisted to make their classrooms more friendly for the learners.

#### *Data Gathering Procedures*

As an integral component of ethical research practices, the researchers ensured compliance with the ethical standards and safeguarding the welfare of all the institution's stakeholders involved in the research process. The researchers obtained the necessary permissions and consent to ensure that the study is carried out in a morally responsible approach. This process involved distributing and collecting signed 1) letter of request to the institution from the school principal, and human resource head, and 2) participant information sheets, and consent forms from the 48 primary English teachers. These actions ensured transparency and accountability in requesting access to the research setting, as well as the autonomy and understanding of the research objectives and the rights of the research participants.

The researchers distributed the questionnaire, containing the CIES, TEIP, AIS, and ITCS scales, to the participants. Two weeks were allocated for retrieval of the research instrument to allow sufficient time to understand, seek questions, and complete the questionnaire. Throughout the administration of the research

instrument, the researchers visited the school daily to ensure that any concerns from the participants were addressed promptly and accordingly.

Lastly, one-on-one interview to all 48 elementary English teachers was conducted for two weeks after the retrieval of the questionnaire. The participants were asked to share the challenges they faced and still have as they implement inclusive pedagogy to mainstream classes with bilingual dyslexic students. This approach enabled thorough investigation of the views, experiences, and feelings of each participant, thus producing rich and detailed data. Furthermore, the private nature of the one-to-one interview allowed the participants to openly share their thoughts and feelings without the fear of being judged, influenced by social pressure, or putting their jobs at risk which resulted in more honest and candid responses.

### *Data Analysis*

The questionnaire, which included the CIES, TEIP, AIS, and ITCS scales was used to measure the following: 1) degree of the participants' concerns or apprehensions related to implementing inclusive education practices due to the challenges they encounter within the school environment; 2) degree of perceived efficacy in carrying out inclusive practices in their classrooms; 3) degree of the attitudes of the teachers towards inclusion in mainstream education; and 4) degree of the participants' intention to implement inclusive pedagogy in their classes. The researchers employed data interpretation through mean scores to review, analyze, and draw relevant conclusions by calculating the average scores across the gathered data set. The mean interpretation table was then adapted by the researchers from Rouse and Dreyfus (2021) to examine, identify trends, recognize patterns, and convey complex information. The modification was validated by 6 faculty members of the Higher Colleges of Technology in the faculty of education. All the validators possess doctoral degrees holders, hold the position of assistant professor, and boast over 25 years of teaching experience.

The researchers then utilized the Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) to measure the degree of linear relationship between 1) teacher concerns and self-efficacy to implement inclusive pedagogy, 2) teacher concerns and attitudes towards inclusive education, 3) teacher concerns and intentions to adopt inclusive teaching practices, 4) teacher self-efficacy and attitudes, 5) teacher self-efficacy and intentions, and 6) teacher attitude and intentions. The t-statistic for testing the significance of a correlation coefficient was then computed to test whether the observed correlation coefficient is statistically significant, or the events although seem correlated occurred by chance.

Lastly, the researchers noted the challenges that the 48 primary English teachers face during the implementation of inclusive classroom practices in their mainstream classes with bilingual dyslexic students. The data gathered from this tool offers insights into how educators can be supported in creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for their students.

## Results

### The Degrees of Teachers' Concerns, Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Intentions of Implementing Inclusive Pedagogy

The 48 primary English teacher participants' degrees of concerns, self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions of implementing inclusive classroom practices were determined by calculating the mean scores of the gathered results from 1) Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale (CIES), 2) Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP), 3) Attitude towards Inclusion Scale (AIS), and 4) Intention to Teach in an Inclusive Classroom Scale (ITICS). The mean scores were then analyzed statistically by adapting the mean interpretation table from Rousse and Dreyfus (2021). Modifications were employed accordingly to aligned with the gathered data from the utilized research instruments.

#### *Degree of Teachers' Concerns in Implementing Inclusive Pedagogy Influenced by the Challenges Encountered in Everyday Teaching*

Table 1 displays the modified mean interpretation table used to analyze the calculated mean score from the Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale (CIES).

Table 1. Teacher Concerns' Mean Score Interpretation

Mean Score	Interpretation
3.51 – 4.00	To a very high degree
3.01 – 3.50	To a high degree
2.51 – 3.00	To some degree
2.01 – 2.50	To a low degree
1.51 – 2.00	To a very low degree
1.00 – 1.50	Not at all

As presented in table 2, the teachers express a high degree of concern about implementing inclusive education practices in their classrooms, considering several numbers of challenges they face in their day-to-day teaching. However, considering the standard deviation is around 1.1, this suggests that there is considerable diversity in responses. The data show that among all the factors considered in the CIES, the teacher participants conveyed that they have no to a very low degree of concern in the following: 1) lack of knowledge and skills in implementing inclusive pedagogy, 2) lack of incentives in return of the additional responsibilities that inclusive education entail, and 3) decline of academic achievements of regular students.

Table 2. Mean Score from the Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale (CIES)

Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
3.1002	1.1074	To a high degree

*Degree of Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Implement Inclusive Pedagogy*

The Table 3 illustrates the adapted mean interpretation table utilised to draw valuable insights from the calculated mean score from the *Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale* completed by the 48 primary English teachers.

Table 3. Teacher Self-Efficacy' Mean Score Interpretation

Mean Score	Interpretation
4.16 – 5.00	To a very high degree
3.33 – 4.15	To a high degree
2.50 – 3.32	To some degree
1.67 – 2.49	To a low degree
0.84 – 1.66	To a very low degree
0.00 – 0.83	Not at all

The table 4 shows that the teachers have high degree of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. The findings indicate that teachers feel confident in their knowledge, competencies, and abilities to actively engage in fostering inclusive classroom environments through the implementation of effective and successful teaching methods. The value of the standard deviation reflects that there are sections in which the teachers' responses vary.

It is important to note that teachers express that they are not confident in 1) preventing disruptive behavior in the class before it happens, 2) designing learning opportunities that cater the individual needs of the students with disabilities, and 3) informing colleagues and other stakeholders who know little about the laws and policies about inclusive education. The results suggest a call for providing teachers with increased opportunities to attend trainings, workshops, and other avenues aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills in inclusive education.

Table 4. Mean Score from the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale

Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
4.0134	1.1484	To a high degree

*Degree of Teachers' Attitudes on Inclusive Education and its Implementation*

The meaningful interpretations from the computed mean score from the Attitude towards Inclusion Scale (AIS) was formulated by adapting the mean interpretation table, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Teacher Attitudes' Mean Score Interpretation

Mean Score	Interpretation
5.85 – 7.00	To a very high degree
4.69– 5.84	To a high degree
3.52 – 4.68	To some degree
2.35 – 3.51	To a low degree
1.18 – 2.34	To a very low degree
1.00 – 1.17	Not at all

Table 6 illustrates that teachers exhibit extremely highly favorable attitudes towards inclusive education and its implementation to their classes. Low standard deviation implies that the gathered data present consistent and homogeneous answers. This demonstrates that teachers have very strong and positive attitudes toward the principles and practices of inclusive education, particularly in how they implement them in their own classes, and the concrete efforts of UAE to include people of determination in mainstream education as reflected in the Ministerial Resolution No. 647 for the year 2020 on the policy of inclusive education.

Table 6. Mean Score from the Attitude towards Inclusion Scale (AIS)

Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
6.8333	0.3701	To a very high degree

*Degree of Teachers' Intentions to Adopt Inclusive Teaching Practices*

The primary source of the generated discerning analyses from the calculated mean score from Intention to Teach in an Inclusive Classroom Scale (ITICS), was the adapted mean interpretation table, as presented in Table 7.

Table 8 shows that teachers have a very high degree of intentions to implement inclusive education. The results imply that the teacher participants are extremely motivated, enthused, and committed to implement inclusive pedagogy in their classrooms. However, it is important to note that teachers express reluctance of the idea of including students with severe disabilities in the class.

Table 7. Teacher Intentions' Mean Score Interpretation

Mean Score	Interpretation
5.85 – 7.00	To a very high degree
4.69– 5.84	To a high degree
3.52 – 4.68	To some degree
2.35 – 3.51	To a low degree
1.18 – 2.34	To a very low degree
1.00 – 1.17	Not at all

Table 8. Mean Score from the Intention to Teach in an Inclusive Classroom Scale (ITICS)

Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
6.1875	1.0062	To a very high degree

*Relationship between Teachers' Concerns, Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Intentions to Implement Inclusive Pedagogy*

The linear associations between the following variables: 1) teachers' concerns and self-efficacy to implement inclusive pedagogy, 2) teachers' concerns and attitude towards inclusive educations and its implementation, and 3) teachers' concerns and intentions to implement inclusive pedagogy were generated by employing Pearson correlation coefficient test and testing the significance of the correlation coefficient, as illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9 presents that there is a strong negative relationship between teachers' concerns and their self-efficacy. The results imply that the higher level of concerns in implementing Inclusive Pedagogy, which are influenced by the challenges encountered in everyday teaching, the lower level of confidence in incorporating inclusive teaching practices.

In addition, the table also shows that there is a strong inverse relationship observed between teachers' concerns and their attitudes towards inclusive education and its implementation. This indicates that the higher the level of teachers' concerns in implementing inclusive pedagogy, which are impacted by the challenges encountered in their daily classroom teaching, the more negative attitudes towards the purpose of inclusive education and incorporating inclusive practices into mainstream classrooms.

Lastly, a moderate negative relationship exists between teachers' concerns and their intentions to adopt inclusive classroom practices is illustrated by the table. This suggests that as the teacher participants increase, their commitment to implement inclusive pedagogy effectively decreases to a moderate extent.

Table 9. Relationship between Teachers' Concerns, Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Intentions

	Pearson's correlation (r)	P-value
<b>Predictor: Teachers' Concerns</b>		
Self-Efficacy	-0.927	.000**
Attitudes	-0.885	.000**
Intentions	-0.749	.000**

**Notes:** Significant using the Pearson's correlation test at \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01

Table 10 illustrates the linear relationship between 1) teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusive education, and 2) teachers' self-efficacy and their intentions to adopt inclusive teaching practice after applying



the Pearson's correlation coefficient formula and testing the significance of the calculated correlation coefficient.

The findings show that there exists a strong positive relationship between the 48 elementary English teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes. This indicates that a higher degree of self-assurance in executing inclusive pedagogy is linked to a more positive outlook towards inclusive education and its implementation.

Moreover, Table 10 displays that the teachers' self-efficacy and their commitment to adopt inclusive classroom pedagogy demonstrate a strong positive association. This implies that higher level of self-confidence in implementing inclusive practice are correlated with greater and more profound intentions to adopt them.

Table 10. Relationship between Teachers' Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Intentions

	Pearson's correlation (r)	P-value
<b>Predictor:</b> Teachers' Self-Efficacy		
Attitudes	0.978	.000**
Intentions	0.844	.000**

**Notes:** Significant using the Pearson's correlation test at \*P < 0.05, \*\*P<0.01

The table 11 displays the result after the application of Pearson's correlation coefficient formula and testing the calculated correlation coefficient to determine if there is a relationship between the teacher participants' attitudes towards inclusive education and its implementation, and their intentions to adopt inclusive pedagogy. The findings reveal that there's an observed strong positive linear association the two factors: teachers' attitudes and intentions. This relationship suggests that teachers who have positive attitudes towards inclusive education, considering it beneficial and necessary, are more likely to use inclusive teaching techniques in their classrooms. These attitudes may be caused by different reasons such as opportunities for professional development, a school culture that is supportive, and personal beliefs that are in line with the values of diversity and equity. Consequently, these teachers show a higher degree of motivation and dedication to implement inclusive practices, which are aimed at meeting the diverse needs of their students and ensuring equitable educational outcomes.

Table 11. Relationship between Teachers' Attitudes, and Intentions

	Pearson's correlation (r)	P-value
<b>Predictor:</b> Teachers' Attitudes		
Intentions	0.882	.000**

**Notes:** Significant using the Pearson's correlation test at \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01

## Discussion

### Teachers' Concerns in Implementing Inclusive Pedagogy Influenced by the Challenges Encountered in Everyday Teaching

The research findings underscore how every challenge they encounter in teaching contributes on the teachers' concerns in implementing inclusive pedagogy in mainstream classes (Mokala, 2020). The results reveal that teachers show an increased degree of concern to effectively implement inclusive pedagogy because they face a lot of challenges and problems within their classrooms. Ediyanto et al. (2023) highlighted that these apprehensions include the overwhelming challenge of meeting diverse learning needs, large number of students per class, lack of teaching aides, dealing with behavioral problems, covering colleagues' classes, struggling with short breaks and limited resources for effective teaching. Although teachers are putting in all their efforts, the lack of solutions to these daily challenges increases their anxiety about the successful implementation of inclusive teaching practices.

In addition, the results highlight the importance of addressing teachers' concerns in the context of the complexities of inclusive education. This supported the research conducted by Beyene & Tizazu (2011) mentioning that underscored that teachers have deep concern about their capacity to manage inclusive teaching practices in the presence of daily unattended challenges and perceived lack of support. The findings highlight the isolation felt by educators who undertake the laudable task of implementing inclusive education without the necessary resources or support systems. This brings out the critical necessity for schools and other stakeholders to focus on helping teachers to deal with these challenges (Forlin et al., 2008).

The findings reveal that in the presence of these problems, teachers have no option but to reconsider their acceptance of inclusive teaching approaches (Shelile & Hlalele, 2014). Faculty members are likely to feel overworked, frustrated, and professionally alienated when their work is continuously interrupted, either due to unforeseen circumstances or lack of the required support. And in such cases, they are usually very helpless and doubtful about their possibility of achieving success in inclusive education. We see from the data that they are not only obstacles to the successful implementation but may arise even when teachers are supportive of it in principle.

The conclusions derived from the study highlight the critical need for school management and other stakeholders to provide full support to teachers. The schools, as discussed by Su et al. (2022), can help to reduce the teachers' worries and create a friendly environment for the successful implementation of the inclusive pedagogy by addressing the underlying challenges like resource inadequacy and the overbearing class sizes. Moreover, continuous support and professional development activities help teachers to equip themselves with the required tools and strategies to manage the inherent challenges of inclusive education successfully. In the end, schools that actively respond to the concerns of the teachers and strengthen their support systems, create an inclusive learning environment where all students succeed.

### *Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Implement Inclusive Pedagogy*

The findings on the teachers' self-efficacy to implement inclusive pedagogy identify several factors that affect educators' confidence in this regard. It is important to note that the level of teachers perceived self-efficacy is greatly affected by the quality and availability of training and professional development opportunities offered by the school (Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020). Teachers who are provided with thorough training and continuous support in inclusive education practices tend to feel more competent and confident in putting inclusive pedagogy into practice in their classrooms. The regular providing of such training by the school plays a crucial role in improving the self-efficacy of teachers in this area (Donath et al., 2023).

In addition, the support level and availability of resources greatly influence the self-efficacy of teachers in implementing inclusive pedagogy. This backs up the study conducted by Mena et al. (2021), elaborating that schools that focus on giving teachers the support networks, materials, and resources that are specific to inclusive education practices have teachers who are more confident in their ability to address diverse learning needs effectively. A positive classroom environment with manageable class sizes, conducive physical spaces, and supportive student behavior can enhance teachers' self-efficacy in applying inclusive pedagogy.

Although training and support bring benefits, the self-efficacy of teachers is also affected by the challenges they encounter in their everyday teaching. Many challenges that teachers face in the school setting, such as large class sizes, behavioral problems, and limited resources, can affect their confidence in their ability to implement inclusive pedagogy successfully (Taole, 2018). Given this, it is important to deal with these daily challenges together with the provision of training and support to teachers. Through resolving the underlying challenges experienced by educators, schools will create a positive environment for teachers to feel empowered and competent in the implementation of inclusive pedagogy, which will in turn benefit all students in the classroom.

### *Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education and its Implementation*

The results demonstrate the teacher participants' highly positive attitudes towards inclusive education and its implementation. Alghazo & Gaad (2004) pointed out that teachers show a strong support to UAE's praiseworthy objective of inclusion of special needs students into the mainstream educational environments. Khalid & Othman (2022) added that the positive attitudes noted in the teachers represent a shared dedication to creating inclusive learning environments that value diversity and accommodate all students. This consistency with the wider objectives of inclusive education highlights the commitment of teachers to generating inclusive classrooms where every learner is appreciated and included.

Nevertheless, though teachers show positive attitudes to inclusive education, their perspective is also affected by the challenges that they face in their daily teaching. Teachers, however, may have worries and anxieties due to different challenges in the school environment despite their positive attitudes. These challenges, which include

big class sizes, poor resources, and behavioral problems, may affect teachers' confidence in the success of inclusive pedagogy (Peter & Nderitu, 2014). Consequently, even with a positive stance towards inclusive education, teachers may lose interest if they find the implementation process to be too difficult or impractical.

In this context, it is clear that the daily problems that teachers have to deal with are the most important issue to be addressed regarding the successful implementation of inclusive education practices. As emphasized by the research of Forlin et al. (2008), through recognition and resolution of the educators' concerns, a supportive environment is created in schools where teachers are given the power to implement inclusive pedagogy successfully. This highlights the need to take a comprehensive approach to inclusive education that not only fosters positive attitudes among teachers but also deals with the practical problems they face in their everyday teaching. By working together and with support from school authorities and other stakeholders, barriers to inclusive education can be overcome and inclusive learning environments can be created where all students can succeed.

#### *Teachers' Intentions to Adopt Inclusive Teaching Practices*

The research findings on teachers' intentions to adopt inclusive teaching practices reveal genuine commitment and intentions among the 48 elementary English teachers to incorporate inclusive pedagogy in their classrooms. Ismail et al. (2022) explained that teachers show profound desire to apply inclusive education approaches, consistent with the positive findings about their attitudes towards inclusive education and its implementation, in line with the UAE's laudable goal of mainstreaming special needs students. This dedication is a manifestation of not only their commitment to promote inclusive learning environments but also their understanding of the significance of diversity and inclusion in education. The positive intentions noticed in teachers highlight their readiness to adopt inclusive pedagogy and to develop classrooms which are friendly to all students irrespective of their abilities and backgrounds (Taale, 2018).

Nevertheless, although teachers have good intentions to embrace inclusive teaching practices, their ability to apply these practices is also affected by the difficulties they face in their everyday teaching. The results are aligned with the study of Schwab & Alnahdi (2020), mentioning that although teachers are genuinely willing to implement inclusive pedagogy, they may encounter many barriers in the school environment. Some of these challenges, such as limited resources, large class sizes, and behavioral issues, can influence teachers' self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices in their classrooms. Therefore, teachers with good intentions may get discouraged if they see the process as overwhelming and unattainable.

Given these results, it is essential to deal with the daily problems teachers have and to encourage them to adopt inclusive teaching practices. Through support and resources to educators and practical barriers to inclusive education, schools will enable teachers to operationalize what they intend to achieve (Chiner & Cardona, 2013). Moreover, creating a collaborative school culture that appreciates and emphasizes inclusive education will increase the readiness of teachers to implement inclusive pedagogy successfully. In the end, by solving the

issues that the teachers encounter and by fostering their desire to adopt inclusive teaching practices, schools can develop inclusive learning environments where all students have the chance to succeed (Peters, 2002).

*Relationship between Teachers' Concerns, Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Intentions to Implement Inclusive Pedagogy*

The research results reveal a negative association between 1) teacher concerns and their self-efficacy to practice inclusive pedagogy, 2) teacher concerns and their attitudes towards inclusive education and its application, and 3) teacher concerns and their intentions to adopt inclusive teaching practices. The results reinforce the study conducted by Malinen et al. (2012) citing that the more teachers worry about the implementation of inclusive pedagogy, the less confident they become in their ability to implement inclusive practices. Such negative association implies that teachers' apprehensions, for instance, about how to address diverse student needs or lack of support, may reduce their self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions towards inclusive education. The reasons for these findings may be due to the fact that teachers are overwhelmed by the challenges in the classroom such as limited resources, large class sizes, and lack of training in inclusive practices. The above concerns are critical to the empowerment of teachers and to the development of positive attitudes towards inclusive education.

On the other hand, the study shows positive associations between 1) teacher self-efficacy and attitudes, 2) self-efficacy and intentions, and 3) attitudes and intentions. Teachers with higher self-efficacy in implementing inclusive pedagogy tend to have positive attitudes towards inclusive education and stronger intentions to practice inclusive teaching (Çetin, 2015). This positive association implies that the self-efficacy of teachers is an important factor in determining their attitudes and intentions towards inclusive education. Teachers who have confidence in their ability to execute inclusive practices are more likely to adopt inclusive pedagogy and promote its use in their classrooms. This highlights the need for teachers to be provided with sufficient training, support, and resources to improve their self-efficacy in implementing inclusive pedagogy, as it can affect their attitudes and intentions towards inclusive education (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019).

In summary, teacher worries have a strong impact on their self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions towards inclusive education. The addressing of these concerns and the necessary support and resources to teachers is essential in empowering them and fostering a favorable attitude towards inclusive education. Through improving teachers' self-efficacy in using inclusive pedagogy, schools can foster positive attitudes and intentions towards inclusive education, thus generating inclusive learning environments where all students are respected and helped (Xue et al., 2023). Moreover, the creation of a positive school culture, which appreciates diversity and supports inclusive practices, can play a role in developing positive attitudes and intentions of teachers towards inclusive education. Through professional development opportunities, collaborative support networks, and a supportive school environment, teachers are empowered to overcome challenges and embrace inclusive pedagogy wholeheartedly (Donath et al., 2023).

### *Teachers' Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Pedagogy in Mainstream Classroom Settings*

Apart from these two main issues, the findings present a number of other common, yet significant barriers that teachers face when trying to implement inclusive classroom practices successfully. The challenges range from adapting the instructional materials and methods to the different learning styles and abilities, managing the classroom dynamics to ensure equal participation and engagement, fostering positive attitudes and relationships among peers with different backgrounds and abilities, and addressing the administrative constraints and resource limitations that impact the implementation of inclusive practices (Van Mieghem et al., 2020). The results underscore the holistic and systemic nature of inclusive education and emphasize the importance of a strong support system and rich resources to enable the teachers to overcome these challenges successfully.

The results imply the need for focused and personalised interventions and collaborative efforts in solving the prevalent problems and promoting inclusive and equitable learning environments (Makhalemele & Nel, 2015). Some effective solutions may include the establishment of specialized training programs that provide educators with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to tackle and deal with the intricacies of inclusive pedagogy appropriately. Furthermore, the development of interdisciplinary partnerships among educators, specialists, and stakeholders can support collaboratively in creating tailored interventions and sharing of best practices to cater the varied needs of the students. Another pertinent point to add is the effort to promote policy reforms and provide adequate resources to support inclusive education programs can increase the capability of schools and teachers to deliver equitable learning opportunities to all students, regardless of their background or ability. Working on these challenges together and in advance, educators can create inclusive learning environments that foster the holistic development and academic achievement of all students (Sengupta et al., 2019).

## **Conclusion**

This research has examined the degrees of teachers' concerns (Beyene & Tizazu, 2011; Ediyanto et al., 2023; Forlin et al., 2008; Mokala, 2020), self-efficacy (Donath et al., 2023, Mena et al., 2021; Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020), attitudes (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004; Khalid & Othman, 2022), intentions (Ismail et al., 2022; Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020), and challenges in the implementation of inclusive pedagogy in mainstream classrooms. The findings show a number of apprehensions or worries among teachers, which are caused by different teaching problems, including diverse learning requirements, large classes, and insufficient resources. These worries reveal the intricacy of inclusive pedagogy implementation and the necessity for support structures that will help teachers to overcome their fears and to implement inclusive pedagogy successfully. In addition, the research highlights the need to consider the teachers' concerns in the complexities of inclusive education, stressing the critical requirement for schools and stakeholders to offer support systems and resources that would enable the teachers to navigate these challenges successfully (Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Forlin et al., 2008; Peter & Nderitu, 2014; Peters, 2002, Shelile & Hlalele, 2014; Su et al., 2022; Taole, 2018)

Moreover, the study examines the association between teachers' concerns, self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions to use inclusive pedagogy. The results suggest a negative relationship between teacher apprehensions and their self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions towards inclusive education, highlighting the adverse effects of fears on teachers' willingness to embrace inclusive practices. On the other hand, self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions are positively related, indicating the importance of training, support, and resources in building teachers' confidence and promoting positive attitudes towards inclusive pedagogy. These results verify studies of researchers (Çetin, 2015; Donath et al., 2023; Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019; Malinen et al., 2012; Xue et al., 2023) who highlighted the need to address teachers' concerns and improve their self-efficacy through focused interventions to promote favorable attitudes and intentions towards inclusive education.

In addition, the study explores the difficulties that teachers encounter when they have to apply inclusive pedagogy in mainstream classroom contexts. Educators face complex challenges which require customized interventions and collaborative efforts, from reconciling bilingual curricula to managing classroom dynamics and dealing with resource constraints. The study highlights the holistic and systemic character of inclusive education showing that teachers need to be supported by strong systems and rich resources to overcome these challenges successfully. Efficient answers can be special training programs, interdisciplinary collaborations, and policy changes to promote inclusive education initiatives and provide teachers with the required knowledge, skills, and resources to create inclusive learning environments where all students can succeed (Makhalemele & Nel, 2015; Mieghem et al., 2018; Sengupta et al., 2019).

## Recommendations

This study could serve as an impetus for investigating potential connections between teachers' demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, age, highest level of qualification attained, and years of experience, and how these variables influence the degrees of their concerns, self-efficacy, attitudes, intentions, and challenges in implementing inclusive pedagogy. Regression models could be used in quantitative analyses to evaluate the effect of these variables on teachers' perception and experiences, whilst controlling for potential confounders. Moreover, qualitative research could investigate how different identities influence teachers' views and actions, providing detailed information about the diversity of inclusive education. Through the consideration of these demographic variables, researchers can create a broader picture of the factors that influence readiness and capability of teachers to appropriately support bilingual dyslexic students in English literacy classrooms, and therefore, inform targeted interventions and support initiatives that are designed to meet the diverse needs of educators in the UAE.

## Notes

*Acknowledgements:* The authors thank the participating students, teachers, and management of the school for their cooperation. In addition, the authors would like to express their profound gratitude to the validators of the



research instruments of this study.

*Authors' contributions:* All authors have equal contributions.

*Competing interests:* The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

*Ethics approval and consent to participate:* The researchers got approval from the school principal, human resource head, and participating teachers to conduct the study by signing the request form, participant information sheets, consent forms, and data collection forms. In addition, the researchers used pseudonyms to conceal the identity of the participants.

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## Primary Teachers' Inclusive Pedagogy Experiences in Literacy Support for Students with Dyslexia in a Bilingual School

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**Abstract:** The research aimed to examine primary teachers' experiences using inclusive pedagogy to serve bilingual pupils with dyslexia. Nine international elementary teachers participated in the study conducted at The International School, a multilingual International Baccalaureate (IB) institution in the United Arab Emirates. The school placed significant emphasis on fostering language and cultural diversity by implementing a dual-language education approach and offering a biliteracy curriculum in both English and French/German. Teachers' perspectives were gathered through qualitative interviewing and analysed thematically. The results highlighted the need for fair and inclusive learning settings and the benefits and pitfalls of inclusive pedagogy. The research demonstrated a shift towards equitable and personalised inclusive strategies that prioritise individual needs and fairness over conventional approaches. The task of reconciling bilingual education with dyslexia help posed a significant challenge, necessitating a prioritization of language assistance and inclusive support by teachers. Literacy was enhanced through structured phonics and multisensory materials, and successful bilingual instruction was supported by a collaborative effort among teachers and the implementation of translanguaging strategies. The research findings highlighted the value of individualised, team-based approaches in helping dyslexic children in a multilingual environment, adding to the conversation on inclusive education.

**Keywords:** bilingual education, dyslexia, inclusive education, translanguaging

**Citation:** Corpuz, T.D. & Maher, A.J. (2024). Primary Teachers' Inclusive Pedagogy Experiences in Literacy Support for Students with Dyslexia in a Bilingual School. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 428-469), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Students' scholastic achievement and self-esteem are seriously hampered by dyslexia (Donato et al., 2022), a neurological special learning need marked by reading, writing, and spelling issues. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a multicultural school context where several languages are spoken, and bilingualism is common, meeting the requirements of students with dyslexia can be challenging. The confluence of many language

systems causes this complexity, which makes it challenging to provide appropriate dyslexia support (Shalan et al., 2021). This research explores primary teachers' experiences with inclusive pedagogy while assisting dyslexic students in reading within the distinctive setting of a multilingual school in the UAE. The research attempts to fully comprehend the difficulties experienced and approaches that educators use in promoting successful learning for dyslexic children, by investigating this unique setting.

According to estimates made by Tabari, 5–10% of school-aged children in the UAE have dyslexia, which is close to the global prevalence, and this number of prevalence emphasises the importance of efficient and focused literacy assistance tools in the classroom (Tabari, 2022). As students are required to traverse two languages, Arabic and English, during their educational journey, bilingualism adds an extra degree of complication. Due to this polarity, teaching dyslexic students reading skills requires a sophisticated approach (Rfissa, 2023). Additionally, previous studies on inclusive education by Sanger (2020) emphasised the crucial part that instructors play in creating inclusive learning environments where students with various learning needs may succeed.

A mindset that supports equal opportunity for all students, regardless of their talents or impairments, is known as inclusive education. The UAE's emphasis on inclusive education is aligned with international frameworks like the UNCRPD, which emphasises the right to education without discrimination (Gaad, 2019). The UAE Cabinet Resolution No. 35 of 2020 also emphasises that students with impairments, including dyslexia, have the same access to high-quality education as their classmates. The UAE's inclusive education system has changed significantly due to this decision (Dubai.gov.ae, 2020). This resolution demonstrates the UAE government's dedication to ensuring that children with disabilities, including those with dyslexia and other learning challenges, have the right to an equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education. The Cabinet Resolution No. 35 of the 2020 resolution denotes a commitment to provide the assistance and accommodations required for the achievement of students with disabilities and acknowledge the exceptional learning requirements of such children (Dubai.gov.ae, 2020).

Significantly, the resolution strongly emphasises dyslexia and other learning difficulties. The UAE government recognised its student population's wide range of learning demands by openly addressing dyslexia and other learning disorders. This acknowledgement is a step toward developing a more diverse and equal educational system that considers each student's unique talents and difficulties (bin Kashah Alshemeili, 2023). However, Buhmaid (2022) argued that numerous ramifications and difficulties are anticipated from UAE Cabinet Resolution No. 35 of 2020. On the one hand, it represents a development in favour of a more inclusive educational setting, encouraging a sense of dignity and belonging for students with impairments. Nevertheless, for implementation to be effective, extensive solutions are needed, such as providing support services, modifying the curriculum, and training teachers. The school system has to be significantly improved and funded.

The resolution also recognises the significance of early detection and intervention by focusing on dyslexia and other learning difficulties. The UAE fosters awareness, research, and best practices to help students with these issues. However, a comprehensive strategy for inclusive education should also cover a variety of impairments beyond dyslexia, considering that each condition has specific traits and requirements (Moe.gov.ae, 2023). To promote inclusive education, the UAE Cabinet Resolution No. 35 of 2020 emphasises the right of children with disabilities, including dyslexia and other learning difficulties, to obtain a high-quality education. Despite this statutory framework, little research has been conducted on primary teachers' experiences and difficulties while applying inclusive pedagogies, particularly in the context of dyslexia and multilingual education.

Examining the unique difficulties and possibilities elementary teachers face in bilingual educational contexts was crucial. The success of dyslexic students' literacy programmes depended on various variables, including teacher preparation, classroom resources, linguistic skills, and cultural influences. In general, our study aimed to unearth crucial environmental cues that would improve the support system for children with dyslexia (Schick et al., 2023). In line to this, our study intends to get an insightful understanding of the methods used by primary teachers to meet the literacy demands of dyslexic pupils in a multilingual environment by probing their experiences. In addition to adding to the body of evidence already available on inclusive education, our research attempts to provide helpful advice for improving teacher professional development programmes and creating educational policies that meet the varied requirements of children in the UAE.

Collectively, our current study focuses on primary teachers' experiences as they work through the difficulties of assisting pupils with dyslexia with their literacy at a bilingual school in the UAE. This study supports continuing efforts to develop an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students by filling in research gaps and illuminating inclusive pedagogy's difficulties and triumphs.

#### *Research Aims and Objectives*

This study aims to explore the primary teachers' inclusive pedagogy experiences in literacy support for students with dyslexia in a bilingual setting.

The primary aims of this study that determined the research directions are:

To identify the key barriers to literacy support for dyslexic students in a bilingual setting.

To determine the effective pedagogical practices of teachers in a bilingual classroom.

To analyse the underlying issues regarding the dual literacy learning of dyslexic bilingual students.

#### *Research Questions*

How do teachers support dyslexic students' literacy in a bilingual setting?

What challenges do teachers have in providing literacy help for students with dyslexia?

## Literature Review

### Introduction

The research's literature review chapter delves deeply into thoroughly examining important topics that collectively help us understand the experiences, difficulties, and potential advantages of supporting dyslexic students' literacy needs in a bilingual IB school. In order to shed light on the complex interactions between dyslexia, bilingual education, and effective pedagogical practises, this chapter synthesises previously published academic research, establishing the groundwork for well-informed and situational-appropriate insights.

The nature of dyslexia and its substantial effects on language learning and acquisition are thoroughly examined in the first part. This paper clarifies educators' challenges while supporting language development in dyslexic pupils by exploring the cognitive and linguistic causes of dyslexia. The following section provides an overview of bilingual education within the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework, building on the knowledge gained in the previous segment. This section examines the difficulties involved in teaching individuals with dyslexia two languages at once while also highlighting the specific benefits of bilingualism.

After that, a methodical approach to addressing the prevalence of dyslexia in bilingual schools is taken, building on empirical research to provide precise knowledge of its incidence in this particular educational setting. This study helps to contextualise the investigation of teachers' knowledge and understanding of dyslexia, which sheds light on how well-prepared instructors are to meet the various demands of pupils. The literature study also explores educators' difficulties when trying to teach dyslexic pupils in a multilingual IB setting. The difficulties are supported by recent research, which connects the cited problems to the larger context of bilingual education and inclusive pedagogy.

The chapter concludes by looking at the possible advantages of properly addressing dyslexia within the bilingual IB context as the literature review progresses. These advantages, supported by empirical data, offer a prospective viewpoint consistent with the research's goal of identifying valuable suggestions to improve the literacy assistance programmes for dyslexic pupils in bilingual schools. This chapter's literature review integrates the many study strands to present a complete picture of the complex dynamics involving dyslexia, bilingual education, and pedagogical techniques.

#### *Understanding Dyslexia and its impact on Language Learning*

The definition and understanding of dyslexia, a complex and dynamic condition, have changed. It has significant consequences for language development. The conceptualisation, classification, etiology, and treatment modalities of dyslexia have all been gradually moulded by the development of scientific studies (Elliott, 2020). This section examines the development of dyslexia's definition over time, considers its neurobiological and environmental causes, and emphasises its significant impact on language development.

Although dyslexia is characterised by difficulty with reading and spelling, early conceptions of the condition were mired in discussions about its distinctiveness and how it related to other disorders (Snowling et al., 2020). The World Federation of Neurology's classification of dyslexia as a reading problem within average intelligence, a term later criticised for its lack of specificity (Critchley, 1970; Rutter, 1982), served as an example of historical ambiguity. Rutter, who favoured a more thorough approach, established diagnostic criteria that included hyperactivity and reading problems, cognitive abnormalities, soft neurological symptoms, clumsiness, and electrophysiological differences. However, the advancement of scientific ideas has been seen in the definition of dyslexia as it has changed through time. The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) proposed a neurobiologically based definition of dyslexia in 2002 that emphasised phonological processing issues (IDA, 2002). This definition anchored dyslexia within the context of specific learning impairments by highlighting the complex relationship between cognitive ability and the efficacy of classroom teaching.

Moreover, dyslexia affects several facets of language development in addition to its influence on reading difficulties. The paradigm change in the identification and separation of various reading obstacles is emphasised by Fletcher (2009). These include dyslexia-related single-word decoding, automatic word and text reading, and comprehension problems brought on by the interplay of decoding and fluency abilities. This categorisation highlights how cognitive and neurobiological variables influence different reading characteristics. The Dyslexia Research Trust emphasises that dyslexia is a condition that affects intellectual people who struggle to learn how to read, spell, or write despite receiving appropriate training (DRT, n.d.). Such people frequently struggle with expressive language issues, finding it challenging to convey their ideas and understand spoken language.

Dyslexic people may experience difficulties with motor skills, sequencing, and time management, impacting their everyday functioning (KHDA, 2023). Physical aptitudes, including coordination, fine and gross motor control, and dexterity, are all in the motor skills category. Studies have demonstrated that dyslexic people frequently display motor skill deficiencies, which can hinder tasks requiring deft motions like writing by hand or tying shoelaces. According to Stevani and Tarigan's (2022) research, there is a connection between dyslexia and motor ability deficiencies due to overlapping brain connections. These motor impairments interfere with daily and intellectual chores, causing dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Behmard et al. (2022) categorised occupational therapy, and specialised exercises are two interventions that concentrate on improving motor skills and have shown promise in easing these difficulties. Another area of issue for dyslexic people is time management. According to research, people with dyslexia frequently struggle with executive functions, including time management, organisation, and planning (Indrarathne, 2019). These difficulties made it difficult to finish tasks on time, fulfil deadlines, or manage everyday tasks. As per Jacob et al. (2022), it is necessary to provide specific education and time management enhancement techniques for dyslexic pupils, such as visual aids, checklists, and technological resources.

Moreover, sequencing, which includes placing information in a particular sequence with care, is essential for activities like reading, spelling, and organising ideas. Dyslexic people frequently suffer from sequencing, making it difficult to decode words, remember the sequence of letters, and follow directions. Given that

sequencing is essential for comprehending the sequence of sounds in spoken language, this difficulty has been related to underlying deficiencies in phonological processing (Sarwat et al., 2023). Interventions emphasising explicit phonics instruction and multisensory learning techniques have successfully addressed sequencing difficulties (Premeti et al., 2023). Thus it is signified by various literature sources that dyslexia affects more than just reading; it also causes problems with motor skills, sequencing, and time management.

In lights of the above-mentioned literature-based facts this growing picture of dyslexia, based on scientific research, emphasises how diversely it affects language development. The transition from old arguments to new definitions reflects the dynamic interaction of environmental, neurological, and cognitive variables. As this section explains, understanding the complexities of dyslexia deepens our understanding of the difficulties people have learning languages and promotes a more inclusive and sympathetic approach in educational and cultural contexts.

#### *Overview of Bilingual Education in IB School*

A paradigm change in how language acquisition is thought of has evolved in the modern global environment marked by increased globalisation and a greater emphasis on inclusion to affirm cultural identities. Even though bilingual education is becoming more popular worldwide, there is still debate about whether it is appropriate for all students (Bialystok, 2018). Beyond the language courses, bilingual education comprises the organised and systematic use of two languages as teaching modalities throughout crucial components of the academic curriculum (Pham and Unaldi, 2022; Cenoz and Gorter, 2022).

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB-PYP) is a curriculum designed to support primary school students (ages 7–12) development as inquirers both within and outside the classroom. As long as specific requirements are satisfied, this programme may be used in any language, guaranteeing that teachers and students fully understand all aspects of the curriculum. Starting at age seven, PYP-adopted schools allow pupils to acquire two languages; their mother tongue and the host nation's language (Dix and Sniedze-Gregory, 2020). According to research by The American Council for International Education (2018), bilingual education programmes are being used in 30% of the world's 868 PYP schools participating, with Latin America having the highest adoption rates. The prevalence of bilingual policies or programmes and the effective implementation of PYP, including improved language competency in extra languages, were shown to be inversely correlated. As a result, bilingual education, focusing on multilingual abilities, is consistent with the core "learning by doing" methodology inherent to IB programmes.

A wide variety of curriculum ideas are included in bilingual PYPs, most of which are based on how much time is spent teaching the two languages. This distribution differs between academic disciplines and grade levels. For instance, a 50/50 model, which equally divides the instructional time between the two languages across all grades, is a popular strategy in the United States. However, some schools first prioritise the target language (L2) before shifting to a 50/50 split (Garcia, 2022). In addition, Green (2020) emphasised that language allocations at



bilingual PYPs worldwide reflect a range of interests, from a focus on the native language to a spotlight on the target language at various phases of primary school. As observed in situations like those in Mexico, Quebec, and the UAE, these allocations frequently comply with legislative requirements. Each bilingual PYP school creates a distinctive model adapted to meet its particular requirements, considering elements including teacher availability, governmental requirements, student demographics, and the broader educational interests of the school community. The variety of implementation strategies highlights how adaptable to are programmes' adaptability. In addition, the importance of multilingual education in enhancing personal identity and self-esteem, particularly among minority populations, is stressed by academics like Kasic et al. (2021). It can cause emotions of personal devaluation when a person's everyday language is marginalised and judged inappropriate for education. In contrast, linguistic acceptance in society and education raises self-esteem. The improvement of self-esteem has a beneficial effect on learning motivation.

Moreover, a global viewpoint and intercultural understanding are fostered via bilingual education. The IB programmes place a high prioritisation to intercultural awareness, providing them with the information and skills they need to navigate an increasingly varied environment successfully. People from different cultural origins are now living together, working together, and developing connections, as noted by the previous IB Director General George Walker (Walker, 2010: 69). The benefits of bilingual education for learners' language and literacy ability in both languages are consistently demonstrated by research. Reljić et al. (2015) conducted a thorough meta-analysis and found that bilingual education improves English reading outcomes to a moderate level. Notably, bilingual education leads to better results in Spanish for Hispanic students in the United States, and English results are equivalent to mainstream English programmes.

These findings are consistent with the effects of bilingual education projects in several nations across various circumstances and languages. This pattern is a well-researched Canadian French immersion programme best shows this pattern uses French as the primary language of teaching to educate Anglophone youngsters in Canada. Over decades of research, it was shown that even when the principal language of instruction was originally French, these students' English ability was on par with or even higher than that of their peers in English-speaking programmes.

Similar to English, results for French language skills ranged from moderate to high, albeit they fell short of those for children who speak French natively (Valentino and Reardon, 2015; Joye, 2019; Xu et al., 2022). In light of the abovementioned literature, it is signified that IB-PYP bilingual education offers a flexible method that encourages cognitive development, language competency, self-esteem, and intercultural awareness. The flexibility of bilingual PYPs in adjusting to various language ratios and ensuring successful implementation is highlighted by research findings. Ultimately, this strategy is consistent with the IB's focus on holistic education, preparing students for success in a multicultural and multilingual environment.

#### *Prevalence of Dyslexia in Bilingual Education Institutions*



The frequency of dyslexia among college students has come under increased international scrutiny, particularly at multilingual educational institutions. While dyslexia research has picked up in English-speaking nations, the UAE has also realised how crucial it is to examine the condition in the context of that nation's linguistic and educational system. With the aid of important research papers, this literature overview explores the frequency of dyslexia in bilingual educational settings.

Up to 10% of school-age children worldwide are affected by developmental dyslexia, a learning impairment that hampers reading competencies (Taha et al., 2022). Estimates from several sources suggest that around 10-15% of the population in the Gulf area has dyslexia, with severe instances making up 4-5% of all cases. Students with dyslexia often struggle with reading, spelling, and writing tasks, exacerbating their reading issues (Benkohila, 2018). On the other hand, despite the lack of precise statistics about students with dyslexia in the UAE, a study carried out across 15 schools in Dubai by the Lexicon Reading Centre provided helpful information. According to this assessment, 65% of students have a high chance of developing dyslexia, with another 17% showing a mild-to-moderate risk (Noor, 2016). These figures highlight the urgent need for specific intervention measures in the educational landscape of the Gulf region, particularly in multilingual environments like the UAE.

Worldwide studies have revealed variable incidence rates of dyslexia among pupils. The prevalence of alphabetic languages has been reported to range from 5% to 17%, with some studies revealing a higher incidence than in non-alphabetic languages, according to Lin et al. (2020) research performed in the bilingual educational context. In addition, dyslexia frequency among Uyghur youngsters in the Xinjiang region, China, was investigated. The Turkic family of phonetic languages, which the Uyghurs speak, is akin to alphabetic languages. In bilingual elementary schools, Uyghur students showed a greater prevalence of dyslexia (7.0%) than Han children (3.9%). These results highlight the complex link between language structure and the incidence of dyslexia. As universities are among the most rigid blends of multilingual educational settings, seminal research conducted in the UAE during the academic year 2007/2008 indicated a prevalence of symptoms associated with dyslexia at 17.6%. Importantly, these issues were present in the students' first and second languages, Arabic and English. The study also showed that dyslexic students preferred career-oriented courses, which may have been affected by their coping mechanisms and professional goals.

There are gender differences in the incidence of dyslexia, with male children typically having a risk ratio of 3.71:1 greater than female children. However, other studies contend that subject selection biases and referral practices may contribute to this gender gap, thus inflating prevalence statistics (Yang et al., 2022). The importance of these research findings is that they demonstrate the necessity of comprehensive dyslexia screening programmes in bilingual educational institutions. Although English and Arabic have very different languages, dyslexia tends to transcend linguistic barriers, highlighting the significance of customised therapies in bilingual educational contexts (Smith, 2022). Previous studies on the incidence of dyslexia in bilingual educational settings have found varying percentages in various language environments. While there are still gender differences, the complicated link between language structure and the incidence of dyslexia makes it more challenging to comprehend this illness.

### *Teachers' Knowledge and Awareness of Dyslexia*

Various researchers explored the knowledge and awareness among teachers about dyslexia teaching. In line with this one of the prominent studies by Yin et al. (2020), Chinese-speaking early literacy teachers in Mainland China were surveyed about their knowledge of dyslexia. Five hundred sixteen instructors from various locations participated in a survey that evaluated their knowledge in three areas: basic information, symptoms and diagnoses, and therapy. The findings showed that compared to kindergarten and primary school teachers from developed areas (KDRs and PDRs), primary school teachers from less developed regions (PLDRs) had lower scores. In PLDRs, misconceptions and ignorance were more common. Chinese instructors have comparable misconceptions about dyslexia, although having less expertise on the condition than their counterparts in Western nations. In order to improve early literacy instruction, the study emphasised the importance of teachers' exposure to dyslexia cases in developing their understanding. It emphasised the necessity for in-depth dyslexia training, especially in less developed regions. Similar to this prominent study in Turkey by Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş (2021) revealed inadequate preparation of teachers for teaching dyslexic students and a lack of dyslexia information. Enhancing teacher knowledge through in-service training, seminars, and conferences is advised to close this gap. This emphasises how important it is to prioritise professional development to fill the knowledge gap. The consequences of the study are placed within the perspective of previous research. Even in the European Context, Chourmouziadou (2016) established that Teachers' understanding of dyslexia varies significantly, and they frequently have knowledge gaps and misunderstandings. The study also reveals a lack of knowledge on successful interventions and techniques for dyslexic pupils. The study offers recommendations for improvements in teacher training and outlines possible directions for future research projects.

### *Challenges and Benefits of Teaching students with Dyslexia in a Bilingual School*

Teaching dyslexic students in a bilingual setting has complex problems beyond linguistic, educational, and support-related areas. These issues are clarified by research studies, which also show educators' difficulties in creating inclusive and productive learning environments. Eikerling's (2022) study focused on multilingual instructors' difficulties with language. It was shown that dyslexic students frequently struggle with speaking two languages, which might make reading and writing challenges worse. It is difficult to conduct consistent treatments in bilingual classrooms because teachers must address language-specific subtleties and differences in literacy development. The requirement to distinguish training for various language proficiencies, a process that necessitates a significant amount of time and effort, further increases this linguistic complexity. In addition to these results, Bortz (2022) research focused on the nuances of pedagogy. It highlighted educators' challenge in balancing bilingual curricular requirements with the best practices for dyslexia intervention. Considering how dyslexic students' requirements connect with language development, teachers must modify evidence-based practises to fit the multilingual setting. This pedagogical juggling act necessitates continual professional development and collaboration and requires a thorough grasp of dyslexia and multilingual education. Both studies also emphasised the dearth of dyslexia specialists in multilingual classrooms. This scarcity makes it

difficult for educators to obtain specialised advice and makes it difficult to carry out focused interventions. Lack of sufficient preparation time appears as a recurring issue, restricting instructors' ability to design varied classes that cater to various learning requirements successfully.

There are several advantages to teaching dyslexic students in a bilingual setting that support their academic achievement, cognitive growth, and general well-being. These benefits are supported by research from the UAE and other regions of the world, which sheds light on the beneficial effects of bilingual education for dyslexic students. Greater language awareness and metalinguistic abilities are promoted through bilingual education. According to research by Vender and Melloni (2021), phonological awareness, spelling, and vocabulary development, all areas where students with dyslexia frequently struggle, were all improved by bilingualism. This is especially important for UAE multilingual schools where students go back and forth between Arabic and English. Moreover, the stimulation of the brain and improved executive skills that bilingualism offers are two critical advantages. For people with dyslexia, cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and metalinguistic awareness are critical characteristics that bilingual students frequently demonstrate (Xu et al., 2023). Bilingual Arabic-English students showed improved phonological awareness and memory abilities, which are crucial for reading acquisition and dyslexia remediation, according to research by Gharaibeh et al. (2021) conducted in the UAE.

Students with dyslexia benefit from bilingual schools' inclusive culture that embraces linguistic variety and fosters a positive self-concept. According to Salazar et al. (2022) research, bilingual education favours children with learning difficulties' motivation and self-esteem. In line with this, in the context of the UAE, the bilingual setting can assist pupils in embracing their linguistic identities and overcoming dyslexia-related challenges. Students with dyslexia can benefit substantially from collaborative learning and peer interactions, which are essential to multilingual education. Students with dyslexia benefitted from peer-assisted learning to enhance their reading abilities. Students with dyslexia can obtain peer assistance and participate in meaningful interactions in bilingual schools because they offer a rich environment for collaborative language acquisition (Mize et al., 2019). Thus, the cited literary sources indicated that teaching dyslexic students in a bilingual setting has several benefits that enhance their cognitive functioning, language awareness, and self-esteem.

## **Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This section describes the approach to investigate primary teachers' inclusive pedagogy experiences in supporting dyslexic students' literacy in a bilingual setting. The study analyses how instructors handle the combined issue of meeting students' second language (L2) requirements and meeting their literacy demands due to dyslexia. The methodology comprises essential components, such as the backdrop of the study environment, the research design, data collecting methods, sampling strategy, ethical issues, data analysis process and the methodological limitations. By examining these elements, the research intends to decipher the complex

dynamics of inclusive education in multilingual classrooms, illuminating successful approaches and possible areas for development.

### *Research Setting Background*

This research study was conducted at The International School, with an International Baccalaureate (IB) that offers bilingual education in the UAE to over 1,790 local and international students. The school provides a biliteracy programme that can be accessed in English and French/German that promotes increased understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity and academic endeavours through two languages as a means of classroom instruction. The International School is the only school in the UAE that offers an Advanced Bilingual Diploma in secondary school (11-19-year-old students) and also offers a boarding school experience with purpose-built boarding houses on the school campus. Being one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan schools in the UAE, there are over a hundred nationalities and forty native languages spoken in the school. As one of the premium IB world school providers globally, its mission is anchored on bilingual pathways that acknowledge the unique potential of every learner to perform an essential part in a multicultural and global world.

This research study is focused on the Primary Years Programme (PYP) or elementary school (7-12 year old students) with two classroom teachers co-teaching using English and French/German, with a maximum of 26 students per class. The setup for student learning is not learning about the language but learning through language use. Hence, subjects are taught in both languages through a co-teaching approach in which English and German/French teachers plan together to create an integrated curriculum. The subject content taught in each language is complimentary. Additionally, students with specific language needs and those needing inclusive assistance receive specialised support across three languages aligned with their unique requirements and challenges. This comprehensive strategy includes a variety of interventions, including tailored learning plans, customised assessments, and specialised language and inclusion support, to provide an inclusive learning environment that meets the requirements of all students.

### *Research Design*

An interpretive approach was used in this study, which is strongly related to social constructionism. It attempted to probe into participants' meaning-making processes related to co-teaching experiences, with particular emphasis on investigating complex social phenomena. The method of choice is consistent with the qualitative paradigm and emphasises the creation of detailed, nuanced descriptions. This attitude made it easier to comprehend the participants' points of view and the complex interactions within bilingual education. By adopting this interpretative perspective, the study attempted to clarify the intricacies of inclusive pedagogy and examine how educators manage the interaction between bilingual instruction and dyslexic literacy support (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021). Qualitative research aims to understand how individuals perceive their life experiences and how they create meaning for them (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Hence, it is an appropriate

design as we aimed to investigate the primary teachers' inclusive pedagogy practices on the literacy support for dyslexic students in a bilingual setting and how they make sense of their experiences.

### *Researcher's Positionality*

Being a qualitative researcher under an interpretive research paradigm, understanding and interpreting the participants' viewpoint on our research topic, and presenting their accounts in context should be grounded on the generated data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Accordingly, it is vital to be mindful of our biases and presumptions regarding the choice of topic to investigate. As an English language support teacher at The International School and inclusion support teacher in the past years, Author 1 was cognizant of the teachers' challenges in their effort to support students through their inclusive pedagogical practices and the language acquisition challenges of students in a dual literacy setting. With this in mind, Author 1 kept track of his assumptions through reflections in a research journal.

### *Sampling Technique*

Sampling and selection of participants are critical strategic elements of qualitative study as they directly affect whether and how generalization is achieved. This includes developing a suitable link between the sample and the larger world and comprehending how this relates to your intellectual puzzle (Mason, 2018). Therefore, participants were specifically chosen based on their experience with bilingually teaching dyslexic students. This intentional selection ensured that the chosen participants had personal knowledge of the complex difficulties and approaches involved in assisting dyslexic students in a multilingual educational setting. After obtaining Gatekeeper's approval to conduct our research, I sent invitations via email to participate, discussing the study's purpose and rationale. Prospective teacher participants who accepted the invitations were scheduled for an interview. Author 1 sent invitations to 15 potential participant teachers in grades 2 to 5, having the students' ages between 7-12 years, but only 9 participants agreed to participate. Seven teacher participants worked in a bilingual co-teaching classroom, 1 grade 3 STEAM class teacher, and 1 grade 5 inclusion teacher participated in the study.

### *Confidentiality and Ethical Concerns*

The application of ethical considerations is grounded in the principle that every individual possesses inherent dignity that necessitates reverence, encompassing the fundamental human entitlement to express their autonomy (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Therefore, it was imperative to prioritize the safeguarding of study participants' confidentiality in order to cultivate confidence and facilitate the acquisition of dependable data. Before the interview process, all participant teachers were assured of their anonymity in this research study through the use of pseudonyms. It was also explained, in an information letter and at the beginning of each interview, that audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews would be stored securely.

Table 1. Participants of the Study

Pseudonyms	Role in School	Years of Teaching Experience
Paula	Grade 2 French teacher	21 years
Emily	Grade 2 French teacher	5 years
Rachelle	Grade 5 German teacher	20 years
David	Grade 4 English teacher	6 years
Ann	Grade 4 French teacher	5 years
Gail	Grade 5 English teacher & assistant head	11 years
Nicole	Grade 5 German teacher	18 years
Prince	Grade 5 English teacher	5 years
Sheryn	Grade 5 Inclusion support teacher	10 years

#### *Method and Data Collection*

Qualitative interviews were employed by researchers to gain insights into the cognitive processes and belief systems that constitute the realm of human experience (Mason, 2018). This methodology smoothly integrates with the interpretative strategy and the researcher's positionality, creating a unified framework that explores participants' viewpoints and meaning-making processes. Knowledge is being tightly braided within situational, contextual, and interactive elements, adopting a qualitative researcher's perspective. Based on the established groundwork and adherence to recognised qualitative research protocols, we employed semi-structured interviews as a pivotal method for collecting pertinent data (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Individual interviews are praised in the literature for their ability to elicit complex, nuanced human experiences, allowing participants to express their points of view and offer rich, in-depth insights (Cohen et al., 2022). This methodological decision fits the interpretative paradigm adopted in this study ideally, enabling a thorough investigation of primary teachers' contacts with inclusive pedagogy in the bilingual classroom. Interviews thoroughly explain how instructors negotiate the complex convergence of dyslexia needs assistance and bilingual education by engaging in discussion. This provides a unique perspective into their solutions, obstacles, and the larger pedagogical environment.

We formulated a set of open-ended questions because they facilitated the generation of rich qualitative data and allowed the participants to explore in detail experiences that were pertinent to them (Wengraf, 2001). These questions aligned with our research questions and required more detailed responses as necessary. Participants were given a detailed letter outlining the purpose and direction of the research before the interviews, as well as guarantees of confidentiality and ethical protections. Non-verbal body language details that were not noticeable



on the digital recording were noted during the interview. The majority of the interviews were carried out in a tranquil environment devoid of any potential disturbances. Nevertheless, certain teachers expressed a preference for being interviewed within the confines of their classrooms. Reflections and descriptive notes were noted down in Author 1's research journal after each interview. Journaling is essential for documenting researcher thoughts, assisting with data analysis, and maintaining transparency, legitimacy and dependability (Gangal and Yilmaz, 2023).

### *Data Analysis*

We adopted Braun and Clarke's (2008) thematic analysis model to perform the data analysis process systematically. First, Author 1 started with the 'key phase' where he transcribed all the audio recordings using the software application 'Descript'. In order to secure the accuracy of the transcription, Author 1 checked the transcripts against the original verbal data and edited the errors found in the transcriptions. This paved the way to becoming familiar with all the aspects of data that are seen as an interpretative act instead of a mechanical act of writing spoken sounds down (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). As Author 1 actively immersed himself in the data that included repeated reading, I took down notes and observed ideas for code that I would return to in later rounds.

Secondly, to find the underlying properties of the data, initial codes were established by organizing the entire dataset into appropriate groupings (Tuckett, 2005). This was done by coding the data manually by writing notes on the transcriptions and indicating probable patterns using coloured markers and highlighters. While carrying out this process, Author 1 gave complete and thorough consideration to each data set to identify intriguing characteristics that might form a foundation of recurring patterns throughout the collected data. Author 1 also took measures to ensure that every essential data extract was assigned codes to group them beneath the appropriate code. This process included transferring data extracts from different transcripts into combined codes as a distinct file. In order to determine what would be interesting potential themes or patterns, I coded as many possible extracts. However, to avoid a typical critique of coding, which needs more context (Bryman, 2001), maintaining an adequate amount of the surrounding data of the coded extracts is relevant to keep the context.

Next, I initiated the exploration of underlying themes by shifting the analytical process to a broader scope. This involved organizing different codes into potential themes by gathering all relevant data extracts that were classified under each respective topic category. I used an application called 'Canva' as a visual representation (thematic map), to help sort the different codes into themes. This graphic organiser assisted Author 1 in considering the link of ideas between codes and themes.

Finally, the themes were carefully examined and improved by analyzing the data extracts associated with each topic. Special attention was given to ensuring that the themes were clear and identifiable, while also verifying that the data extracts within each theme exhibited consistent and meaningful patterns. Through this analytical process, Author 1 generated the following themes; inclusion and practice in a bilingual context, balancing



students' second language (L2) and dyslexia needs, monolingual vs. bilingual Instructions for dyslexic Learners, bilingual pedagogical strategies, teachers' support needs, which have been used to structure the Findings and Discussions chapter presented below.

## Findings and Discussions

### Inclusion and Practice in a Bilingual Context

The thematic analysis brought out the complex interrelationship between inclusion tactics and teaching techniques in a bilingual educational context. According to Ann, grade 4 French teacher;

*"I think it's amazing cuz it's not just the inclusion students that can benefit from what, whatever we plan. Like it's, it's really like the whole class, whole class, if they need it, they know that it's accessible. It's not just, you know, for the equation, kid who has a personal or whatever it's called, like program"*

This statement established that the focus of inclusive practices in bilingual settings, especially for students with specialised needs like dyslexia, is more towards providing equal opportunity to all students with diversified needs rather than just focusing on specific individual student's needs. This strategy adopted by Ann fits with a change in the inclusive education paradigm, which Puigserver Nadal's (2018) study has brought to light. It is clear how the inclusive school model has developed from aiming for unity in educational sphere to guaranteeing equal opportunity for all pupils. Although the move towards equal opportunity in inclusive education is to be applauded, it is essential to recognise the possible drawbacks of this strategy. According to Hayes and Bulat (2017), equal opportunity unintentionally supports the "one size fits all" paradigm, which is insufficient to meet the various requirements of all pupils. A consistent strategy can only meet their needs since each student is different in their abilities, problems, and learning preferences. Educators should pay attention to the need for individualised interventions and assistance, considering each student's unique circumstances in pursuing equal opportunity. Some students may need specialised approaches and resources that stray from the conventional approach, especially those with more complicated demands. Therefore, even if equal opportunity policies try to advance justice, they unintentionally exclude those who must fit the present framework. Additionally, equal opportunity only sometimes implies fair results since it ignores the different starting places and existing inequalities among pupils. Accurate equity demands deliberate efforts to address the particular problems marginalised or underprivileged groups confront (Ho, 2021). The idea of equal opportunity should thus be viewed critically, with the knowledge that it requires adding policies that cater to individual needs, encourage inclusion, and advance true educational fairness.

Incorporating children with special needs into regular classrooms is just one aspect of inclusive education; the entire educational system must be redesigned to meet the individual needs and abilities of every student in order to promote equity and a sense of belonging. Ann's viewpoint emphasises how crucial universal design is in schooling. Everyone's educational experience is improved by providing learning settings that are open, adaptable, and catered to different learning requirements and styles (Jeffery, 2021). This strategy is even more

critical in multilingual classrooms because students have a variety of language and cultural backgrounds. This viewpoint does not, however, discount the need to provide students with dyslexia and other specialised needs with specialised help. Instead, it emphasises that the advantages of inclusive practices permeate the whole classroom, favourably affecting all students' learning experiences (Mendenhall et al., 2021). Ann's comment highlights how the motivation for inclusive practices in multilingual settings has shifted from educational unity to equitable opportunity.

Additionally Nicole, German grade 5 teacher stated that;

*“And in, in, in theory, yeah, these things [The ideas and concepts of inclusion practice involved in the planning] are written down and in theory, these things are shared amongst us teachers, but in practice it is, it is highly, what can I say? It is highly, um, intense. Mm-hmm. To prepare those and have these. Like resources, all always ready, always printed out. Mm-hmm. Because we are talking about, uh, a normal lesson plan, and then we are talking about that adapted lesson plan. And very often, um, I, I don't think that this is [00:11:00] done, uh, with justice to all the inclusive learners”.*

Nicole's observations show educators' complex difficulties when implementing inclusive education initiatives by bridging the gap between theory and practice. The requirement to provide specialised resources and modify lesson plans to meet the needs of various learners places a heavy strain on educators (Page et al., 2021). This is especially important in multilingual educational environments because the students' complicated language backgrounds increase the demands. Nicole's views in the setting of a heavy workload are consistent with earlier research that highlights the heavy effort teachers deal with in inclusive classrooms. Studies by Carver-Thomas et al. (2021) and Bishop (2021) have repeatedly shown the severe effort instructors encounter while catering to the particular needs of a wide range of students. This responsibility includes developing adapted lesson plans, producing or modifying materials, considering students' various learning preferences, and managing classroom dynamics. Additionally, Nicole's comment on the difficulty of having materials close at hand emphasises how time-consuming planning is in inclusive settings. The substantial effort instructors put in outside of class to adapt curriculum materials and develop instructional methods that accommodate different learning preferences is highlighted by research by Furey (2020). Thus, the extra planning and preparation that instructors do add to their total workload.

Furthermore, Nordgren et al. (2021) research, which emphasises that teaching efficiency is directly impacted by the amount of time teachers spend planning and preparation, shows the connection between workload and instructional quality. When a teacher's workload becomes excessive, it may affect their capacity to provide inclusive learning environments that cater to the various needs of pupils. This may unintentionally interfere with the equal use of modified lesson plans for all learners. Nicole's experience could be more exceptional regarding the strain of a heavy workload in the context of inclusive education. According to research by Bishop (2021), thorough administrative assistance and less non-teaching activities are essential to reducing the workload strain on teachers and allowing them to concentrate better on providing inclusive education. In line with this, at the International School, administrators make efforts to balance teachers' well-being through events like staff social

gatherings, morning Yoga and Zumba sessions within the campus. Collectively, Nicole's comments provide insightful information on the intricate interactions between inclusive education, flexible lesson design, and the urgent problem of high workload.

In addition to this, thematic analysis of teacher interviews revealed the importance of professional development in the context of inclusion and practice in bilingual education. According to the statement of Rachele, grade 3 STEAM teacher;

*“About inclusive pedagogy. Okay. Uh, differentiated instructions, strategies for supporting students with diverse learning needs. Um, things like workshops, conferences, webinars, and online [00:18:00] courses can enhance our knowledge as educators, uh, and to, to provide the knowledge and skills for, for, um, learning disabilities”*

The statement made by Rachele emphasises the value of ongoing professional development in fostering inclusive pedagogy and practical methods for helping students with a range of learning difficulties. This is consistent with Ferreira et al. (2020) previous research, which emphasises the crucial role that continual teacher preparation plays in improving educational practices. Numerous studies demonstrated the benefits of professional development on instructors' knowledge, abilities, and teaching strategies. Teachers receive up-to-date material, evidence-based practices, and creative techniques to address learning disorders like dyslexia through workshops, conferences, webinars, and online courses (Dumitru, 2023). Shaturaev (2021) asserts that excellent professional development enhances teaching strategies and student performance. Additionally, the importance of chances for instructors to use new techniques in the classroom and ongoing involvement and cooperation is well established. Educators would develop inclusive settings that meet the different needs of their students, including those with learning impairments, by remaining up to date on the most recent research and approaches (Vadivel et al., 2021; Martinez, 2022; Mystakidis et al., 2021). Finally, research demonstrating the significance of thorough professional development opportunities supports Rachele's insight. Learning outcomes for all students, including those with learning impairments, are enhanced by educators committed to lifelong learning because they can better apply differentiated teaching, respond to the unique needs of their students, and promote inclusive classrooms.

#### *Balancing Students' L2 and Dyslexia Needs*

The complex difficulty of reconciling students' second language (L2) and dyslexia demands within the framework of bilingual education is brought to light by the theme analysis of the interview transcript. Teachers gave insightful explanations of the intricate interactions that these expectations frequently cause. Nicole, a fifth-grade German teacher, emphasised that deciding whether to give language help or inclusion requirements more importance might be challenging. She stated;

*“Okay, so this is a quiet of a conflict that we experience at school. We have a language support team. Mm-hmm. As well as an inclusion team. Mm-hmm. Very often the children are first identified with a language support need, and later on we [00:20:00] realize, no, actually it's not a language support*

*need, it's an inclusion need. Mm-hmm. Um, very often these two go hand in hand. You see a lot of children that are in language support. They also have inclusion needs. Yes. And a lot of children vice versa as well. So it's sometimes it's difficult to find the best approach. Is it best to support their language or is it the best, is it best to support their barriers to learning? So I feel that it is, it is, it's different from child to child and in some cases I feel it's, it's important to understand that language support is needed until a child can follow the curriculum in that language of instruction”*

Nicole's comment highlights the complex balancing act that instructors must perform to satisfy the demands of second language (L2) learning needs and inclusion learning support needs. The choice is between putting the demands of dyslexic pupils' inclusion over language support. Nicole highlighted the overlap between language support and inclusion requirements, emphasising how closely these issues are related. Children frequently needing language support also have inclusion-related needs, and vice versa; therefore, a complete strategy that covers both elements is required (Nelis et al., 2023). Nicole's observations highlight how vital it is for parents, educators, and inclusion experts to work together to set and track specific goals. Comprehensive approaches to addressing these interrelated challenges is demonstrated by establishing an intensive support programme that includes interventions such as morning reading sessions and pull-out and push-in language and inclusion services. Nicole's description of the length of language acquisition support, which usually lasts between six months and two years, is noteworthy because it provides a baseline for comprehending the complexity of children's learning needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Prolonged periods may indicate underlying issues, calling for a more targeted and comprehensive assessments that may lead to the identification of learning disabilities or inclusion needs. Successful methods must manage the complex confluence of inclusion and language hurdles for the best possible student development. This requires a holistic and collaborative viewpoint. Nicole's viewpoint is consistent with the findings by Heineken et al. (2012), which show how bilingual educators work with stakeholders to establish and monitor student goals. This is consistent with The International School's all-encompassing approach, demonstrated by the inclusive support programme. The alignment of objectives with language competency frameworks like the CEFR (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) shows a commitment to bridging students' language skills and academic needs throughout language learning. Nicole's comment highlights the challenging nature of balancing inclusion and language learning requirements, emphasising the need for a team-based and comprehensive approach (Reraki, 2022). Moreover, the fact that many students with language assistance requirements also have inclusion issues highlights the interconnectedness of learning difficulties. This overlap calls for a full grasp of each student's profile, highlighting the value of thorough assessments and personalised intervention programmes (Gyll and Hayes, 2021). Hence, teachers encounter various challenges due to the complex relationships between language support, inclusion requirements, and bilingual education. It is challenging to strike the ideal balance between language learning and inclusion needs; this calls for extensive individual assessments and adaptive interventions. The International School strives to be a data driven school with the use of various internal and external assessments which include The New Group Reading Test (NGRT), a standardised reading assessment in comparison to the national average, The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4), an assessment of developed abilities in areas known to make difference to learning and achievement, WIDA Model (Measure of Developing

English Language) used as an English Language proficiency assessment. These assessments produce data that are used to drive instructions in the classroom.

In addition to the discussion of this theme, English teacher Prince, who teaches grade 5, revealed his multilingual classroom management techniques. He stressed the significance of developing interesting classes and multilingual materials by saying:

*"It's just on the edge of they can learn things, but how can they apply it and how they can push it and, It's a fun lesson. Children learn through fun mostly. So it'll be quite an engaging lesson. In a bilingual [00:03:00] setting, um, I make sure all the, uh, resources are bilingual and French and English. I try and make the learning as fun as I can by getting the children involved and just entertaining them, um, giving them a fun like scenario to work with and how they could apply it to whatever we're learning".*

Identical to this Rachele, grade 3 STEAM teacher emphasised;

*"Something like a balanced language instruction, like creating a balanced approach to language instruction where both languages, English and another language are valued and keep and given equal, uh, importance, uh, language rich [00:09:00] environment. Foster language rich environment by displaying, uh, print materials and signs in both languages. Uh, this helps students to see and interact with written language, uh, in various contexts promoting their dual, uh, literacy development, uh, code switching and translanguaging. Uh, as of to recognize and support the natural tendency of bilingual students to code switch or trans language using elements of both languages and communication"*

This strategy tries to assist both language learning and dyslexia-related difficulties. This method of generating multilingual materials and a welcoming learning environment with the element of 'fun' which could mean learner engagement in the classroom. This demonstrates an intentional attempt to balance the demands of students' second language (L2) acquisition with dyslexia-related difficulties. Prince and Rachele both attempt to accommodate a range of language skills by guaranteeing that all resources are available in French and English, making educational materials accessible to all pupils. This strategy aligns with studies that highlight how crucial it is to modify materials to fit each student's individual learning profile, especially those with dyslexia (Nez Soto, 2021). However this particular approach appears to be successful on the surface, but there are essential factors to consider. According to Shikina et al. (2023), due to the complexity of dyslexia, bilingual resources may help with language learning, but their efficacy in addressing dyslexia-specific challenges varies. This emphasises the need for specialised support that addresses the issues associated with dyslexia.

Additionally, a more thorough strategy involves including targeted interventions and explicit phonics instruction in bilingual classrooms. Prior studies have highlighted the advantages of multisensory and explicit education modalities for dyslexic pupils. As a result, while bilingual resources aid in language learning, they should be combined with methods specifically aimed towards dyslexia (Boe, 2023). Collectively, Prince's strategy emphasises the need for inclusive education but raises concerns about the ability of multilingual resources to meet complicated dyslexia demands adequately. Personalised dyslexia support and language learning must

coexist harmoniously, necessitating careful planning for available materials, preparation time, and teaching strategies.

Moreover, Sheryn, a grade 5 inclusion teacher, discussed the need for tailored help. She clarified;

*"I found that really, um, in-class support is obviously huge and massive and wonderful. Um, but having that targeted time to really focus in on specific skills in a small group setting is absolutely invaluable"*

This statement critically indicated the push-in and pull-out support from the inclusion and language support teacher. A critical analysis clarifies the push-in and pull-out support model's consequences for student learning outcomes. In inclusive education, the push-in and pull-out assistance models are common strategies, each having certain benefits and drawbacks. A cohesive learning environment is promoted via push-in support, which includes special education teachers working together in the general classroom. This approach encourages social contact and reduces interruptions so students can learn the primary curriculum and get individualised help. However, due to high-class numbers and various demands, it could need more focus and be easier to implement successfully. The pull-out strategy, in contrast, briefly removes children from the classroom for specialised education. While this allows for individualised attention and targeted skill-building, it disturbs classroom engagement and may cause missed material (Meijer and Wessels, 2019). While pull-out support can offer customised treatments in line with Individualised Education Plans (IEPs), it also runs the danger of isolating pupils and can necessitate more teacher collaboration (Huang et al., 2020). This remark emphasises the hazard of pull-out assistance, which is that it might separate students from their classmates and can cause emotions of stigmatisation or segregation. According to Manitsa et al. (2023) research, students who are repeatedly taken out of the regular classroom may feel alienated from their peers, which can be detrimental to their self-esteem and feelings of belonging. Additionally, because peer relationships and the development of social skills are essential elements of holistic education, this seclusion might impede them. Practical teacher cooperation is essential to addressing this issue since it may help close the gap between pull-out support and the regular classroom, guaranteeing that children receive individualised attention while retaining a sense of inclusion and social integration (NCLD, 2021). The scheduling of committed time, however, is essential. When students are pulled out of class, Dawson (2014) emphasises a gap between classroom teachers and support personnel. This difference may result in the coverage of some topics needing to be improved. To be clear, level 3 children in Author 1's setting get pull-out help, as directed by IEPs and ILPs with SMART objectives for academic and language development. Pull-out sessions concentrate on developing crucial skills that align with predetermined objectives, even if they may cause missed classroom activities. As a result, even if there may be a brief absence from class, pull-out help guarantees that these pupils will gain specific skills.

Furthermore, it becomes clear that there should be designated periods during the school day for in-depth targeted interventions students with dyslexia. According to research by Hurwitz and Vanacore (2022), pull-out sessions that concentrate on developing a single ability can successfully help dyslexic pupils. As a result of these sessions, students' academic and language development has improved because they are given the individualised attention they need to meet their specific learning demands. A dedication to maximising the



efficacy of disability assistance and promoting the holistic development of dyslexic pupils is also shown in the acknowledgment of the necessity for set times during the school day for these interventions. This makes it easier to match the objectives of an individual education plan (IEP) with its actual execution and documentation. In line with this, Barton (2016) already established that together with the classroom teacher, an inclusion or special education teacher joins the class to support students and promote co-teaching. By enhancing assistance for students with different needs, this cooperation encourages a more inclusive and productive learning environment. Barton further emphasises the value of co-teaching in smaller classroom settings between general and special education instructors. According to Barton's argument, co-teaching in smaller classrooms by general and special education teachers has distinct advantages that improve the learning environment. With this strategy, students with various learning difficulties may receive the individualised attention they require, ensuring their needs are adequately satisfied. It promotes a collaborative environment where the two instructors may combine their knowledge, leading to more profound and more thorough training. Co-teaching has several benefits, including lowering stigma, preserving the privacy of support services within the classroom, and fostering an inclusive environment where all students feel appreciated and encouraged in their academic endeavours.

The critical review highlights the complexity of the push-in pull-out concept and its effects on student learning in its conclusion. When maximising the assistance given to students with impairments, the significance of time allocation, professional development, and collaborative teaching techniques becomes clear. These direct quotes from the respondents support the theme analysis's conclusions. The educators' observations highlight the necessity of individualised strategies that consider each student's language and dyslexia requirements. Providing complete support within a multilingual context presents difficulties, underscoring the need for coordinated efforts and thoughtful interventions. This synthesis supports Cline's (2000) research, which emphasises the significance of finding a delicate balance in order to effectively serve the unique needs of dyslexic and second language learners.

#### *Monolingual vs. Bilingual Instructions for Dyslexic Learners*

Educators' views on the ideal teaching language for dyslexic students in multilingual contexts indicate a complex problem. According to Nicole, German grade 5 teacher;

*“These children would probably benefit from a, uh, uh, from a language of instruction in one language. Mm-hmm. So I would suggest that children with a severe, uh, dyslexic, [00:27:00] um, profile, would learn in one language only”*

Nicole's suggestions that students with severe dyslexia characteristics could benefit from education in a single language is consistent with earlier studies. Studies, including those by Drigas et al. (2022), showed that children with dyslexia would be better able to deal with linguistic issues if they concentrated on one language. This strategy reduces cognitive strain and offers a focused setting for focused therapy.

Similar to this Ann, grade 4 French teacher stated that;



*“Like, I can try everything honestly. Like I can really try everything. Like, it doesn't, it doesn't, it doesn't work. Mm-hmm. So for me, it's, uh, They, they need, it's awful. But like, I would say they need to go to the monolingual. Because there's too many, there's too many [00:20:00] challenges for them and like they should tackle one challenge at a time”*

Ann's perspective supports the notion that problems should be solved one at a time. Her recommendation that dyslexic students prefer monolingual education reflects reservations and challenging prospects over the numerous language difficulties they encounter in multilingual environments. These opinions are supported by Fletcher and Miciak's (2019) study findings, which accentuate the necessity for specialised strategies for learning focusing on particular language acquisition challenges. A legitimate worry is raised by Ann's viewpoint, which supports monolingual instruction for dyslexic pupils. Focusing on a single language may be a practical answer to learning challenges, but it also presents inclusion challenges. According to inclusive education, all students should have equal access to and involvement in educational environments. Inadvertently excluding dyslexic students from the advantages of bilingualism and the chances it provides in a varied, multilingual environment is the focus on monolingualism (Kalfountzou et al., 2023). The study results by Fletcher and Miciak support the necessity of specialised approaches to language learning problems. However, the key here is to balance addressing dyslexia-related issues and ensuring that dyslexic students may still profit from bilingual education's advantages. It is critical to think about customised strategies that meet the unique requirements of dyslexic students while preserving an inclusive learning environment that promotes linguistic variety and equal opportunity for everyone.

Moreover, Emily, grade 2 French teacher further added that;

*“If you think about it, I mean, it should be a part of it, but you are using languages to, you know, jump from one language to another, to be skill together so they become fully bilingual. So I believe maybe. But that's only my personal opinion. It could be one of the cons of the bilingualism, you know? Mm-hmm. I don't think, like, this is what I say when I see a student, uh, who really struggle in learning new [00:34:00] languages, um, I, I don't recommend the parents to put them into bilingualism. I recommend them to focus on one language.*

Emily offers a clear viewpoint, noting the potential disadvantages of bilingualism while recognising its difficulties. According to research by Gunnerud et al. (2020), bilingualism may benefit pupils cognitively, but as Emily points out, individual challenges must be considered. Her approach emphasises that dyslexic students may find it particularly difficult to master the complicated skill of switching languages fluidly being bilingual. She emphasises that owing to their unique requirements and challenges, dyslexic students may not find this language shift to be acceptable for them all. The perspectives of these educators provide a nuanced view on the language of teaching for dyslexic children in multilingual settings, and it is recommended that individuals with severe dyslexia traits could benefit from studying in a single language to assist them in overcoming obstacles. Emily's point of view critically raises the consequences of bilingualism for dyslexic pupils in the context of inclusion. It is essential to see inclusion through the lenses of equitable access, opportunity, and involvement,

even though bilingualism can positively affect cognitive function. Inclusive education aims to meet all students' needs, and Emily's perspective emphasises the possible difficulties dyslexic individuals may have in learning language transitions. It is crucial to watch out that judgements made concerning language instruction do not unintentionally prevent pupils from receiving a well-rounded education (Luo and Chan, 2023). Unaffected by their level of language competence, dyslexic pupils should be able to succeed intellectually and socially with the help of specially designed support systems, according to an inclusive approach. It is essential to find a balance between treating specific difficulties and creating a welcoming environment that promotes the development of all children (Pulimeno et al., 2020). In order to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students, including those with dyslexia, in multilingual settings, it is necessary to carefully assess the broader aims of inclusion while acknowledging that some individuals may benefit from individualised language methods.

In contrast, the study of Vender (2018) provided an insightful argument. Children with dyslexia, both monolingual and multilingual, performed worse than controls on activities requiring clitic formation. In the simple present, bilingual children responded similarly to their monolingual classmates, suggesting linguistic immaturity rather than a detrimental effect of multilingualism. However, both bilingual groups had more difficulties with the present perfect, indicating that bilingualism may worsen problems in challenging settings. Notably, no detrimental bilingualism impact was shown in the clitic generation when vocabulary was controlled. This emphasises the significance of lexical competence for native-like performance.

These results provide an essential contribution to the current discussion about teaching strategies that meet the needs of dyslexic pupils in the multilingual educational environment of the UAE. They draw attention to the intricacy of the problem and the intersection of task difficulty, lexical proficiency, and the language of teaching. Understanding that variables other than bilingualism play essential roles in their academic path require a comprehensive approach when addressing the demands of dyslexic learners. The study contributes to our understanding of how dyslexia interacts with bilingualism and helps us build successful educational practices specifically suited to the unique needs of dyslexic children in the bilingual environment of the UAE.

### *Bilingual Pedagogical Strategies*

With a particular emphasis on aiding students with dyslexia, the interview extracts offered insightful information on the pedagogical strategies used in bilingual classrooms. Differentiation, Structured Phonics Programmes, Student Agency and Autonomy, Technology, Multisensory Resources, Co-teaching Models, and Translanguaging were some of the important topics covered by the theme results. These tactics helped create a comprehensive and inclusive bilingual education programme for dyslexic students.

As per Rachelle, grade 3 STEAM teacher;

*“Uh, differentiation is important, is an important aspect of teaching students. Uh, it involves also tailoring instruction to meet individual needs, learning styles, abilities of the students. Some strategies*

*for differentiation that I use is the flexible grouping group students, uh, based on their needs, allowing for targeted instruction and support, uh, modified assignments and, uh, assessments”*

Differentiation, which emphasises individualised instruction to meet each student's requirements and learning preferences, has emerged as a vital strategy for successfully educating bilingual students with dyslexia as (Platt, 2018) established that every student possesses unique characteristics, including their specific learning preferences, demands, and interests. Hence, it is readily apparent that the implementation of differentiation is vital in every educational setting. According to Westwood (2001), effective unique education integration depends on varied instruction considering each student's learning preferences. This idea emphasises the significance of flexible grouping, modified tasks, and scaffolded instruction to accommodate various learning profiles. By implementing differentiation tactics, educators want to give dyslexic children a tailored support system that will enable them to interact with the educational material more effectively and overcome the challenges of their condition (Dreeszen, 2009 ; Reyes, 2021 ; Rochester 2021). Although the differentiation strategy has the potential to help dyslexic students, it is essential to recognize its limits. The strategy's efficacy strongly depends on the depth of instructors' knowledge of dyslexia and teaching techniques and materials. However, according to studies, instructors frequently fail to acquire thorough training to successfully handle specific learning challenges, including dyslexia, which can hamper the implementation of differentiation (Thwalaa et al., 2020). Furthermore, it can be challenging to personalise teaching for every dyslexic kid in a bilingual classroom with a range of competency levels, which could put an undue burden on teachers (Quintanilla, 2023; Biza & Giannakou,2022). Additionally, Reading Rockets (2023) established that if not carried out carefully, this strategy might unintentionally isolate dyslexic students and impede their social integration. Hence, while differentiation could have certain advantages, it may also be less successful owing to poor training, a lack of resources, and potential societal repercussions. However, this method acknowledges the need to attend to individual needs to obtain the best learning results and is consistent with the more extensive educational debate on inclusive pedagogies. It is evident that the use of differentiation approaches emphasises a commitment to inclusion and instructional effectiveness, especially for bilingual pupils with dyslexia (Anderson 2023 ; Coupland 2019). This viewpoint subsequently leads to thoroughly comprehending how specialised teaching strategies may effectively handle learning difficulties and foster academic achievement.

In line to differentiation, the concept of structured phonics is also largely discussed. Emily, grade 2 French teacher established that;

*“We really emphasis on the phonics, not the, the, the whole language. You know, when you learn, uh, reading, they have different, um, technique. So, And then there's also, uh, learning new vocabulary. So if you do the phonic, you really teach the sound and you really teach them to, to shrink the words”*

Structured phonics is a method of teaching reading (Dilgard et al., 2022). Programmes are crucial tools for improving language acquisition and literacy abilities in dyslexic pupils, and they should be in line with methodologies like Orton Gillingham that are supported by research (Ntousas, 2019; Sayeski et al., 2019). In order to successfully meet the requirements of struggling students, Paige (2017) highlighted the need for

foundational skills programmes that include regulated phonics with exciting texts. Systematic, multimodal training in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension is offered via research-based teaching techniques like Orton Gillingham. Although structured phonics methods like Orton Gillingham show promise for enhancing dyslexic pupils' reading abilities, it is essential to understand their limits in certain situations. The ability of educators to properly execute such programmes is crucial to their success. While structured phonics can be advantageous, research indicates that the level of training needed for teachers to use these techniques effectively may only sometimes be practical, especially in settings with limited resources (Boyd, 2022). Furthermore, the emphasis on a multisensory approach does not necessarily correspond with the realities of classroom settings, where various learning demands and time restraints make it challenging to implement such approaches completely (Yu, 2023). Furthermore, structured phonics' usefulness is constrained if not combined with broader reading comprehension techniques, which may impede the general growth of dyslexic pupils as confident readers (Kuschel, 2022). In conclusion, although structured phonics methods provide helpful strategies, their application might be complex because of the necessary training, real-world restrictions, and possible inadequacies in addressing more considerable reading abilities. Despite this limitation it is appeared as a fact that structured phonics programmes are recognised as a pillar for developing reading skills in dyslexic students confirms the need for precise, methodical instruction. Using evidence-based strategies like Orton Gillingham contributes to discussing practices in education. These programmes help pupils develop core abilities and increase their comfort level while using other languages. This demonstrated the need for specialised pedagogies that pair regimented phonics with exciting content to help dyslexic students improve their reading (Mitofsky Neuss, 2021; Nugra, 2021). By implementing such tactics, educators support the continuous effort to provide a successful, inclusive education and see the potential for these approaches to give students more control over their academic progress.

Additionally within the practice of structured phonics the multisensory phonics programs gained attention. According to Rachelle, grade 3 STEAM teacher:

*“I find, uh, some, a variety of resources effective for that, but, uh, we can just like name some of them, like structured literacy programs where research based approach is specifically designed for students with, uh, dyslexia. Uh, these program provide systematic, explicit, and multi-sensory instruction that targets, uh, their chronological awareness, phonics and fluency, vocabulary and comprehension”*

This viewpoint is inclined towards multisensory phonics programs. Integrating such programmes into multilingual settings is consistent with research that highlights the value of personalised treatments for dyslexic students in a range of language situations (Langille and Green, 2021). Due to the interaction of many languages, bilingual students with dyslexia experience additional challenges. Multisensory phonics programmes can offer a well-organised framework to address phonological elements unique to a language and improve reading abilities (Petrescu and Helms Park, 2021). Whilst The International School aims for consistency of structured phonics program for English across the Early Years (EY) and PYP, it uses specifically ‘The Little Wandle Phonics Program’ for English. Additionally, while organised literacy programmes excel at teaching decoding and phonemic awareness, more enormous linguistic and cognitive difficulties associated with dyslexia, such as deficiencies in vocabulary and understanding, require specialised attention (Godó, 2023). Strategies that address

both language development and issues related to dyslexia should be incorporated when integrating these programmes into a comprehensive bilingual educational framework. The potential of multimodal phonics programmes as valuable instruments in bilingual educational procedures for dyslexic students is therefore highlighted by Rachelle's support. However, implementing such programmes necessitates addressing training requirements, language issues, and complete support to ensure successful intervention.

The multisensory phonics program is one of the key virtues of technology. In the modern era of teaching technology appeared as one of the most inevitable features of the instructional and learning dynamics. In alignment to this Prince, grade 4 English teacher stated that; *“And luckily we've got a lot of apps that can help translate and look at the word types to them”*. In addition to this further elaboration is provided by Rachelle, grade 3 STEAM teacher;

*“And of course, the assistive technology and tools like using intro, introducing assistive technology tools, resources that support both language learning and dyslexia, uh, challenges. This may include bilingual dictionaries or Lear language learning apps for students with dyslexia. Text-to-speech software, speech-to-text tools or dyslexia friendly font can, uh, can be very beneficial”*

According to the teacher's statements technology offers assistive features and multimodal resources to improve learning experiences, making it a valuable tool for aiding dyslexic students in multilingual classrooms. Students that struggle with language acquisition benefit from a multimodal, direct teaching method, according to Sparks and Miller (2000), similar to how text-to-speech software, speech-to-text programmes, and dyslexia-friendly typefaces offer helpful solutions for reading and writing difficulties. Sparks and Miller's language learning method supports the notion that understanding different learning preferences enhances comprehension. Including technology and multisensory materials in bilingual classrooms is consistent with the emphasis on inclusivity and varied instruction in the larger educational discourse (Sommadosi, 2022; Boardman, 2020; Newman, 2019). Because of its potential to increase inclusion and participation, especially in bilingual settings, using assistive technology to facilitate language learning in schools has drawn attention. According to research, monolingual and bilingual students may benefit from technology and multimodal materials, which can help with language learning and comprehension (Guan, 2023). It is important to remember that the usefulness of assistive technology varies depending on the technology used, the requirements of each student, and the environment in which it is used. There is no one-size-fits-all answer regarding pedagogical tactics and the alignment with students' learning preferences, even while technology can offer personalised learning experiences (Alamri et al., 2020). Technology as a leveler in education reflects how pedagogy changes and digital technologies are used to close learning gaps, that are not limited to students with learning difficulties like Dyslexia.

Gail, grade 5 English teacher added that;

*“So I would say giving, um, skills and student autonomy in terms of allowing access to materials. So really giving them ownership of what is available to them, which builds confidence, which builds all kinds of other skills as well as self-management skills”*

Similar to this Nicole, German grade 5 Teacher added that;

*“So sometimes it's good to just give them a timeframe and say, you know, it doesn't actually matter how you spell it. Mm-hmm. Write it as you could. So the stories flow. It's not impacted by too much thinking”*

These statements critically indicated that in order to foster self-efficacy, empowerment, and intercultural competence in dyslexic students, student agency and autonomy are essential components of effective bilingual instruction. According to Tsunematsu (2022), international students encounter difficulties with intercultural competency, forcing them to prioritise their agency and autonomy when navigating their cultural identities. Similarly to this, educators place a strong emphasis on encouraging student ownership of their learning, decisions, and triumphs (Huang and Benson, 2013). The importance of student agency and autonomy in bilingual pedagogy and intercultural competency is acknowledged, underscoring the learner-centered emphasis in the larger educational discourse (Felix, 2020). The findings of Tsunematsu support the notion that autonomy is essential when pupils face cross-cultural difficulties. The educational tenet that encourages resilience and adaptation through self-directed learning informs educators' techniques. Stressing student autonomy and agency bridges the gap between the development of intercultural competence and the objective of successful bilingual teaching for dyslexic pupils. Teachers help students develop a sense of ownership and independence that enhances their ability to interact productively in various circumstances (Quintanilla, 2023 ; Rerri, 2022; Chua, 2020). This comprehensive approach recognises the connection between instructional practises and the growth of intercultural competence, eventually preparing students for effective involvement in both the academic and societal arenas.

The statement of Emily grade 2 French teacher established;

*“Okay. So, uh, Laura and I, we've been working together in the co-teaching model for the past three years, and this year after, after the, after three years together this year was very successful. I believe for us into the, the way we installed this bilingualism, uh, it was. Way [00:23:00] much more stronger than the previous year. Uh, cuz we finally found out, you know, it takes time”*

A viable strategy for developing inclusive learning settings that meet the requirements of dyslexic students is co-teaching models. At the International School, EY and PYP have 2 teachers (English teacher and French/German teacher) in each classroom catering dual literacy and bilingual education. To provide individualised instruction and assistance inside the mainstream classroom, these methods include collaboration between general education instructors and special education teachers or other professionals (Tam and Leung, 2019). The claim made by Dillon and Gallagher (2019) that co-teaching solid relationships and administrative assistance are essential aligns with how the educational landscape is changing. According to Ehsan et al. (2019), Co-teaching stands out in several teaching methods, including conventional, differentiated instruction, and inclusive education, because it can close gaps and provide varied yet coherent learning environments.



Due to the standardized methods used in typical classrooms, dyslexic students suffer, on the account of one size fits for all approach. Differentiated instruction seeks to remedy this, but co-teaching improves individualised support through in-class collaboration. Co-teaching enhances inclusive education, which focuses on including students with disabilities, as it breaks down barriers and fosters a collaborative learning environment (Sundqvist et al., 2021; Hackett et al., 2021). Co-teaching uses a variety of methods, such as translanguaging and classroom management. Classroom management is improved by combining the talents of the two teachers, and translanguaging benefits bilingual dyslexic students. This strategy is consistent with current educational discourse, which strongly emphasizes the value of accommodating a variety of learning profiles (Murphy, 2022). However, as Dillon and Gallagher note, co-teaching must be implemented with clear administrative direction. Administrative assistance ensures that instructors have the tools and training they need to work together smoothly, promoting a more peaceful learning environment.

The increased individualized attention, a decrease in the stigma associated with dyslexia among pupils, and the sharing of teaching methods are all advantages of co-teaching. Nevertheless, it is also vital to acknowledge difficulties. To minimize misunderstanding, co-teachers must have similar teaching principles and communicate well (Pappamihel, 2012). However, Abnett (2013) argued that balancing instructor dynamics, material delivery, and assessment alignment can be challenging. Additionally, educators need enough time and opportunity for professional development to prepare successfully, reflect on, and improve their co-teaching techniques. Collectively contextualized within conventional, differentiated instruction and inclusive educational models, co-teaching approaches correlate well with inclusive pedagogical practices for dyslexic students.

In alignment with this Rachelle, grade 3 STEAM teacher enlightens the importance of translanguaging;

*“Encourage students to use both languages strategically and, uh, understand the context where each language is appropriate. Uh, collaborative learning, like promote collaborative, uh, learning activities where students can interact with peers, uh, who speak the same language across. And, uh, those who speak different languages”*

Translanguaging is a sophisticated method that improves bilingual education by smoothly combining languages, giving dyslexic pupils better language competency and cognitive flexibility. Wawire and Barnes-Story (2023) emphasise that translanguaging instruction promotes deeper topic comprehension and links between home and school languages by supporting the development of biliteracy and language competence. Similar to how educators in the current study stress the value of combining languages for dyslexic pupils. The idea that bilingual education entails language translation is refuted by translanguaging (Pontier, 2022; Dikilitaş et al., 2023). Its inclusion is consistent with recent studies emphasising that multilingualism promotes cognitive development and academic achievement. The results of Wawire and Barnes-Story's study highlight the advantages of translanguaging for language proficiency. This is complemented by the observations of educators, who show how effective language integration may be used to improve cognitive flexibility, linguistic competency, and learning continuity, particularly for dyslexic pupils. By fostering the linguistic skills and cognitive agility of dyslexic pupils, translanguaging techniques in bilingual classrooms meet their demands



(Dornet and Schiller, 2023). These results are consistent with more general debates on the advantages of bilingual education and inclusive practices. Educators enable a comprehensive learning experience that fosters both language growth and better comprehension by relying on the concepts of translanguaging (Ndhlovana and Charamba, 2023; García and Otheguy, 2020). This is in line with the changing educational environment, which emphasises the value of linguistically varied approaches that consider students' different learning preferences while questioning preconceived notions about bilingual education.

Thus, the educational techniques used in bilingual classes for dyslexic students show a thorough and inclusive approach. Differentiation, Structured Phonics Programmes, Student Agency and Autonomy, Technology, Multisensory Resources, Co-teaching, and Translanguaging all help to create an atmosphere that is both supportive and empowering for learning.

## Conclusion

Our research examined the challenges that bilingual primary teachers in the UAE faced while trying to help dyslexic students with their literacy. The strategies used by bilingual primary teachers in the UAE to help dyslexic pupils' literacy and language learning abilities were examined in this research study. Through thorough thematic analysis, the study filled in significant gaps in the literature by highlighting the accomplishments and challenges of inclusive education. The results of the study underscored the necessity of implementing educational reforms that effectively address the unique requirements of individuals, while also promoting inclusive education. These findings shed light on a shift in inclusive educational practices, moving away from a focus on uniformity towards prioritizing equal opportunities for all. To promote equal education in multilingual environments, this strategy is crucial.

The study also highlighted the challenging balance bilingual educators must achieve between addressing second language (L2) learning and dyslexia-specific requirements. Due to the conflicting needs of these two factors, problems must have unique solutions. Although bilingual resources can help with language acquisition, they cannot appropriately address issues associated with dyslexia. The study emphasised the value of setting aside time for concentrated assistance, focusing on small-group interventions, adaptive planning, and ongoing professional development to handle these multiple difficulties successfully. The viewpoints of educators give insight into the complexities of language acquisition for dyslexic pupils in multilingual environments. Nicole, Ann, and Emily's points of view illustrated various approaches to treating dyslexia, such as education in a single language and monolingual learning. These methods highlight the necessity of individualised techniques that consider students' cognitive needs, language abilities, and personal traits. The study provided sophisticated methods for assisting dyslexic students in the challenging multilingual setting of the UAE.

The study's overall findings highlighted the crucial support needs for bilingual education for dyslexic pupils. It underscored the significance of continual professional growth, inclusive pedagogies, and efficient tactics. The

study also highlighted the difficulties brought on by workload, highlighting the need for extra preparation time and team collaboration, particularly in multilingual environments. To successfully address these complicated demands, suggestions were made for including dyslexia specialists, involving families, and creating a specialised bilingual curriculum. The study's conclusions support the argument for adaptable strategies to meet the various learning demands of all children, which aligns with the broader conversation on inclusive education.

## Recommendations

Future studies should further examine the numerous important recommendations provided to enhance the inclusive pedagogy experiences for dyslexic students in a bilingual school setting based on the research's findings and taking into account its limitations:

*Professional Development:* To improve bilingual teachers' comprehension of dyslexia, efficient teaching methods, and inclusive practices, schools should fund extensive professional development programmes. Differentiation, structured phonics, co-teaching models, and multisensory teaching strategies should be the main topics of workshops and training sessions.

*Individualised Support Plans:* To create individualised support plans for dyslexic children, schools should create a collaborative framework incorporating dyslexia experts, teachers, parents, and students. These plans must include precise objectives, modifications, and interventions catered to every student's individual learning requirements and preferences.

*Workload balance:* Evaluating the distribution of workload among teachers in bilingual schools is crucial in order to effectively meet the demand for bilingual education and ensure the production of high-quality instruction and teaching materials.

*Comprehensive Assessments:* Bilingual educational institutions should prioritize the importance of comprehensive assessments in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of each dyslexic student's profile.

*Multilingual Resources for Dyslexia:* Teachers must have access to materials that address difficulties unique to dyslexia in multilingual contexts. Teachers can be helped in developing an inclusive learning environment that satisfies various language and learning demands by developing specialised materials and resources that integrate language learning and dyslexia support.

*Longitudinal Studies:* Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of particular inclusive pedagogies and support methods on the academic development, self-esteem, and general well-being of dyslexic students in bilingual settings.

## Acknowledgements

Author 1's acknowledgements

First and foremost, my heartfelt gratitude to Almighty God for providing me with strength, resilience, and unwavering faith that sustained me throughout the arduous process of completing my dissertation. To my family back home, your emotional support and enduring faith in my abilities have been my rock and inspiration. To my wife, who stood by my side through the nights of research and moments of self-doubt, your patience, understanding, words of encouragement, and love are well appreciated. I am grateful for your steadfast presence in my life.

With profound gratitude and immense appreciation to Professor Anthony Maher for his invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout the entire process of my dissertation. His insightful feedback and constructive criticism have been instrumental in refining my research paper and I am truly fortunate to have had the privilege of working under his supervision. I am grateful for his constant encouragement during challenging times and for the countless hours of meetings and patiently addressing my questions and concerns and guiding me through the intricacies of research methodology, data analysis, and academic writing. Thank you for being an exceptional mentor.

Lastly, I wish to extend my appreciation to my colleagues who participated in my research study and to our school leadership, particularly Ms. Ruth, the Head of School, and Ms. Shona, the Head of Primary School, for their invaluable support and permission to conduct this research.

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## Profiles, Characteristics, Challenges and Opportunities of Transnational Education Providers in the Philippines

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**Abstract:** Transnational Education (TNE) is a relatively new educational concept in the Philippines that focuses on accessibility, open learning, and distance education. Defined by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as the education provided by universities and institutions from the home countries to students working and studying abroad that offers a double degree. Since its implementation in 2016, no research exists on its achievements and milestones in the academe. Hence, this research investigates to determine common profiles, characteristics, challenges, and opportunities of TNE providers in the Philippines. Qualitative phenomenological design elicited data from three out of ten legitimate TNE providers who participated in the study. Data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's procedures, data familiarization, initial code generation, theme search, theme review, and theme definition. Results revealed that empowerment of human capital, program collaboration and partnership were the common profiles of TNE providers. Whereas education quality and support in programs, quality in facilities, and accreditations are the common characteristics. However, internationalization is a challenge as well as an opportunity for TNE providers. Hence, this research highlights that TNE is critical to the internationalization of education and its competitiveness and employability of Filipinos in the global economy of today and tomorrow.

**Keywords:** Transnational education, Higher education institutions, Distance education

**Citation:** Severo, G., & Andes, O.A. (2024). Profiles, Characteristics, Challenges and Opportunities of Transnational Education Providers in the Philippines. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 470-486), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In a developing country like the Philippines, the most economically rewarding jobs are secured by college degree holders. This demand resulted to various higher education institutions. As of 2021-2022, records from Commission on Higher Education (CHED) showed that the country has 1,963 HEIs (excluding satellite campuses of state universities and colleges). From this record, 242 are public HEIs, while 1,721 are private

institutions. Alongside with this supply and demand is the mandate of the state to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education. This fundamental law also mandates that education shall be assigned with the highest budget. These mandates are triggered by the challenges of globalization and internalization of educational services. As a result, the Philippines seriously considered transnational education as a response to the increasing pace and international qualification demands in services fueled by trade arrangements and developments in information and communication technologies. As technology becomes more accessible to schools all over the world, there has been a global shift as education becomes infused with technological usage. With that technological usage, many other methods of learning have been realized and created. In, states that from being the catalyst in developing multimedia and information technologies to using the internet as a means for educational purposes, e-learning has created radical changes in the traditional process of teaching.

Transnational Education is defined by CHED as the education provided by universities and institutions from the home countries to students working and studying abroad that offers a double degree. The Philippines TNE model is a work in progress, that will serve as test case for neighboring countries to emulate given the challenges and opportunities it may offer to higher education institutions. In 2014, the Open Distance Learning Law was implemented to expand the possibilities, opportunities, and modes of learning to those who are far away from the country. It utilizes print, audio-visual, internet, and face to face methods to ensure that the students may have quality education best suited to their needs and in August 2019, the Transnational Higher Education Act or RA 11448 was enacted, in order to expand “access to educational services through the establishment and administration of Transnational Higher Education”. The TNE act will enable and accelerate Transnational Education partnerships between foreign and local universities, increasing the access of Filipino students to quality international programs and standards.

The new law mandates the CHED to establish a dedicated office to handle TNE matters, as well as to develop a comprehensive TNE program. While there are existing TNE programs in the country, RA 11448 opens opportunities for more models, beyond collaborative TNE arrangements, such as franchising, articulation, validation, and branch campus among others. CHED will support the implementation of locally relevant TNE models in the undergraduate, graduate and post graduate levels. According to the British Council in 2019, one of our leading partners in TNE, this law will also expedite the processing of applications and permits of foreign students and faculty. According to the TNE Act, the ultimate purpose of bringing international standards and expertise to the Philippines is to modernize and make higher education in the country globally competitive. In, sees the TNE’s purpose as a way to draw in gifted students, faculty, and personnel, in order to enhance the country’s human resource base. Therefore, any Philippine Higher Education Institutions with programs recognized by CHED may also offer services offshore, provided that they preserve the reputation of the Philippines as a provider of quality higher education as well as abide by the laws, rules, and regulations of the host country. While Philippine legislation on transnational education is a critical development in strengthening higher education system, it poses a big challenge on educational and digital access due to the country’s geography, socio-economic status of students, internet connection in other areas like the provinces in Mindanao and the Visayan region. Now that a new norm will be observed in schools after the global pandemic, the

Department of Education and the Commission of Higher Education are strongly considering online platforms. However, the readiness of infrastructure and technology as well as the implementation of this platforms remains a challenge. Although the potential of distance education and TNE has been discussed because of its value in raising the quality of education in the Philippines, there is not much information on how to proper lead and implement TNE and distance education. In, there are ten pioneer schools who offered TNE but there is not enough literature on how this platform is delivered. Since the internationalization of higher education in the Philippines through TNE program is not yet truly recognized despite its effort and initiative, it is deemed necessary to find out the milestones and achievements since its implementation in 2016. Therefore, this study aims to explore and investigate the implementation, common characteristics, qualifications, and best practices of leading TNE providers in Manila.

### **Research Objectives**

Specifically, the study aimed to provide answers to the following objectives:

1. Describe the common profile and characteristics of the TNE institution providers in terms of:
  - 1.1 Human capital and leadership styles
  - 1.2 Programs, partnerships, and accreditations
2. Identify the challenges and opportunities in implementing TNE in terms of:
  - 2.1 Curriculum and Instructions
  - 2.2 Technology innovation on mode of delivery
  - 2.3 Teaching and learning management.

### **Background**

The world as we know it has become a global community. Part of its realization is the advent of the internet and the internationalization of education. In its broadest sense, internationalization of higher education is the expansion of learning within and beyond national borders which is sometimes referred to as cross-border education. There are two pillars of internationalization: home-based and cross-border. Home-based involves networking and other forms of linkages with foreign HEIs and students' study without moving out of their country while cross-border requires students to study in a foreign country. This study, however, will focus only on transnational education providers in Manila. Transnational education includes all types of higher education study programs, set of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based (CMO No. 55,s. 2016). TNE is one of the key features of higher education in the global era considering the freer flow of students and workers within and across the ASEAN region and the necessity of international linkages to facilitate sharing of knowledge, innovation, and technology.

The implementation of TNE is grounded on the Philippine's policy in education under Article XIV Section 4 (2)

of the 1987 Constitution, Sec. 123 of the Corporation Code and Investment Act of 1991. Its primary goal is to ensure quality of education that would translate into a development of a competitive resource capital. The goal is grand and noble, but the researchers has observed that there are very few schools that offer TNE. In its first year of implementation, there are only 10 HEIs who participated. Until now, TNE is unpopular in the country and only those students who are well-off can afford to study and earn international degrees without moving out of the country. This premise has motivated the researchers to study and explore further the reasons why very few HEIs offer TNE and why many schools are not even qualified to offer it.

## Method

Qualitative phenomenological design elicited data from three TNE higher education institutions (HEI) in the National Capital Region (NCR) of the country who participated in this study. These HEIs were the only institutions who willingly participated in interviews. The sensitivity of the data that was gathered from the study was one of the major considerations under the Data Privacy Act as pointed out by the respondent prospects. For data privacy, the name of the university participants will not be mentioned in this research report.

Phenomenological research design was used to examine contemporary context or setting of the existing TNE providers which started in 2016. An open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured online interview were utilized. The researchers also heavily relied on the use of secondary sources from the HEIs websites and multi-media accounts to gather public documents to enrich the qualitative findings. These documents served as exhibits for the thematic analysis of TNE standards and qualifications.

## Results and Discussion

### A. TNE Profiles

#### *A.1. Human Capital and Leadership Styles*

In terms of Human Capital and Leadership Styles, the thematic analysis of the responses of the co-participants during the interview showed one theme, that is, “Empowerment.” This word encompasses the idea of investing in and developing human capital, leadership styles, and employee commitment and engagement, as well as the overall goal of achieving success and effectiveness for the organization. Based on the findings of the investigation into the separate experiences of the co-participants, this theme is categorized into three codes, namely: (1) Ensuring Employee Commitment and Engagement; (2) Employing Various Leadership Styles; and (3) Improving Human Capital. Each table in the next pages are used to present the references and core ideas of each thematic code.

. Table 1. References and core ideas of the code

Code	References and Core Ideas
Ensuring Employee	Participant 1.1: Employees have a high level of commitment and engagement;

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Commitment and Engagement	they are provided several training opportunities. Participant 1.2: Their performance rating has consistently been between superior and excellent. Participant 1.4: Retain employees' superior level of performance and customer service orientation; high levels of commitment and engagement. Participant 1.5: To improve – training in use of technological tools for data collection, maintenance, and analysis; improve English language proficiency – in writing. Participant 1.6: Yes, because our employees rate the performance and style of the managers and leaders, and they give high ratings for all levels of management
Employing Various Leadership Styles	Participant 1.3: The leadership style of management is democratic. Participant 2.2: The leadership style is top-down management style. Participant 2.3: I would like to improve by observing participatory management. It advocates sense of ownership. Participant 3.1: Top-down leadership style
Improving Human Capital	Participant 2.1: The human capital is excellent because they are trained based on international standards. Participant 2.4: A wider involvement of all stakeholders will be very good for the university. Participant 3.2: I would like to retrain highly competitive TNE partners.

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The thematic code, “Ensuring Employee Commitment and Engagement,” seems to suggest that the co-participants ensured employee commitment and engagement by creating and sustaining a work environment in which employees are inspired, invested, and committed to the success of the organization. This can be accomplished through a variety of tactics, such as offering growth and development opportunities, building a pleasant and supportive work culture, and successfully conveying the organization's goal and values. As mentioned in, a key part of running a successful organization is maintaining staff dedication and interest. Methods for accomplishing this goal include encouraging team members to share ideas and opinions, providing them with opportunities for professional growth, and creating a welcoming workplace. Putting money into employee engagement has been shown to boost output, boost morale, and decrease turnover. Employees are more likely to be dedicated and engaged in their work if they are given opportunities to have input into important decisions, if there is a strong culture of rewards and recognition, and if they feel like they have a place in the organization.

Whereas “Employing Various Leadership Styles” theme, implies that the co-participants thought that the ability of leaders to modify their approach dependent on the environment and the folks they are leading is referred to as employing several leadership styles. Different leadership styles can be more effective in different circumstances,

and the ability to employ multiple styles can help leaders achieve their objectives more effectively. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is leadership style. Specifically, the statements suggest that there may be a lack of consistency or agreement among participants in regard to the leadership style within the organization, with some describing it as democratic, others describing it as top-down, and one suggesting a preference for participatory management. Such ideas can be found in the following statements: Participant 1.3: “The leadership style of management is democratic.”; Participant 2.2: “The leadership style is top-down management style.”; Participant 2.3: “I would like to improve by observing participatory management. It advocates sense of ownership.”; and Participant 3.1: “Top-down leadership style.” One possible takeaway from the responses is that there is little consensus on how leadership should be exercised inside the group. The leadership style has been described as both democratic and top-down by the participants. This could reflect a genuine divergence of opinion amongst those involved, or it could suggest a breakdown in leadership clarity and communication inside the company. In addition, one respondent expresses a desire for participatory management, which promotes a feeling of ownership; this seems to suggest that this could be an indication that the current leadership style isn't pleasing the employees completely and that they want to have a greater hand in making decisions. As described in, to be an effective leader, one must be able to employ a variety of leadership styles, each tailored to the specific needs of the organization and its members. In some cases, and with some groups of people, one leadership style may work better than another, and must be able to modify his or her approach based on the needs of the group they're in charge of and the circumstances at hand.

The theme “Improving Human Capital,” seem to suggest that co-participants believed that improving human capital means investing in and growing an organization's employees' skills, knowledge, and talents. This can be accomplished through a variety of ways, including the provision of training and development opportunities, the creation of a good and supportive workplace, and the provision of competitive salary and benefits. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is related to improving the quality of human capital and involving more stakeholders in the university. For example, Participant 1 describes the human capital as excellent, but also suggest that training should be based on international standards. Participant 2 suggests involving more stakeholders in the university will be beneficial. Lastly, Participant 3 suggests retraining to be more competitive TNE partners. Overall, the theme is about finding ways to improve the quality of the human capital and involving more stakeholders to increase the competitiveness of the university. The key impression is that the participants understand the value of incorporating more constituents in university decision-making and the need to invest in the human capital of the institution. They think that the university's competitiveness can be improved through retraining and conforming to worldwide norms. Hence, to maintain its position as a leader in higher education, the university must continually engage in the training and development of its staff and foster possibilities for collaboration and partnerships with a diverse set of constituents.

### *A.2. Programs, Partnership, and Accreditation*

In terms of Program and Partnership, the thematic analysis of the responses of the co-participants during the interview showed one theme, that is, “Collaboration.” Collaboration is the process of working with others to

accomplish a shared aim or objective. This may involve the sharing of resources, knowledge, and talents, as well as the coordination of efforts and good communication. Collaboration can occur among individuals, teams, companies, and even businesses or sectors. Often, the purpose of collaboration is to attain an outcome that would be difficult or impossible to accomplish alone. Collaboration can result in increased creativity, efficiency, and production, as well as enhanced communication and interpersonal interactions. According to the findings of the investigation into the separate experiences of the co-participants, this theme is categorized into three codes, namely: (1) Providing Programs and Curriculum; (2) Working on Partnerships and Employment; and (3) Strengthening Partnership with Another University. These codes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. References and core ideas of the codes

Code	References and Core Ideas
Providing Programs and Curriculum	Participant 1.1: Programs are transformational, quality standards of education based on international standards, innovation is encouraged and there is a culture of research.
	Participant 1.2: We have partners from the UK and Australia because we deliver their curricula in the Philippines.
	Participant 1.3: We are transnational education provider with a good number of academic and industry partners in the UK, Australia, and Switzerland.
	Participant 1.4: We would like to continue to provide transnational education and are continuously exploring partnerships with more universities in the UK, USA, and Australia to ensure top-up opportunities for our students.
Working on Partnerships and Employment	Participant 2.1: Yes, we are satisfied with our current partners since they are excellent universities and program providers in the UK.
	Participant 2.2: We continue to have high employability rates of our graduates - 95%-98% of graduates find employment or entrepreneurship opportunities here and abroad within 6 months to a year of graduation.
	Participant 2.3: More partners where we deliver their curriculum in the Philippines to open up to additional programs or courses.
	Participant 2.4: Well managed academic partners. Majority of the students are coming from academic partners (almost 95%).
	Participant 2.5: The program and partnership is innovative and focused on academic excellence. It is also consultative to provide students of what they need.
	Participant 2.6: The government should be responsive and adaptable to enhance TNE services. I would like to retain the online education



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	because it is innovative and flexible.
Strengthening Partnership with Another University	Participant 3.1: Partnered with UK-Liverpool Hope University. The partnership is program pairings/ twinning arrangement and joint/dual degrees as defined in TNE guidelines. Participant 3.2: We recognized by CHED, research based, internationally focused curriculum, more on practical skills, delivers intellectually stimulating and culturally enriching programs. Participant 3.3: Harmonize higher education system across ASEAN with improved quality assurance and degree recognition.

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The theme “Providing Programs and Curriculum,” as shown in the references and core ideas, responses seem to suggest the act of offering various educational programs and courses to students. This can include traditional classroom-based instruction as well as online and distance learning options. Based on the findings, the insight is that the group is dedicated to offering high-quality education that is in line with worldwide standards and is actively looking to extend its collaborations with universities from other countries to increase the options available to its students. They foster a mindset that values discovery and new information. They operate as a global education provider, collaborating with numerous institutions and businesses across the globe. As cited in, stated that offering programs and curriculum means that the institution makes effort to provide instruction that is up to par with global norms for educational quality. Maintaining a culture of inquiry is essential, as is providing transformative and innovative programming. This indicates a commitment to provide a wide variety of courses that are both interesting and useful to their pupils and up to par with global norms. In addition, as mentioned in, TNE is used to describe educational initiatives and programs in the Philippines that facilitate the movement of students, teachers, and materials between Philippine and foreign educational institutions.

The thematic code “Working on Partnerships and Employment,” means that the co-participants explained the act of forming partnerships with other organizations, particularly universities and industry partners, in order to provide more opportunities for students. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is partner universities and graduate employability. The co-participants’ feedback suggests that the universities and service providers they are already working with are meeting their needs. They also stress the need of fostering new partnerships to increase the breadth of their course offerings and the high employability of their grads. On top of that, they highlight the need of having well-managed academic partners, as many of their students come from these organizations. Furthermore, they place an emphasis on student input, academic rigor, and ground-breaking new approaches to program design and collaboration. They also stress the value of online education as a versatile and forward-thinking alternative and call for the government to be more responsive and adaptable in order to improve TNE services. Hence, working on partnerships and employment means establishing and strengthening ties with academic institutions in order to deliver first-rate courses and internships to students. It is also desired to broaden these collaborations and investigate additional programs and courses in order to provide students with a wider variety of options. In addition, these collaborations highlight the significance of creativity and adaptability, particularly in the context of distance learning.

In the theme code “Strengthening Partnership with Another University,” co-participants clarified the process of developing and maintaining a strong relationship between two universities. This can involve various activities such as sharing resources, collaborating on research projects, and offering joint or dual degree programs. The goal of strengthening a partnership with another university is to enhance the educational opportunities and resources available to students, as well as to promote academic excellence and innovation. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is the focus on transnational education (TNE) partnerships and program offerings, with a specific emphasis on the partnership with UK-Liverpool Hope University and adherence to TNE guidelines. Additionally, there is a focus on ensuring quality and recognition in the higher education system, both domestically and internationally. One takeaway on this implies that aligning with the principles of international education, the relationship includes program pairs, twinning arrangements, and joint/dual degrees. The universities have been approved by the CHED, offer a curriculum based on academic research and an international perspective that places an emphasis on practical skills development, and present intellectually stimulating and culturally enriching courses and events. They are also committed to advancing quality assurance and degree recognition within ASEAN in an effort to standardize the region's higher education system.

### *B. TNE Common Characteristics*

The thematic analysis of the responses of the co-participants during the interview showed one theme in terms of facility and accreditation levels, that is, “Quality.” The quality of a university's education depends on the caliber of its faculty members. Universities should place a high priority on its employees' development and growth and invest in their faculty to provide a high-quality education for its students, as evidenced by the hundreds of training programs it offers to employees at all levels and to managers. Based on the investigation into the separate experiences of the co-participants, the theme is categorized into two codes; that is, Faculty and Training; and Quality Assurance and Standards.

Table 3. References and core ideas of the codes

Code	References and Core Ideas
Faculty and Training	Participant 1.1 Faculty, trained in the British education practices and requirements
	Participant 1.2 Research opportunity; technology support is excellent as shown by our performance during then pandemic years.
	Participant 1.3 Excellent learning resources from partner universities.
	Participant 1.4 High employee retention rates and hundreds of training programs for all levels of employees and management.
	Participant 1.5 Recruitment of more qualified faculty.
	Participant 1.6 Strat planning to create the elements of the School of the Future which is already NOW.

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	Participant 1.7 Build more partnerships with industries-especially multinational corporations.
	Participant 1.3 Recruit more faculty
	Participant 2.1 Accredited by ISO, veritas and Philippine associations like PACUCOA
	Participant 3.1 CHED-Autonomous level, Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU), ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUNQA)
Quality Assurance and Standards	Participant 3.2 Granted Institutional Accreditation status by the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP)
	Participant 3.3 CHED named fourteen academic programs as Centers of Excellence (COEs) and five academic programs as Centers of Development (CODs).
	Participant 3.4 Improve the assessment standards per program.
	Participant 3.5 It should meet both the standards of the local and international qualifications.

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The thematic code "Faculty and Training," means that the co-participants shared their thoughts on the educational backgrounds of the university's teaching staff. They stressed the importance of the faculty's training in British education practices and requirements, which implies that the university places a premium on the quality of its teaching staff. Responses seemingly suggest, one of the common themes is the quality of education and resources provided by the university, specifically through the use of British education practices and partnerships with other universities for research and technology support. It suggests that the common thread among these declarations seems to be a commitment to developing the institution's human and material resources by means of activities like faculty recruitment and development, expanding the scope of available research, embracing technological advancements, forging relationships with relevant businesses, and implementing long-term strategic plans. It is stressed that the institution is at the vanguard of educational theory and practice. The term "training" is commonly used to describe the process of learning what one needs to know and how one might improve one's performance on a given job or task. Training for faculty members is essential in the context of higher education because it allows them to maintain expertise in their fields, enhance their teaching abilities, and meet the requirements of their students. The institution's dedication to its teachers and staff, as seen by its strong retention rates and the sheer number of training programs it offers, suggests it places a premium on their professional growth and provides them with the tools they need to succeed in their professions.

As mentioned in, the term "faculty" is commonly used to refer to the group of teachers and professors at a university or college. They are the ones whose job it is to teach the material and help the pupils along the way. The term "training" is commonly used to describe the process of learning what one needs to know and how one

might improve one's performance on a given job or task. Training for faculty members is essential in the context of higher education because it allows them to maintain expertise in their fields, enhance their teaching abilities, and meet the requirements of their students. The institution's dedication to its teachers and staff, as seen by its strong retention rates and the sheer number of training programs it offers, suggests it places a premium on their professional growth and provides them with the tools they need to succeed in their professions. TNEs span a greater scope when it comes to accommodating for the educational requirements of nations. Hence, teaching experience and adaptability of the teachers are two crucial components of TNE.

Furthermore, the term "Accreditation" means that institutions are being evaluated and certified as having high quality standards in the field of education. It is a process by which a school or program demonstrates that it adheres to quality criteria established by a recognized body, either nationally or internationally. Due to the confidence, it instills in prospective students and teachers that the institution or program is up to par, this approach can increase enrollment and faculty retention. TNE providers also emphasized that accreditation can be used as a marketing tool to attract students and staff to the university, which is a key takeaway from the discussion so far. According to the findings of the investigation into the separate experiences of the co-participants, this theme is categorized into one code; that is, Quality Assurance and Standards.

Consequently, "Quality Assurance and Standards" is the theme that emerged from co-participants which seemingly suggest that they are focused on the standards and quality assurance in education within their institution. They shared information about the many initiatives now underway at the university to improve teaching and research. The relevance of accreditation in luring customers was also highlighted, as was the promotion of the reciprocity doctrine. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is accreditation and quality assurance in higher education. The participants are discussing the importance of recruiting more faculty, being accredited by various organizations and agencies, and meeting both local and international standards for academic programs. They also mention specific accreditation and recognition received by the institution and the need to improve assessment standards for each program. Findings seemingly suggests that accreditation and educational quality assurance serve as a unifying theme here. Accreditation and quality assurance measures attained by the educational institution are being discussed, including ISO and PAASCU accreditation, and the significance of recruiting more faculty. They also stress the need for higher quality assessments that are in line with global norms. The overall goal is to guarantee that the children receive an excellent education. As stated in, the term "quality assurance and standards" is used to describe the procedures and measures taken to guarantee that educational programs consistently deliver on promised quality and excellence. Assessment standards for various programs and accreditation by various bodies fall under this category. The overarching point of this discussion is the need of quality assurance and standards in ensuring that schools offer effective teaching and curriculum that caters to the diverse needs of their students. Furthermore, learning methods are the strategies that are used to facilitate the acquisition of new information and abilities. Quality Assurance is a staple when it comes to methods in improving the standards of TNE. Hence, when assessing the efficacy and worth of a school or university, it is crucial to consider the institution's quality, accreditation, and curriculum.

Accreditation and other forms of evaluation, as well as the hiring of skilled instructors and the ongoing refinement of assessment tools, can help institutions meet these benchmarks. Based on the number of accreditation and recognition levels, it can be concluded that these TNE providers are achievers who sport excellence in delivering quality education that is in accordance with the provisions of RA No. 7722 which states that institutions offering transnational education must have (1) accreditation or certification by the respective higher education ministry/commission or appropriate regulatory body for higher education; (2) legal standing in its country of origin and/or other countries in which it conducts business as well as the recognition of its qualifications including those delivered through TNE; (3) academic reputation in academic communities ; (4) qualifications and/or experience of academic staff with regard to teaching and research, when tutoring/academic support is provided by the offshore partner; (5) quality and accessibility of student learning support services such as ICT infrastructure and facilities, library, computing services, bandwidth availability, meeting rooms, virtual learning environment and learning management system; (6) quality teaching and learning resources such as open education resources ; (7) institutional and national quality assurance procedures for TNE including published standards and reports; (8) appropriate student support services including, when international students are to spend a period of time in the Philippines as part of course or program requirements, information on legal requirements and accommodation arrangements, subject to the Bureau of Immigration requirement for international students; (9) strictly followed the processes of application to operate transnational education.

### *C. Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Transnational Education*

The thematic analysis of the responses of the co-participants on TNE’s challenges and opportunities during the interview showed one theme, that is, “Internationalization.” To improve an organization’s viability and global standing, its leaders may choose to engage in a process known as “internationalization.” This involves forming and maintaining relationships with counterparts in other countries. In order to do this, the school must conform its programs and activities to worldwide norms and partners, seek authorization from government authorities like CHED, and establish new programs and collaborations with universities in other countries. In order to ensure the long-term success of the school, it is crucial that it expand its worldwide reach through fostering new programs and mutually beneficial academic partnerships.

According to the findings of the investigation into the separate experiences of the co-participants, this theme is categorized into three codes, namely: (1) Obtaining Approval from CHED and Partner Universities; (2) Identifying and Developing New Programs and Partnerships; and (3) Aligning Programs and Activities with International Partners and Standards.

Table 4. References and core ideas of the codes

<b>Code</b>	<b>References and Core Ideas</b>
Obtaining Approval from	Participant 1.1 Obtaining approval from CHED, it takes years to get approval of programs and by the time they are approved, the partner university has improved

CHED and Partner Universities	<p>and revised the content of these programs.</p> <p>Participant 1.2 Keep following up requests for approval. Speak to representatives of CHED.</p> <p>Participant 2.1 Government policy on approval of programs. 3 to 5 years before approval.</p> <p>Participant 2.2 Merged programs of partner institutions abroad not aligned with local programs.</p> <p>Participant 2.3 Multilateral participation... work together with government agencies. Consultation of both partner institutions.</p> <p>Participant 2.4 CHED activities and programs must be participated by stakeholders, universities and partner institutions.</p> <p>Participant 2.5 Engage with experience TNE programs</p> <p>Participant 2.6 Outsource human capital and seek more educational partners</p> <p>Participant 3.1 Government policy on approval of programs. Twinning programs require fast approval from CHED</p>
Identifying and Developing New Programs and Partnerships	<p>Participant 1.3 Identify new programs which are getting to be critical part of the school of the future</p> <p>Participant 1.4 New programs and/or new partners in the USA and in Germany</p> <p>Participant 1.5 Through meetings with representatives of selected universities</p>
Aligning Programs and Activities with International Partners and Standards	<p>Participant 3.2 Hiring internationally qualified faculty and staff</p> <p>Participant 3.3 CHED activities and programs must be aligned with international partners</p> <p>Participant 3.4 Establish international linkages</p> <p>Participant 3.5 Acquire and adapt to new technologies and teaching approaches</p>

The theme code “Obtaining Approval from CHED and Partner Universities,” means that the co-participants talked about applying to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for recognition of a program or partnership with an international institution. The amount of time it takes to get clearance from CHED and the possibility that the content of these programs will alter by the time they are approved seem to be causing participants some concern. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is the challenges and difficulties in obtaining program approvals from CHED and the impact of government policies on program approvals and alignment with partner institutions abroad.

In addition, another theme that is common in the responses is the challenges and obstacles in obtaining approval for international partnerships and programs, and potential solutions such as engaging with government agencies, involving stakeholders, and seeking out more educational partners. Based on the findings, participants gained knowledge about the complex, potentially years-long process of seeking clearance for international education programs from the CHED. This can be a concern because the content may have already been altered by the



partner school by the time the programs are authorized. Those involved advise following up on requests for approval and communicating with CHED officials in an effort to hasten the procedure. Further, questions remain about the consistency between federal initiatives and local initiatives, as well as the consistency between programs offered by partner universities. Participants propose coordinating efforts amongst government agencies, joining forces with established TNE programs, and expanding the network of educational allies to tackle these problems. They also recommend including stakeholders, universities, and partner institutions in CHED activities and programs. And CHED needs to approve Twinning programs quickly. It can be difficult and time-consuming to secure CHED accreditation and establish international partnerships with universities. Participants report that the approval process might drag on for years, during which time the content of the programs at the partner university may have been updated and amended. The licensing procedure for CHED activities and programs can be streamlined by enlisting the support of established TNE programs and expanding the network of educational partners already in place. In sum, getting CHED's stamp of approval and forming partnerships with international universities is a process that calls for open lines of communication, teamwork, and flexibility as programs develop and change.

The theme code "Identifying and Developing New Programs and Partnerships," means that the co-participants discussed the process of locating and establishing mutually beneficial academic collaborations with universities in the United States and Germany. They believe that creating and promoting such innovative programs and collaborations is crucial to the institution's future viability. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is identifying and establishing new programs and partnerships with universities in the USA and Germany. Findings seem to suggest that according to the insights provided by these three individuals, it is becoming increasingly vital for schools to create new programs and collaborations in order to future-proof themselves. The first respondent argues that innovative programs will be essential in tomorrow's schools, while the second and third say that collaborating with colleges in the United States and Germany could help get there. The third individual suggests holding meetings with representatives from other educational institutions to achieve this goal. It's possible that participants think that forming relationships with universities is a good method for schools to adapt to changes in the educational landscape.

Hence, developing new programs and partnerships is the process of finding and putting into action projects, classes, or collaborations that will benefit students and further the school's stated goals. Finding innovative ways to fill in the gaps in the current curriculum or set of services requires exploration of various program and partnership options, as well as the identification of those gaps. Schools can better meet the needs of their students, and act in accordance with the school's vision and goal, by continually seeking out and creating new programs and partnerships.

The references and core ideas of the theme code "Aligning Programs and Activities with International Partners and Standards," means that the co-participants talked about the method by which the institution ensures that its programs and activities correspond to those of its international partners and are up to international standards. In addition, the need of acquiring and adapting to new technology and teaching methodologies, as well as the



importance of coordinating CHED operations and programs with foreign partners, was emphasized by the attendees. Based on the responses, one of the common themes is the ways to bring an international perspective to the school's education. Hiring internationally qualified faculty and staff can bring different cultural perspectives and experiences to the classroom. Based on the findings, participants shared their appreciation for the importance of bringing a global perspective to the classroom. To this end, they recommend acquiring and adapting to new technology and pedagogical approaches, as well as hiring internationally skilled teachers and staff and coordinating CHED activities and programs with worldwide partners. This indicates that the participant recognizes the value of a culturally and racially diverse faculty and staff and understands that conforming to international norms and collaborating with like-minded organizations can open doors for students. The collective wisdom of the focus group suggests that its members agree that an international perspective is crucial in modern education, and that various approaches, such as recruiting internationally qualified faculty and staff, aligning CHED activities and programs with international partners, establishing international links, and acquiring and adapting to new technologies and teaching approaches, can help accomplish this.

As mentioned in, "aligning programs and activities with international partners and standards," we mean making sure that the school's courses, services, and operations are in line with the norms and guidelines set forth by authoritative bodies on a global scale. Thus, to ensure that the school's programs and activities are of the highest quality and excellence on a worldwide scale, it may choose to associate itself with international accreditation bodies, professional associations, and other educational institutions.

## Conclusions

The detailed drawn conclusions and its implications were discussed in the Results and Discussions part. However, the following are the specific highlights:

1. Transnational education is critical to the internationalization of education, and the future-proof competitiveness and employability of Filipinos in the global economy
2. The versatility of Transnational education with regards to the multitude of systems are specialized to cater to the needs of Philippine and Foreign Higher Education Institutions.
3. The lack of timely regulatory support established processes, and frequent changes in policies and goals contributed to the slow growth of transnational education in the Philippines compared to its regional neighbors.
4. TNE providers in the country must establish a healthy partnership with foreign HEIs.
5. Program approval is not consistent with the revision and review cycles of international academic partners.

## Recommendations

In view of the significant findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were hereby

offered:

1. The Commission on Higher Education may simplify and optimize regulatory processes and methods with regards to the creation, modification, and validation of TNE programs to expedite development of TNE providers within the country.
2. CHED'S TNE Technical Panel may focus and implement stringent rules and policies on panel attendance during program reviews.
3. The government must support the development of TNE in the Philippines at the basic, secondary, and tertiary levels.
4. CHED may work with TNE providers to ensure significant change in the processing of permits and documents need for program recognition.
5. CHED may include easing regulations for implementation, tax relief, quicker regulatory oversight, and financial aid for students participating in various exchange programs.
6. Future researchers may use this study as a guide to explore changes in the TNE implementation and verify improvement in the regulatory process that may ease the challenges of becoming a TNE provider in the Philippines.

## Acknowledgements

This research was partially supported by the researchers' affiliated universities. The researchers are thankful to the participants who provided expertise that assisted in the completion of contents of the research.

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## Evaluating Mobile Apps Features for Learning English Speaking Skills

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**Abstract:** The demand for mobile apps, especially for second and foreign language learning, has been rapidly growing with the gradual introduction of mobile technology into learning and the evolutionary growth of mobile technology. The widespread utilization of mobile phones has massively affected learning methods. Nonetheless, exploration towards utilizing the mobile application in cultivating English language learning specifically, English speaking, persists limited. Concurrently, speaking is seen as one of the most challenging aspects among second language learners despite the advancement of universal learning. This paper investigates and evaluates the features of three selected mobile apps for English-speaking learning. This study employed qualitative content analysis to analyse three chosen English-speaking learning apps- Duolingo, ELSA, and Speak English Conversation. The findings focus on the quality app features of these apps which include categories of curriculum, pedagogy, and app design. These findings will potentially lead some directions to educators, teachers, learners, and app makers when selecting a well-designed app.

**Keywords:** Mobile apps, Speaking skills, English speaking app, App features

**Citation:** Hashim, H. & Hasnan, K. (2024). Evaluating Mobile Apps Features for Learning English Speaking Skills. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 487-506), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In the era of implementation of emerging machineries universally, the roadmap of language teaching and learning has seen significant improvement. Undoubtedly, English language is acknowledged to be a medium of language to communicate internationally, and ought to support individual development competencies that are fluent in English so that our learners would be prepared to achieve their best in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Lie & Yunus, 2018). Additionally, mobile technologies have been progressively integrated into learning these days. In many contexts, the widespread utilization of mobile phones, portable, and wireless gadgets has massively affected learning methods, along with language learning (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009).

The use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in Malaysia's education system is ever increasing in the country and is continuing to modify strategies that are employed by both teachers and students in teaching

and learning (Hanapiah, 2017). In the fourth industrial revolution, education is now inculcating innovative technology and creating several new types of mediums for teaching and learning, offering information, and encouraging alternative ways of performing assessments. To understand the need for Malaysian education and to address the problem posed by low speech skills, the incorporation of mobile technologies and English learning are used to become a great platform for learners to practice language skills in a fun and leisurely way. Based on the Common European Framework of Reference about languages, for the development of learning English as a second language, speaking is the second component of learning. Making it an important aspect of language learning for learners. This supports and is on par with Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 aspiration, whereby integrating technology in the acquisition of English learning in formal and informal settings is equally essential.

Speaking skills is a crucial skill to learn any language (Parveen, 2016). His study indicated that technologies should be practiced in the English classroom as it motivates playfulness of learners in learning the targeted language, he further supports those learners need a stronghold of English-speaking ability as people would often be judged based on their capability to speak. Mustafa (2018) states that both social networking and educational mobile applications work to nurture learners' oral skills, modern technologies available like YouTube, WhatsApp, Skype, and Duolingo are some famous choices that are free for learners to utilize. Additionally, the software "Learn to Speak English" is a noteworthy mobile application that cultivates the speaking skill development of learners (Farman, 2018). In this technological era, portable electronic equipment that can connect to the internet, especially a smartphone or tablet computer is getting more and more common in today's world due to the advancement in technology. Simultaneously, there are countless mobile applications designed and published for users of mobile devices. Unquestionably, language learning application is one of the useful applications that is used by most people to learn or improve a language. In this context, English is the language that the majority of people want to enhance by using mobile applications as it is the most used and spoken language around the world (Klappenbach, 2019). There are countless present mobile application that provides a different range of English learning tools for free. This indirectly encourages people to boost their language, especially English on their mobile devices as it is convenient and easy to use. Learning a language can be carried out anytime and anywhere if there is an internet connection and mobile devices (Andrew, 2019).

A myriad array of teaching materials that focus on language learning, especially digital learning content is widely available on the internet for teachers and students to venture into. Nevertheless, this endless selection may also be a potential challenge and appear daunting for teachers in selecting appropriate digital tools like mobile apps for their teaching and learning practices (Aryee et al., 2016). An extensive number of apps in the market could overwhelm both teachers and students in choosing suitable language learning apps. Thus, one way is by referring to the app description on the app store as guidance (Chik, 2014). On the contrary, Robles et al. (2021) pointed out that poor description and labeling of the app by developers may stir a problem as apps are context sensitive. Developers often rely only on learning context that fits only certain learning visions, hence, meticulous planning in building a language learning app is vital to support learning context for different variables and context. Accordingly, Larkin (2013) reminded us that due to differences in every user's learning

experience in accessing the app, the app description presented on the web will not be an adequate measure to match a valid verdict for everyone.

Developing a mobile learning app relies strongly on pre-existing evaluation criteria. It is with great importance that quality language learning mobile apps entail between life learning context, inculcate social interaction for engagement and self-directed learning (Nino, 2015; Kukuska-Hulme & Traxler, 2007). Several researchers recommended quality and useful learning apps to be built based on curriculum, pedagogical, technical, and design criteria. Sweeney and Moore (2012) proposed language learning apps to include pedagogical and technical measures. These measures are- Interactive, learning materials, and context are multimedia appropriate, have great functionality with clear context relevance, and self-directing and autonomous acquisition. Elena et al. (2014) also supported the quality criteria for the creation of digital learning that combines pedagogic and technical characteristics. Pedagogical characteristics emphasized are cognitive value and pedagogic coherence, content quality, motivation, interactivity and adaptability, and capacity to generate learning. On the other hand, technical features are usability, accessibility, visibility, compatibility, and layout and format.

Furthermore, the adaption of instructional sequence from Chamot and O'Malley by Nisbet and Austin (2013) highlighted curriculum and pedagogical features for a valuable mobile app. The criteria that make up a practical mobile learning app include- the able to trigger users' background knowledge, clear presentation of the usage of the app, highlight advantages and app functions, and feedback opportunities on the user's overall experience. In general, these studies focus on the pedagogical, design, and curriculum aspects of mobile learning app evaluation criteria. Consequently, these three aspects are used as the base categories for this study's preliminary app evaluation and are the root of this study's in-depth analysis. This study intends to come out with a comprehensive app evaluation tool that would benefit users in selecting appropriate language learning apps based on an in-depth analysis. A preliminary app evaluation checklist is needed in response to this study, this acts as a core analysis matrix and benchmark for easier evaluation of the selected language learning app. This preliminary app evaluation checklist is based on the three vital aspects evaluated by several studies, these include curriculum aspect, pedagogical aspect, and design aspect. A quality guide of the preliminary app evaluation checklist by Luyi (2018) has been adopted in this study. This app evaluation was chosen as it has a similar analysis vision in which the researcher delves into language learning apps in a vocabulary context while this study intends to explore language learning apps in the context of speaking.

## **Methodology**

This study incorporates qualitative content analysis as the research method. Gao (1996), Weber (1990), and Creswell (2007) defined content analysis as a medium for scholars to analyze organized, replicable practices that consist of many words, texts, audio, pictures, or videos into fewer content categories to describe the central phenomenon rather than using statistics. In this study, qualitative content analysis is applied to obtain in-depth insights into the app features of selected ESL learning apps. Content analysis is used as both the research

method and the data analysis method of this study. This study is firstly carried out deductively as a set of preliminary checklists was adopted. Further analysis based on the pre-existing categorization matrix chosen eventually changed it to inductive analysis as emergent categories and criteria on the chosen ESL learning app appear. This study employed content analysis to explore the usage, content, features, and practicality of chosen speaking language learning apps. This study includes various forms of textual and non-textual analysis, which are writing presented in the app, sounds, graphics, videos, icons, logos, and game activities in the speaking app.

### **Sampling Units: Selecting the Apps**

According to Neuendorf (2017), sampling is a crucial part of data collection where it requires the researcher to narrow down related research from the larger pool of studies. Through the sampling process, the researcher could select apps for greater analysis. The apps chosen were purposefully sampled from app store in Google Play Store and Apple App Store. This study comprises an app that is:

- 1) downloadable in mobile devices using IOS and Android operating system. Example: iPhone, iPad, smartphones, and tablets.
- 2) accessible in both Google Play store and Apple App store
- 3) designed as a language learning app
- 4) either free or freemium

Keywords used to search on the web, Google Play store, and Apple App Store are English Learning Apps, ESL, Speaking Apps, and English and Language apps. From 20 resources that recommended ESL and language learning apps, a total of 145 times of recommendations for 38 apps appeared as a preliminary list for data analysis. These recommended resources are based on literature readings, blogs and websites, professional resources, and advertisement recommendations. Some apps (e.g., Duolingo, Busuu, and Babbel) are recommended on several resources. To ensure app information from the recommended list of resources is affordable, each app was verified on the Google Play store and Apple App Store. From the list of 145 times of recommendation, this study only takes into consideration apps that meet all criteria listed for this study and apps that include speaking skills as one of the main language focuses. Based on the recommended apps, language focus varies from listening, writing, reading, speaking, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. Apps that were chosen were at least recommended twice based on the list of resources.

### *Chosen Apps for in-depth Study*

This study focuses on the content analysis of Mobile Language Learning Apps for Speaking skills. To learn and understand the development, content, functionality, and quality of app characteristics, three language-learning apps were further chosen. To begin with, speaking capabilities integrate many other skills components for it to be successfully executed. Rizqiningsih and Hadi (2019) emphasized several elements that build speaking skills. They mentioned the importance of vocabulary elements in which sufficient vocabulary helps to express



messages verbally; grammar elements to avoid miscommunication and the right access to the meaning of each word; pronunciation element that determines the correct way sounds are articulated; fluency element that creates a natural stream of communication; comprehension element to ensure speakers understand the discussion and important points made during speaking. To ensure a proper content analysis of this study, apps were chosen based on the recommended source compiled with these speaking skills elements. The three language learning apps that focus on speaking skills chosen are- Duolingo, Elsa and Speak English Conversation.

### *Materials*

Content Analysis of this study used three different devices to gain access, explore, and collect data in all these chosen apps. Devices used to access these three apps are Samsung S9+, iPhone 12 Pro, and iPad 7th Generation. Samsung S9+ device is used to analyse through the Android operating system, iPhone 12 Pro is for iOS, while iPad is to look at the differences of chosen apps layout as compared to mobile phones. Throughout the in-depth study of these apps, data collected for the three apps were saved in the form of screenshots and Microsoft Word files. The collection of screenshots and proper recording of raw data is critical to transform emergent findings into analysable representations.

### *Procedures*

This study uses both inductive and deductive content analysis as the research methodology. There are three phases during the data analysis process which are preparation, organization, and reporting. Neuendorf (2017) stated that the analysis of the unit is the core of content analysis for raw data and emergent findings to be reported in a more organized manner. Unit is an element that is derived from numerous styles of text, which can be broken down into phrases, words, and sentences. Researchers need to determine significant components such as the objectives, what and how to analyse data, and the criteria involved to determine samples. Based on the criteria listed previously, out of 145 times of recommendations, this study chose 3 language learning apps with a focus on speaking skills- Duolingo, ELSA, and Speaking English Conversation as the sampling unit.

The second step of this data analysis is organizing the data found and collected. Each data and analysis done are coordinated and kept using Microsoft Word. The preliminary app evaluation that was introduced earlier was used as a guide at the beginning of this study (refer Table 1), it is then modified accordingly to fit the emergent findings which situate better in-depth analysis to be done. This resulted in the development of a new temporary matrix of data analysis (refer Table 2).

It is later grouped for further analysis. Reporting is the last phase in the data analysis procedure. According to Elo and Kyngas (2008), the reporting phase is crucial as the researchers need to consider and truly analyse the description of the analysis process. On the qualitative analysis of recommended apps by several resources, a tabular table is presented in the following table (refer Table 3).

Table 1. Preliminary Apps Evaluation Checklist

Types	Description	Remark
Curriculum	Articulates learning objectives that are achievable through the app's content.	
	Provides rich, appropriate learning content through different learning activities (e.g., level challenges, and games, etc.).	
	Has accurate learning content	
	Provides content activities.	
Pedagogy	Gives feedback to learners.	
	Articulates the levels of difficulty of the learning content.	
	Allows social interaction among learners.	
	Integrates social contexts.	
	Provides personalized options that can satisfy users' individual needs.	
	Facilitates autonomous learning.	
Design	Contains different forms of multimedia (e.g., video, audio, and image, etc.) that are purposefully incorporated in the learning content and activities.	
	Has off-line functions.	
	No pop-up elements during the use of the app.	
	No technical elements that influence learner's overall learning experience.	

Table 2. Modified Analysis Matrix

Types	Description
Curriculum	Objectives
	Learning Content & accuracy
	Assessment
Pedagogy	Feedback

	Social Interaction & context
	Autonomous learning
	Gamification
Design	Multimedia integration
	Pop-up elements
	App support
	Technical elements

Table 3. App Recommendation based on Multiple Resources

Recommended Sources	Recommended Apps
US News Global Education	1. Rosetta Stone
	2. FluentU
	3. Hello English
	4. Duolingo
	5. Hello Talk
Oxford House Language Courses	1. Duolingo
	2. Quiz your English
	3. The British Council
	4. 6,000 words
	5. Beelinguapp
	6. Hello Talk
	7. Grammarly
	8. BBC Learning English
To Fluency	1. Grammarly
	2. Anki
	3. Hello Talk
	4. Udemy
	5. BBC Learning English
	6. Italki

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	7. Lingq
	1. Duolingo
	2. Busuu
	3. Improve English: Word Games
	4. Sentence Master Pro
Educational AppStore	5. Memrise: Learn Languages Free
	6. Learn English with Babbel
	7. Rosetta Stone
	8. LearnEnglish Grammar
	9. LingoDeer
	10. Beelinguapp
	1. FluentU
	2. Rosetta Stone
	3. MindSnacks
FluentU	4. Memrise
English Language and Culture	5. Babbel
Blog	6. Mosalingua
	7. Busuu
	8. Duolingo
	1. Duolingo
	2. Babbel
Oxford International English	3. FluentU
Schools	4. Rosetta Stone
	5. Memrise
	6. HelloEnglish
	1. FluentU
	2. Duolingo
	3. Anki
Study Portals Masters	4. Memrise
	5. The Pimsleur Method
	6. Busuu
	7. Babbel
	1. Memrise
Lingualift	2. LinguaLift
	3. Rosetta Stone
	4. Duolingo

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	5. Hello Talk
	6. Mindsnacks
	7. Busuu
	8. Babbel
	9. TripLingo
	10. MosaLingua
	11. HiNative
	12. (How to) Pronounce
	1. Babbel
	2. Mondly
	3. Duolingo
	4. Memrise
Cnet	5. Busuu
	6. Lirica
	7. Drops
	8. Language Learning with Netflix
	9. Pimsleur
	10. Rosetta Stone
	1. Memrise
	2. Pimsleur
	3. Tandem
	4. Duolingo
	5. Rosetta Stone
Oprah Daily	6. Babbel
	7. Busuu
	8. Drops
	9. Mango
	10. Beelinguapp
	11. Mondly
	1. Duolingo
	2. Hello Talk
Addevice	3. Memrise
	4. Busuu
	5. Babbel
	1. Encore
Gurmentor	2. Duolingo

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- 
3. Memrise
  4. Busuu
  5. Rosetta Stone
  6. HiNative
  7. Anki
  8. Lirica
  9. Tandem

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Android Headlines

- 
1. Duolingo
  2. Memrise
  3. Hello Talk
  4. Busuu
  5. Mondly
  6. Rosetta Stone
  7. Drops
  8. Babbel
  9. Beelinguapp
  10. Mango

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Forbes

- 
1. Babbel
  2. Memrise
  3. Duolingo
  4. Mondly
  5. Speakly
  6. Lirica
  7. Pimsleur
  8. Beelinguapp
  9. Rosetta Stone
  10. QLango

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Good House Keeping

- 
1. Mondly
  2. Mango
  3. Memrise
  4. Drops
  5. Busuu
  6. Rosetta Stone
  7. Duolingo
  8. Pimsleur
  9. Babbel
-

Pcmag	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Duolingo</li> <li>2. Memrise</li> <li>3. Quizlet</li> <li>4. Busuu</li> <li>5. Beelinguapp</li> <li>6. 50 Languages</li> <li>7. Hello Talk</li> </ol>
Play Store	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Duolingo</li> <li>2. English Speaking Practice</li> <li>3. ELSA Speak</li> <li>4. English Conversation Practice</li> <li>5. Cake</li> <li>6. English Listening and Speaking</li> <li>7. Speak English Fluently</li> <li>8. Learn English</li> </ol>
Speak English anytime,anywhere	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lingo Blabla</li> <li>2. Duolingo</li> <li>3. Speaky</li> <li>4. Cambly</li> <li>5. HiNative</li> </ol>
Top 5 Language Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Babbel</li> <li>2. Mondly</li> <li>3. Lingoda</li> <li>4. uTalk</li> <li>5. Busuu</li> <li>6. Pimsleur</li> <li>7. Preply</li> <li>8. Rype</li> <li>9. Duolingo</li> </ol>
Litrature Review	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Duolingo</li> <li>2. Busuu</li> <li>3. ELSA Speak</li> <li>4. English Conversation Practice</li> </ol>

The sample units of this study were Duolingo, Elsa, and Speak English Conversation. This study utilizes both deductive and inductive content analytical approaches. Findings and data found that fit the categorization of the preliminary checklist matrix are analysed deductively, while those data that did not fit any categories or themes



in features listed in the matrix are analysed inductively. This cause new categories to be emerged. All reported findings are followed with a description of apps in each category of speaking language learning apps.

## Findings and Discussion

Based on the in-depth content analysis of the Spoken language learning apps showed that all three of the learning apps portrayed learning and practice activities for users. However, only Duolingo showed gamification elements in their language learning process with features like hearts that act as life bars limiting users with a number of mistakes. Common features such as learning topics and lessons are included in all these apps. This section of findings features is divided into Curriculum, Pedagogy, and App design.

### Curriculum

The findings from various literature showed that a potential language learning app contains five curriculum criteria: learning objectives, rich and appropriate learning content, content accuracy, content activities, and learning topics. Of the three analysed speaking apps in this study, these three apps did not meet all the criteria listed.

Duolingo managed to include a list of keywords on the main page of a lesson, creating easier access for users to understand the overview of lesson content. These keywords act as learning objectives of each lesson. Elsa and Speak English Conversation also include this feature with phrases and short sentences for extra details on each language learning lesson that is portrayed as learning objectives. For example, Elsa stated details such as talking about your hometown, career, and more under the Self-Introduction topic, while Speak English Conversation included phrases such as a trip to the lake conversation under the trips & vacation category.

From the perspective of learning topics, rich and appropriate learning content, Elsa contained a variety of learning topics and categories that are rich with learning content. Topics and categories included in speaking skills vary and are suitable for users of different backgrounds, interests, and language skills. Users have access to countless free speaking lessons. Elsa also includes appropriate speaking practice involving pronunciation lessons with videos as a learning guide and speaking practices that evaluate the user's accuracy of uttering words and speaking. Likewise, Duolingo also contained hundreds of lessons intended for language learning. It is likely users can attain high levels of English proficiency through the extensive lessons provided. Unlike Duolingo and Elsa which teach lessons in micro and macro-English learning, Speak English Conversation learning content and lessons are cantered only on everyday life conversation learning. Various categories and topics provided in this app present rich and appropriate learning opportunities for users to pick up their speaking capabilities in distinct conversation settings.

Regarding accuracy, Elsa showed the best performance in detecting inaccuracy and mispronunciation made by

users. Extensive justification, audio examples, and detailed explanations to improve made learning how to speak easier for users to attain. In addition, the app also addresses vowel sounds, word and sentence stress, intonation, and consonant sounds that highly contribute to proper pronunciation and speaking abilities. However, natural elements such as accent and noise cancellation on background sound may make speaking lessons difficult as suggested by reviews. On the other hand, Duolingo's failure to detect mistakes made during the speaking lessons of the researcher's experience should be avoided. Inaccuracy of feedback and detection may cause users to unconsciously repeat the same mistakes, affecting their learning progress and effectiveness. Undoubtedly, this influences their affective filter when challenged with their learning pace, self-confidence, learning motivation, and interest (Krashen 1989). A high affective filter that is caused by the inefficiency of the app may jeopardize the user's comprehensible input and overall learning experience.

In terms of activities provided in these apps, Duolingo includes lessons and quizzes in the forms of word matching, speaking activities following audio provided, translation, and so on for their lesson content. Elsa also includes lessons with the addition of videos and phonetic transcript, while quizzes are in the form of word matching to audio sound and testing of pronunciation following given audio and text phrases. Nonetheless, Speak English Conversation with countless learning topics offered limited learning activities as compared to the other two apps. Activities are straightforward with conversation transcript, simple multiple-choice questions for the quiz, turn-taking speaking activity, and recording of the whole conversation. A predicted sequence of learning activities may decrease user's interest and motivation, subconsciously lowering their affective filter during their learning progress.

### *Pedagogy*

Analysis and findings found during the content analysis of this study portrayed certain pedagogical features that are exceptionally important for language learning apps. These features include app feedback during lessons, social elements, gamification features, and personalized options for users. Feedback in language learning plays a vital element in stimulating the user's learning progress. The absence of efficient feedback will not guarantee successful learning productivity (Smith & Higgins, 2006). It is argued by Little and Uchida (1998) stating feedback is one of the most important stimuli to learning, they further emphasize responses create awareness for learners, and interaction of assessing errors promotes effective learning. Instant feedback allows students to determine their quality of work and effort as to the knowledge acquired (Krystalli & Arvanitis, 2018). This study found that Duolingo, Elsa, and Speak English Conversation all provide feedback to users. All three apps provide instant feedback after each question and quiz for users, however, the feedback given was not satisfying for Duolingo and Speak English Conversation. Based on Krashen (1989), language learners attain language knowledge in an environment that is beyond their current language level. Hence, effective feedback with extensive justification over mistakes made, detailed explanations, and suggestions for improvement for future attempts would provide quality learning and increase comprehensible input for users. Elsa proved a great pedagogical aspect in feedback when it included these features for their users, it also allows users to click on specific words for more elaborations. Speak English Conversation showed the least interactive feedback with

only 'correct' and 'incorrect' feedback after each question in the quiz. Unfortunately, users may not be able to relate to mistakes made when there is zero input or extensive explanation for them, users will not capture meaningful learning, and this diminishes the effectiveness of learning in general.

From the perspective of social aspects, these apps analysed integrated a certain level of social interaction. Duolingo and Elsa both have leader boards and score boards that allow users to participate with other users for a spot on the board list. Elsa offers an interactive platform called Elsa Communities whereby Elsa users can interact with one another, make friends, open a discussion, and seek assistance. Alternatively, Duolingo includes a language club for its users to communicate and track their team progress, this app also offers an opportunity to start a discussion in the comment section of each question for users to exchange opinions. The accessibility and communication capabilities from the social participation of these apps can boost learning motivation. Barcene et al. (2015) commented that countless apps have inadequate social interaction. This can be seen in Speak English Conversation which showed the lack of social engagement made available for users, and no opportunity for participation and interaction among users throughout the language lessons. Supporting statement by Barcene et al. (2015), there also seems to be a lack of collaboration features in these apps. Users are not able to learn and work together with others to solve language activities, language learning is highly learned independently.

Fithriani (2021) emphasized the significant attention towards gamification or gamified language learning along the robust and revolutionary technologies advancement, especially in the field of language education. Gamification features are found through the in-depth analysis of this study. The familiar features included in gamification learning tools are rewards, scoreboards, mistake constraints, and time restrictions. Gamification features are widely seen in the learning design of Duolingo, it offers users rewards in the form of gems tokens, XP points, and badges. This app also includes mistake constraints in the feature of a heart, users are limited to five mistakes before their learning progress is paused. Mistakes made directly affect the user's time constraints in the learning process, the user needs to wait a few hours for the hearts to reload before continuing the lessons. Regrettably, limiting users to mistakes and time restrictions could negatively affect users, blocking their mental capacity to learn, and increase users' affective filter (Krashen, 1989).

### *Apps Design*

The apps analysed in this study looked into several features of the app design. Features include integration of multimedia, pop-ups, and ads, and technical and app support. The findings of this study show that all three of these apps employ integration of multimedia in their lessons, activities, and overall learning design. It is found that Duolingo includes text, images, animation, and sounds; Elsa has multimedia integration of text, images, animation, charts, sounds, and videos; Speak English Conversation includes text, images, and sounds. Duolingo utilizes animation and images during their lessons the most when introducing new content to users, while Elsa is the only app among the three to include video as a medium of their learning. Varies animation images and the inclusion of video content during lesson learning enable users to stay interested and motivated, users receive learning content not only through reading the text but are engaged through their listening and analysing

capabilities utilized when watching videos and animations. These features may also boost users' understanding substantially and the amount of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1989) during their learning. However, not all media features in the app are well-designed. Speak English Conversation lessons are majorly dependent on long text of conversation scripts, audio of the conversation scripts, and images to represent the speaker in the conversation. Learning progress could be more efficient by incorporating other forms of relevant and interesting media to increase user's comprehensible input. According to Beach & O'Brien (2015), there is a great possibility for students to remain motivated and participate in active English learning through the multimedia integration of downloaded digital tools. Hence, it is imperative to include various forms of multimedia features in these apps for users to remain motivated and interested in learning.

Ads in between lesson learning are the common pop-up elements found in this study's learning app. All these apps analyzed include pop-up ads that appear after every lesson, which may be very distracting and irritating to the learning progress of the user. Even when it is mentioned by developers of Duolingo and Elsa that these ads make learning free, users could not help but complain. Most of the pop-up ads are to promote in-app purchases to upgrade from the free to the paid version, this is aligned with Sweeny & Moore (2012) emphasizing developers' dependency on in-app upgrades or short ads in between usage of the app to cover the marketing expenses. While these ads may be disturbing and could increase user's affective filter (Krashen 1989), ads have a reason to exist, especially from the perspectives of app developers.

The findings show that all the apps provide app support for users. Speak English Conversation provides a feedback option in the form of email, users can access the link through the support page and any feedback would be directed straight to the support team. On the other hand, Duolingo and Elsa have the report button for easier feedback access. Users can access this feature after every question in the lesson, users are free to click on some of the suggested and common feedback categories. Duolingo and Elsa provide constant and regular app updates based on user's feedback for a better learning experience, assuring users that their concerns are heard and developers' initiative to restructure the app-built aligning to users' interests. Regrettably, Speak English Conversation is not well up to date as no recent version update made by app developers.

Table 4. Comparison of App Features among Duolingo, ELSA, and English-Speaking Conversation Apps

Category	Duolingo	ELSA	Speak English Conversation
Objectives	Key Words stated	Short phrase of objectives stated	Key words stated
Learning content & accuracy	Lessons and quizzes in the form of multiple-choice question, translation, and word match.	Lessons in the form of multiple-choice questions, videos, record speaking.	Lessons in the form of dialogue conversation listening, speaking recording and multiple-choice question quiz.
	Pronunciation inaccuracy		

	detected.	Pronunciation inaccuracy detected.	No inaccuracy detected.
Assessment	Placement test	Placement test	No assessment
Feedback	Instant feedback after each question, no extensive explanation	Instant feedback after each question, offers extensive explanation	Instant feedback of correct and incorrect answers only, no extensive explanation
Social Interaction & context	Leader board, language club. Learners cannot collaborate in learning activities but are able to comment and discuss.	Leader board, ELSA communities. Learners cannot collaborate directly in learning activities but are able to interact and discuss especially through ELSA communities.	Learners cannot collaborate in learning activities.
Gamification	Heart, gems, XP 5 mistakes (heart) limit	No mistake limit	No mistake limit
Multimedia integration	Animation, text, images, sounds	Text, animation, videos, images, sounds, charts	Text, images, sounds
Pop-up elements	Has ads after every lesson	Has ads after every lesson	Has ads after every lesson
App Support & transaction	Updates about once to twice every week  Send feedback to developers through report button  Has in-app purchases (Duolingo Plus)	Updates about once every week  Send feedback to developers through report button  Has in-app purchases (ELSA Pro)	Updates about three times per year, but latest version was updated once in 2020  Send feedback to developers via email  Has in-app purchases (Removal Ads & Offline Mode)
Others	Saves learning progress  Has user's overall learning achievement	Saves learning progress  Has user's overall learning achievement	Does not save learning progress  No overall user's learning achievement

## Implication

Mobile application is an effective approach to stimulate positive change in users' behaviour and attitude towards language learning. It is common in this advanced and fast-paced learning environment we are living in to witness the direct integration of technology into the education curriculum. Blending fun technology elements with active learning in a leisure game-like environment through ESL learning apps helps to increase users' engagement and motivation which eventually contributes to better learning and knowledge retention. Proponents of mobile apps in language learning assert that gamification features-based apps enhance users' problem-solving and thinking skills, besides encouraging cooperative and collaborative learning. Through collaborative learning, users can interact and communicate for greater creation and knowledge sharing (Anderson, 2007).

In this digital age, users can become autonomous and independent learners as they take sole responsibility for their learning while using the mobile app. In the context of language learning apps, the apps analysed support Krashen's theory, especially in terms of autonomous and independent learning. This is because students can use the speaking app to study on their own time, anywhere and whenever they desire. They can enhance their level of "+1" at their desired pace without having to depend on anyone to teach them.

From the practical pedagogy perspective, language learning apps have been accepted as a fun method to learn. This is attributed to multimedia integration and app elements such as appealing colour, animations, interesting videos, images, clear audio, helpful text, and organized charts found in the language apps. The fun elements help users to increase their interest and intrinsic motivation to learn in an entertaining environment. Application of language learning through English learning apps provides a partial solution to users' poor motivation and engagement in traditional classroom learning. It could also be a remedy for users who find themselves alienated by traditional instructional methods. Learning to speak could be a challenge to many, users may be shy to speak out in class or to partake in any discussion. With language learning apps made accessible to everyone, users may opt for fun speaking learning lessons through digital apps instead.

Furthermore, fun learning elements in language learning apps help to enhance users' attention, interest, and creativity and motivate them to learn. Çağlar and Kocadere (2016) reminded us that users' diversity in their learning style remains a major challenge in the implementation of learning. It is a fact that everyone has their style of learning, thus, they may demonstrate different reactions toward language learning apps. Users are free to select the learning content they wish to learn, and set target duration learning, which allows users' free control to dictate the flow of their learning. This supports personalized learning as learning content is developed based on the characteristics of the users. Language learning apps could be used to create a positive learning experience apps that have been extensively used by users globally, enable users to engage and learn through their digital gadgets outside the classroom activities. This helped users to improve their learning experiences (Zhao, 2019). Language learning apps significantly allow users to take responsibility for their learning.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study show all three speaking language learning apps include app features in the categories of curriculum, pedagogy, and design. Even when each of the apps analysed contains these categories, the app features need amendments and improvement for a better learning experience. Such advancement includes the addition of social aspects features, providing varies multimedia integration, including extensive feedback, and limitations of pop-up distractions. mobile learning becoming an increasingly popular trend in the language learning field, there is a critical need for educators to understand the design, implementation, and impacts of language learning through mobile applications to harness its benefits. The undertaken study revealed the most common speaking apps recommended are Duolingo, Elsa, and English-Speaking Conversation. There is limited literature to evaluate language learning app quality, in response to this, this study investigated app features of chosen speaking learning app. The findings can serve as a guide for parents, educators, app developers, curious language learners, and policymakers to select suitable English learning apps.

The impact of pandemic learning has resulted in a drastic shift from traditional classroom lectures to technology-integrated online learning. This has created an opportunity for educators to evolve their teaching practices through the incorporation of language learning apps and mobile apps that have shown immense increases in learner's attention, motivation, communication, and healthy learning. Furthermore, the drastic shift to home-based or self-learning creates the perfect chance for app developers all over the world to build educational apps for learners. This study recommends opportunities for future research. Future research could explore the potential of other apps that were not chosen in this study. This study only chose apps that are free as it is accessible to every user, future studies could look into paid apps and investigate the differences and the advantages of purchasing paid language learning apps. Additionally, future studies should explore beyond the context of the evaluation app checklist. The evaluation app checklist in this study is limited to three big categories curriculum, pedagogy, and app design. Researching more categories or extensive features beyond this checklist would provide substantial discoveries for educators, app developers, and language learning app users.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia under research grant No. GG-2021-003 and GG-2022-007 for funding the research.

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## Research on the Parameters Influencing the Flow Rate and Power of a Rotating Volumetric Pump

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**Abstract:** The paper presents an original constructive solution for conveying some liquids with the help of a rotating volumetric pump. The pump can transport pure or suspended fluids, viscous fluids, polyphase fluids. Compared to reciprocating machines used to transport the same fluid flow rate, the energy consumption is lower at profiled rotating machines because the motor torque at the shaft level is almost entirely transmitted to the transported fluid. The influence of rotor length, radius, and rotating piston height on pump flow rate and driving power is noted. Afterwards, the influence of the functional parameters is presented: pump speed, pressure increase between suction and discharge on flow rate and pump driving power. The increase in machine speed is limited by the fact that the speed of the fluid in the suction connection of the rotating machine must not exceed approximately 1 m/s. The effective efficiency of this machine, which can also be used as a fan or low-pressure compressor is clearly superior to other similar machines in the field of fluid flow.

**Keywords:** rotating volumetric pump, profiled rotors, rotating pistons

**Citation:** Fischer-Szava G., Adil Abdul-Nabe R., Ghioca S.A., Constantin M., Băran N., & Dăescu (Duiculete) G., (2024). Research on the parameters influencing the flow rate and power of a rotating volumetric pump. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in*

*Education and Science* (pp. 507-518), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

This paper continues the theoretical and experimental research in the field of rotating machines equipped with profiled rotors; this research aims to improve the actual efficiency of rotating machines. The efficiency increase can also take place by optimizing the interior architecture of these machines; there are different shapes for both the rotating pistons and the shape of the rotors [1][2]. To build the rotors, a calculation program was developed and later the processing of the rotors was carried out at a numerical processing center (C.N.C) [3].

In the field of fluid hydrodynamics, machines are divided into two categories [4][5]:

1. Motor machines in which the main purpose is to yield maximum mechanical work to the machine to be driven.

2. Working machines, which must be constructed so as to absorb a minimum mechanical work at the coupling.

In working machines (fans, pumps, compressors) it is aimed to have a certain correlation between the internal architecture of the machine and the fluid flow parameters [6][7]. In rotating machines, the motor moment received from the outside is  $M = F \cdot b \cdot \sin\alpha$ , where  $\alpha=90^\circ$ , so the product between the force (F) and the arm (b) is maximum; this is a main advantage of rotating machines with profiled rotors [8][9]. In [10] the authors states that the presence of blades on the rotor is a significant feature affecting the device performance. In [11] the effect of geometry and rotor speed on power consumption and shear rate profile in the investigated mixer is discussed.

Considering the theoretical and experimental research carried out, this rotating working machine can be used in agriculture to compensate for the soil water deficit, ensuring the controlled supply of soil and plants with the amounts of water according to the calculated soil moisture maintenance regime, but also in pumping stations to remove excess water from the soil and drainage, as this rotating machine can also transport dirty water with solid particles in suspension.

The positive effect foreseen by the modernization of the land improvements is the improvement of the operating efficiency of the pumping aggregates, the reduction of electricity consumption and implicitly the reduction of expenses for water pumping. Also, this rotating machine, depending on the materials used in its construction, can transport food fluids such as oil, wine, alcohol, spirit, etc. The construction of the rotating machine with profiled rotors of the original shape could be constructed on a larger scale, depending on the water requirement requested by the beneficiary.

## Method

Figure 1 shows three cross-sections through the rotating machine, offset by  $90^\circ$ . Two gears (7) are mounted on

the machine shafts (7 and 9), which constitute a cylindrical gear that ensures a synchronous rotation of the two rotors [12]. Thus, the pistons of the rotor (6) enter the cavities (10) of the lower rotor (3).

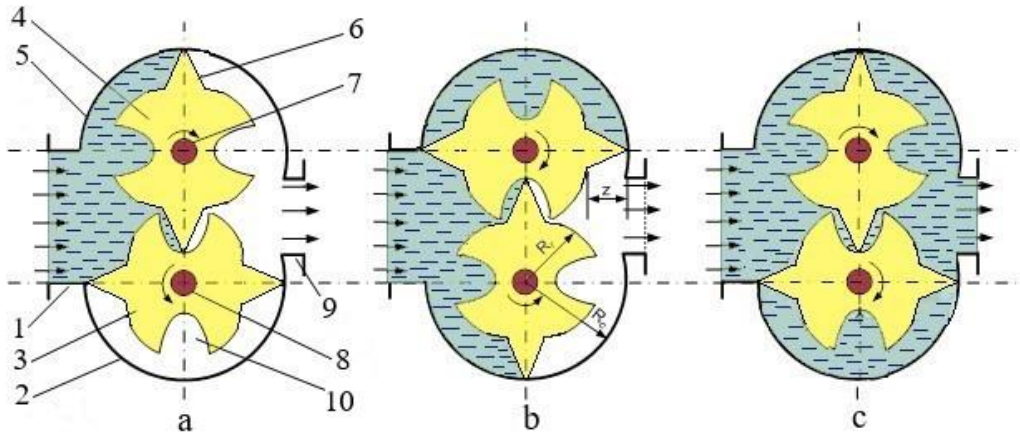


Figure 1. The working principle of the rotating volumetric machine

1 -suction chamber; 2 -lower case; 3 -lower rotor; 4 -upper rotor; 5 -upper case; 6 -rotating piston; 7 -driven shaft; 8 -driving shaft; 9 -discharge chamber; 10 -cavity into which the piston of the upper rotor enters.

The fluid in the chamber (1) is taken up by the rotating pistons (6) and transported to the discharge chamber (9).

After one rotation of the machine, the fluid in the useful volume  $V_u$  (figure 1.c), that is, in the space between the pistons, the lower case (1) and the lower rotor (2), will be sent to the discharge chamber.

At a complete rotation of the shaft (9) two such volumes will be transported from suction to discharge [13][14].

$$\dot{V}_u = 2 \cdot \left( \frac{\pi R_c^2}{2} - \frac{\pi R_r^2}{2} \right) \cdot l \left[ m^3 / rot \right] \quad \square \square \square$$

The casing radius ( $R_c$ ) is the sum of the rotor radius ( $R_r$ ) and the piston height ( $z$ ), (fig. 1.b).

$$R_c = R_r + z [m] \quad (2)$$

result:

$$\dot{V}_u = \pi \cdot l \cdot z \cdot (z + 2R_r) \left[ m^3 / rot \right] \quad (3)$$

The volumetric flow rate of fluid pumped by a single rotor of length  $l$  [m] and speed  $n_r$  [rot/min] will be:

$$\dot{V}_u = \pi \cdot l \cdot z \cdot (z + 2R_r) \cdot \frac{n_r}{60} \left[ m^3 / s \right] \quad (4)$$

Since the machine has two identical rotors, the fluid flow through the machine will be:

$$\dot{V}_u = 2 \cdot \left( \frac{\pi R_c^2}{2} - \frac{\pi R_r^2}{2} \right) \cdot l \left[ m^3 / rot \right] \quad (5)$$

The driving power of the two-rotor rotating machine can be calculated as:

$$\dot{V}_u = 2 \cdot \left( \frac{\pi R_c^2}{2} - \frac{\pi R_r^2}{2} \right) \cdot l \left[ m^3 / rot \right] \quad (6)$$

where:

\*  $\dot{V}_u$  – volumetric flow rate;

\*  $\Delta p$  – represents the pressure increase between suction and discharge [ $N/m^2$ ].

For the same pressure value, the volumetric efficiency is higher in large-sized pumps, because the volumetric losses increase more slowly than the flow rate increase. In low-flow pumps, achieving high volumetric efficiency involves processing with high technological precision.

## Results

In Figure 2 the two gears (7) are mounted outside the machine on the shafts (3) and (4); lubrication of the cylindrical gear formed by these gears is provided by the oil in the box (5).

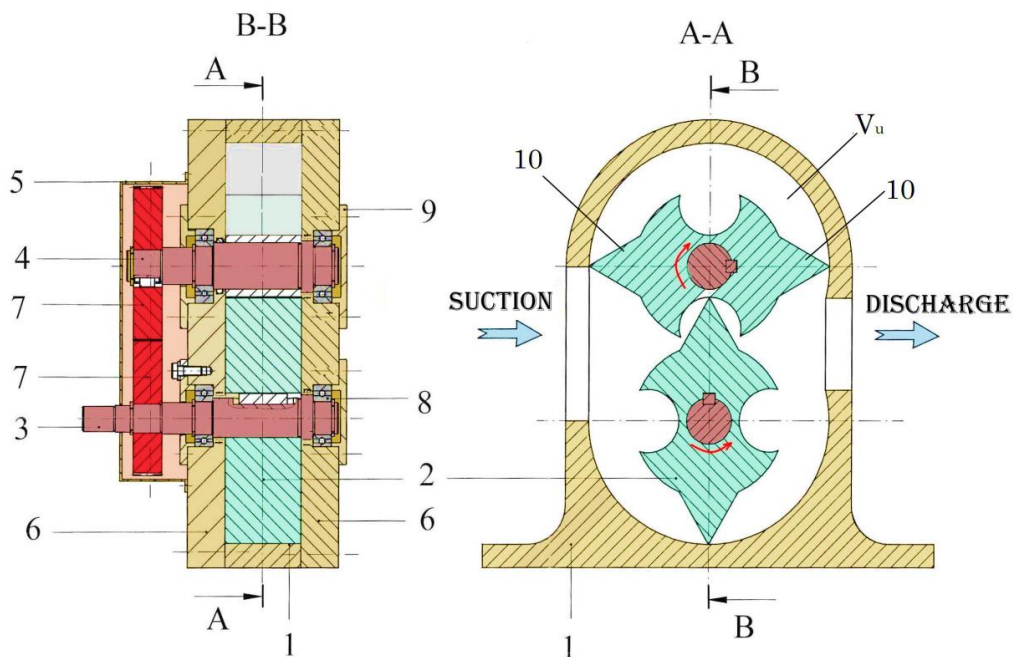


Figure 2. Rotating volumetric pump with profiled rotors

- 1 -oval casing; 2 -profiled rotor; 3 -driving shaft; 4 -driven shaft; 5 -oil box; 6 -side wall; 7 -gear wheels;  
8 -bearing; 9 -bearing cover; 10 -rotating piston.

The theoretical driving power of the rotating machine can be calculated from relation (6) where [15][16]:

$$\Delta p = \rho \cdot g \cdot \Delta H \left[ N / m^2 \right] \quad (7)$$

where:

\* $\Delta p$  – pressure increase;

\* $\Delta H$  – pumping height [m];

\*  $\rho$  – density of the transported fluid [kg/m<sup>3</sup>].

The total pressure increase achieved by the pump ( $\Delta p$ ) changes when the pump speed increases; the hydrostatic load and pressure losses occurring in the hydraulic circuit of the pump are rated at about 4 mH<sub>2</sub>O.

$$\Delta p = \rho_{H_2O} \cdot g \cdot H = 10^3 \cdot 9.81 \cdot 4 = 0.3924 \cdot 10^5 \text{ Pa} \quad (8)$$

Next, based on the values of the flows previously obtained, one can calculate the theoretical driving power. For  $n_r=500$  [rpm], substitute the values in relation (6) and obtain:

Variant I – piston in a rectangular blade shape (Figure 3):

$$P = \dot{V}_u \cdot \Delta p = 0.010205 \cdot 0.3924 \cdot 10^5 = 400.44 \text{ [W]} \quad (9)$$

Performing similar calculations, the values of P are obtained for the speeds of 100, 200, 300, 400 and 500 rpm shown in table number 1.

Table 1. Table values of  $P = f(n_r)$

$n_r$ [rpm]	100	200	300	400	500
P [W]	80.08	160.17	240.26	320.35	400.44

Variant II – piston in an isosceles triangle shape (fig. 3):

$$P = 0.00983 \cdot 0.49 \cdot 10^5 = 481.67 \text{ [W]} \quad (10)$$

Table 2. Table values of  $P = f(n_r)$

$n_r$ [rpm]	100	200	300	400	500
P [W]	77.14	154.29	231.43	308.58	385.72

Variant III– curvilinear shaped piston (fig. 3):

$$P = 0.00983 \cdot 0.49 \cdot 10^5 = 481.67 \text{ [W]} \quad (11)$$

Table 3. Table values of  $P = f(n_r)$

$n_r$ [rpm]	100	200	300	400	500
P [W]	74.93	149.87	224.81	299.75	374.69

Based on the data from tables 1, 2 and 3, the function for the three constructive variants was graphically represented in Figure 4.



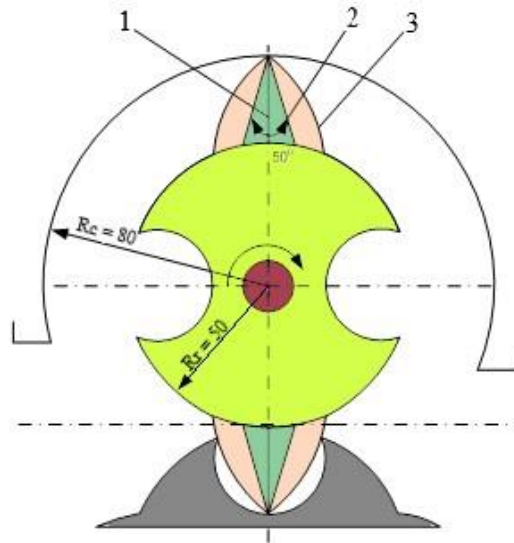


Figure 3. Rotor with rotating pistons

1 – rectangular blade; 2 – triangular profile; 3 – curvilinear profile

Variant I – piston in a rectangular blade shape  $R_r = 50$  [mm],  $z = 30$  [mm];

Variant II: The rotating pistons have the shape of an isosceles triangle  $R_r = 50$  [mm],  $z = 30$  [mm];

Variant III: The rotating pistons have a curvilinear shape  $R_r = 50$  [mm],  $z = 30$  [mm].

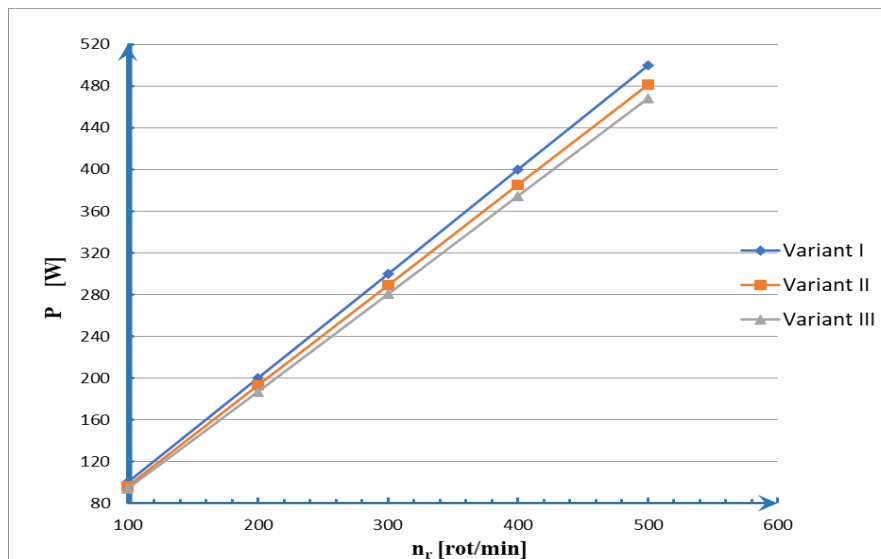


Figure 4. Graphical representation of the function  $P = f(n_r)$  for the three constructive variants.

Figure 4 shows a linear dependence between the theoretical drive power and the speed of the rotating machine.

The calculation of the power consumed by viscous friction between the tip of the rotating piston and the case is made for a single rotor. The gap size between the piston tip and the rotating machine case is of size  $s \times l$ . From

the paper [17],  $s = 0.01 \cdot 10^{-3}$  m and the length of the rotor is  $l = 50 \cdot 10^{-3}$  m.

The velocity of the fluid will be:

$$w = \omega \cdot r_p \text{ [m/s]} \quad (12)$$

where:  $\omega$  – angular speed [rad/s];  $r_p$  – piston radius [m].

The viscous frictional force between the piston tip and the case will be:

$$F_f = \tau \cdot S \text{ [N]} \quad (13)$$

where S represents the friction surface in the radial direction, which is taken equal to half a cylinder of radius  $r_p$  and length l:

$$S = \pi \cdot r_p \cdot l \text{ [m}^2\text{]} \quad (14)$$

result:

$$F_f = \eta \frac{\pi \cdot \omega \cdot r_p^2 \cdot l}{s} \text{ [N]} \quad (15)$$

The friction moment between the piston tip and the fluid is given by the relation:

$$M_f = F_f \cdot r_p = \eta \frac{\pi \cdot \omega^2 \cdot r_p^3 \cdot l}{s} \text{ [W]} \quad (16)$$

Since the rotating machine has two profiled rotors, the power required to overcome viscous friction on radial surfaces will be:

$$P_{m,r} = 2(\omega \cdot M_f) = \eta \frac{2\pi \cdot \omega^2 \cdot r_p^3 \cdot l}{s} \text{ [W]} \quad (17)$$

The following are known:  $\eta_{H_2O} = 10,4 \cdot 10^{-4} \text{ [N} \cdot \text{s/m}^2\text{]}$ ;  $\omega = \frac{2\pi \cdot n_r}{60} = \frac{\pi \cdot n_r}{30}$ ;  $r_p = (50 - 0,01) \cdot 10^{-3} \text{ [m]}$ .

For water and  $n_r = 200$  rpm it results:

$$P_{m,r} = 2(\omega \cdot M_f) = 10,4 \cdot 10^{-4} \frac{2 \cdot 3,14 \cdot 20,93^2 \cdot (49,99 \cdot 10^{-3})^3 \cdot 50 \cdot 10^{-3}}{0,01 \cdot 10^{-3}} = 1,788 \text{ [W]} \quad (18)$$

Carrying out the calculations in a similar way for speeds between 100...500 rpm, the data from table 4 results.

Table 4. Table values of  $P_{m,r} = f(n_r)$

$n_r$ [rpm]	100	200	300	400	500
$\omega$ [rad/s]	10.467	20.933	31.400	41.867	52.333
$P_{m,r}$ [W]	0.446	1.7877	4.0223	7.1507	11.1730

Based on the data obtained in table 4, the graph of the power function required to overcome viscous friction was drawn in Figure 5.

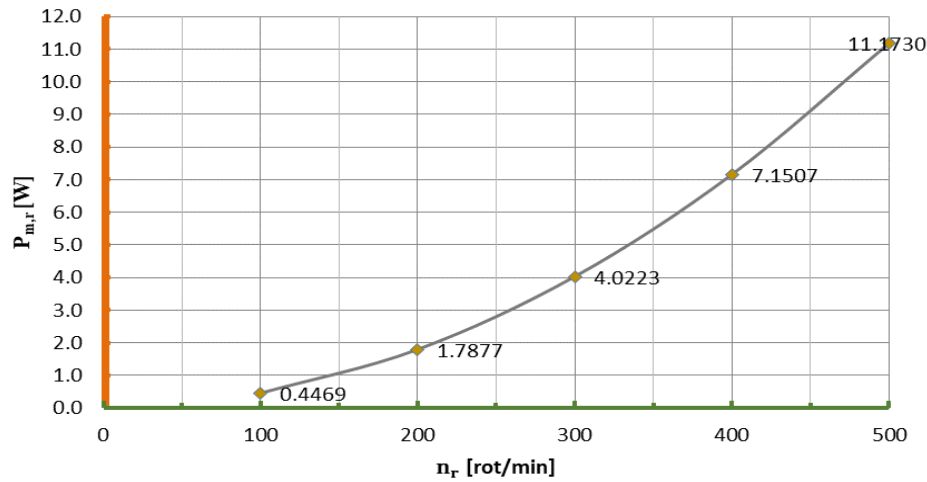


Figure 5. Graphical representation of the function  $P_{m,r} = f(n_r)$ .

From figure 5 one can see that the value of  $P_{m,r}$  increases with the increase in the speed of the rotating machine. Calculation of the power consumed by viscous friction between the rotors and the case side walls of the will be:

$$P_{m,f} = 2(\omega \cdot M_f) [W] \tag{19}$$

The resisting elementary moment due to viscous friction between the rotor and the casing walls will be:

$$M_r = \frac{\pi \cdot \eta \cdot \omega}{s} \cdot (r_r^4 - r_a^4) [N \cdot m] \tag{20}$$

where:

- the outer radius of the rotor is:  $r_r = 50 \cdot 10^{-3} [m]$ ;
- the radius of the shaft on which the rotor is mounted is:  $r_a = 9 \cdot 10^{-3} [m]$ .

result:

$$P_{m,f} = 2 \frac{\pi \cdot \eta \cdot \omega^2}{s} \cdot (r_r^4 - r_a^4) [W] \tag{21}$$

Performing the calculations for revolutions between 100...500 rpm, the data presented in table 3.7 results.

$$P_{m,f} = 10.4 \cdot 10^{-4} \frac{2 \cdot 3.14 \cdot 20.93^2}{0.01 \cdot 10^{-3}} \left[ (50 \cdot 10^{-3})^4 - (9 \cdot 10^{-3})^4 \right] = 1.786 [W] \tag{22}$$

Table 5. Table values of  $P_{m,r} = f(n_r)$

$n_r$ [rpm]	100	200	300	400	500
$\omega$ [rad/s]	10.467	20.933	31.400	41.867	52.333
$P_{m,r}$ [W]	0.4467	1.7869	4.0205	7.1475	11.1680

Based on the data obtained in table 5, the graph of the power function required to overcome viscous friction was drawn in Figure 6.

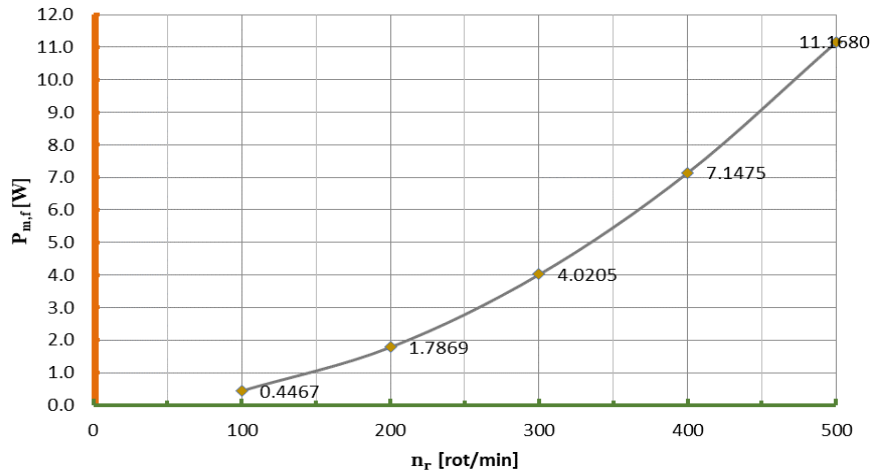


Figure 6. Graphical representation of the function  $P_{m,r} = f(n_r)$ .

Calculation of the total power consumed by viscous friction between the rotors and the casing will be:

$$P_t = P_{m,r} + P_{m,f} [W] \tag{23}$$

Based on the data in table 4 and table 5, the data in table 6 resulted.

Table 6. Table values of  $P_t = f(n_r)$

$n_r$ [rpm]	100	200	300	400	500
$P_{m,r}$ [W]	0.8936	3.5746	8.0427	14.2982	22.3409

Based on the data obtained in table 6, the graph of the power function required to overcome viscous friction was drawn in Figure 7.

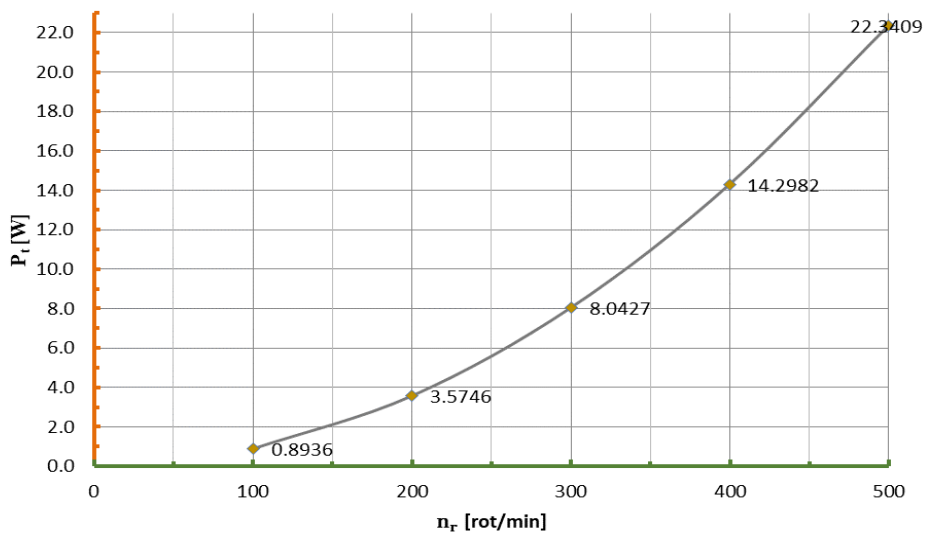


Figure 6. Graphical representation of the function  $P_t = f(n_r)$ .

The relations that determine the performance of a machine at various operating regimes, different from the calculation (nominal) one, are called the characteristics of the respective machine.

Relations can be analytical, graphical, and theoretically or experimentally determined.

## Discussion

The flow rate for variant I is the highest, then the drive power will also be higher (variant I).

In Figure 6 the function  $P = f(p)$  is graphically represented for two constructive variants:

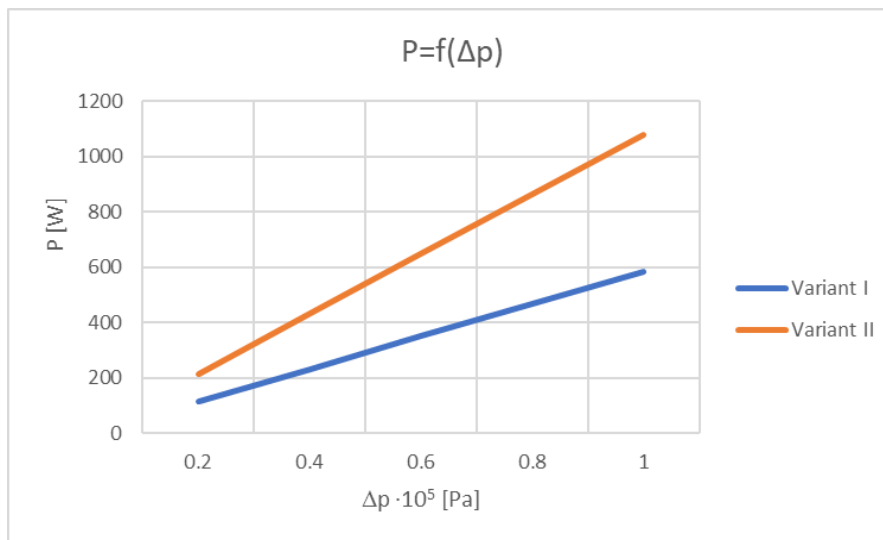


Figure 6. Graphical representation of the function  $P=f(\Delta p)$  for two constructive variants.

From figure 6 one can observe that the drive power of the rotating machine increases similarly with the increase in pressure achieved by the machine.

The pump flow rate varies as follows:

- Depending on the geometric parameters:  $l$  – rotor length [m];  $R_r$  – rotor radius [m];  $z$  – piston height [m].
- Depending on the functional parameters:  $n_r$  – machine speed [rpm];  $\Delta p$  – pressure increase [ $N/m^2$ ].

## Conclusion

1. The driving power is influenced by the flow rate (that is, by the parameters mentioned above) by the pressure increase ( $\Delta p$ ) achieved by the pump between suction and discharge, by the nature of the transported fluid.

The pressure increase achieved by the pump must overcome the hydrostatic load and the pressure losses that occur on both the suction circuit and the discharge circuit of the pump.

2. In variant I (pistons in the form of rectangular blades) the flow rate transported by the rotating machine will be the highest compared to variants II and III.

This high flow will require a higher driving power of the machine  $P_I > P_{II} > P_{III}$  [W].

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# Unlocking the Power of Perception: Exploring the Influence of Perceived Value on Mobile Payment Adoption in Saudi Arabia


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**Abstract:** Mobile payments are one of the modern, convenient, and secure growing payment options. It has evolved into a different way to pay than with cash or a credit card. A number of reasons have influenced the adoption of M-payment. This study aims to investigate a few of the variables that have been postulated to influence M-payment usage. Because of the recent pandemic (covid-19), M-payment use has grown in Saudi Arabia. People were forced to rely on online transactions or near-field communication. However, some people are hesitant to use it because they distrust technology or are afraid of fraud. Numerous factors have been put forth as potential influences on how people behave when using M-payment. Nearly all the participants in this study, which took place in Saudi Arabia, were Saudi citizens. Perceived value, convenience value, and low risk value all correlate favorably with the inclination to use M-payment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The link between the monetary worth on the other hand, is antagonistic. the social value and enjoyment value impact is neutral.

**Keywords:** Mobile payments, Perceived value, Technology adoption, Economic growth, Sustainable development, Digital transformation

**Citation:** Al-Durries, R. F., Adnan, N., Sanyal, S. (2024). Unlocking the Power of Perception: Exploring the Influence of Perceived Value on Mobile Payment Adoption in Saudi Arabia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 519-535), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

This study's main terms are M-payments, perceived risk, perceived value, convenience value, social value, enjoyment value, monetary value, and propensity to use M-payment. M-payment is a term for using a mobile device to make purchases or payments. The development of mobile technology and wireless communication

rendered this payment method obsolete. It facilitates consumer payments (Au & Kauffman, 2008). It operates similarly to conventional purchasing in that consumers exchange money for the product or service's value (Au and Kauffman, 2008). M-payment is essentially the payment of products or services via mobile devices. It contains both near-field communication (NFC) and remote payment methods. (Karnouskos and Fokus, 2004; Chandra, Srivastava and Theng, 2010). To make a remote M-payment, the user must possess the business's or customer's payment information, or it may be stored in the application (de Reuver & Ondrus, 2017). Similar to a point of sale (POS), proximity payments necessitate a connection between the mobile device and the card reader in order to transmit information. It operates by storing card information in one of the mobile secure software or embedded hardware element applications, such as the most popular wallet (de Reuver and Ondrus, 2017). Near field communication (NFC) is the technology used by wallet apps to transmit payment information by wafting a mobile device in close proximity to a card reader without making contact (Tan et al., 2014). The remote M-payment is the first type of M-payment and a vital component of M-commerce payment (Kreyer et al., 2002; Slade, Williams, and Dwivedi, 2013). However, proximity M-payment is an emerging method of payment that supplements cash and credit cards (Slade, Williams, et al., 2015). Over time, this payment method began to demonstrate its efficacy and convenience to acquire consumers' trust. Utilization of proximity M-payment is dependent on consumer trust in this technology and their willingness to substitute it for cash and cards. M-payment is superior to other payment methods for both consumers and merchants. It is more straightforward, expedient, and practical. It is possible to increase the number of daily transactions, reduce transaction costs, and increase consumer loyalty. Numerous studies investigate the reasons for M-payment's sluggish global adoption, despite the technology's many benefits. Apple Pay and Android Pay have contributed to a rise in M-payment users, but it is uncertain whether this trend will persist. Statista is a company that specializes in market and consumer data. It anticipated a rise in M-payment utilization. However, additional research is required to determine why this increase was delayed and what obstacles prevented people from taking advantage of it. The complexity of the infrastructure and the familiarity with extant payment methods is one of these obstacles. However, these obstacles progressively began to diminish. Numerous factors, including privacy and security, positively influence the adoption of mobile payments. RFID (radio frequency identification) and NFC (near-field communication) advancements have made M-payment more user-friendly, secure, and pervasive. 52% of 2015 study participants are conversant with M-payment, but only 18% actually use it. Currently, mobile devices are an integral part of society, and M-payment usage is on the rise. However, numerous studies indicate that individuals' adoption of M-payment has increased due to a variety of factors. Examples include technological acceptability, perceived utility, social influence, perceived convenience, trust, cost, and compatibility. According to a study (Koenig-Lewis, Marquet, Palmer, and Zhao, 2015), M-payment adoption is affected by perceived utility, convenience, risk, technology knowledge, and social value. Age, security, and convenience all influence the adoption of mobile payments, according to a 2014 Arvidsson study (Kiser.A, Washington.R, Torres.R, 2018). This study does not examine gender differences in the adoption of M-payments, nor does it examine how reducing perceived risk influences the propensity to adopt M-payments. These two absences are regarded as research spaces. This study's variables are perceived risk, perceived value, value of convenience, social value, enjoyment value, and monetary value. The user's sense of loss or insecurity resulting from a lack of trust in the technology is perceived as a risk. (Alhallaq, Younas, Kamal, and Champion, 2019). Perceived value

is the value a customer obtains from utilizing a service in comparison to the value that service provides. This service's functionality is essentially its convenience value. The positive self-perception of the m-payment consumer is social value. Enjoyment reflects the positive emotions experienced by the consumer as a result of utilizing the service. (Alhallaq, Younas, Kamal, and Champion, 2019) The monetary value is the value the consumer receives for the quantity paid, such as a discount or savings. Understanding specific psychological and behavioral economic concepts in relation to M-payment. M-payments, perceived risk, perceived value, convenience value, social value, enjoyment value, monetary value, propensity to use are the key terms of this study.

### **Main Research Contributions:**

M-payment simplified people's lives and accelerated and facilitated payment. It enhances e-commerce and the economy, which is part of Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision. After the introduction of covid, the use of M-payment by Saudis increased because people found it convenient to use in near field communication and e-shopping because it reduces the need to interact with others. M-payment was intriguing not only because of its simplicity and convenience, but also because of its enjoyment and social value. This research will aid in gaining a thorough understanding of the factors that encourage Saudis to utilize M-payment, there forward better understanding of how to enhance the economy in KSA by using better technology in payment . This study employs a theoretical model of the additional values of M-payments and how these added values affect its use among Saudis. This research is supported by data analytics derived from survey responses, and it will aid other researchers in making theoretical contributions given the paucity of research on this topic. The research examines Saudis using a number of suggested factors that influence the propensity to use M-payment. Despite its extended availability, this technology was adopted slowly. It has also been stated that the pandemic had an effect on the adoption of M-payment. This study contributes to our understanding of the adoption of m-payment in Saudi Arabia by discussing in detail how certain factors influence the perceived value of m-payment and, in turn, the propensity to use it. Future theoretical contributions could include investigating why users are reluctant to implement this technology and how factors such as the covid pandemic have affected its adoption. These factors are perceived risk, perceived value, convenience value, social value, enjoyment value, monetary value.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Problem implementing m-payment in KSA:**

Even though M-payment has a number of appealing features, research indicates that its adoption has been slower than anticipated. In 2007, this study was conducted. Another study conducted in 2022 (Mustafa.A.Raza.A.Kiani.U.Ullah.S.2022) confirmed that m-payment usage is still minimal in several nations despite its many advantages. According to (Phillips.T,2020), near field communication (NFC) M-payment accounted for 25 percent of all point-of-sale payments in Saudi Arabia in September 2020. The managing director of Saudi Payments, Fahad Al-Akeel, stated that the development of digital and mobile payments has

exceeded expectations. Al-Akeel suggested that Covid-19 influenced individuals to switch to contactless payment, and that this was the primary reason for its growth (Phillips.T, 2020). According to a study (Alabdan.R, Sulphey, 2020) on the comprehension of proximity payment in Saudi Arabia, acceptance of M-payment varies by gender. Males take M-payments more readily than females. In general, males are influenced by innovation and compatibility, while females are influenced more by usefulness and social pressure. (Alabdan.R, 2019) conducted research at Saudi Arabia's Majmaah University. Among the 257 individuals who responded to the survey, 198 use a smart phone and 143 use M-payment; 60.6% were females and 39.39% were males. People between the ages of 25 and 34 have the greatest percentage of M-payment users. The same study identifies security and trust as one of the primary obstacles to using M-payments. In another study conducted by Alswaigh.N and Aloud.M on the factors that influence M-payment adoption in Saudi Arabia, the relationship between M-payment adoption and perceived utility was found to be positive. The main reason why people adopt M-payment is because it simplifies and expedites the payment process. This study also found that perceived usability has a positive correlation with the adoption of mobile payments. Using STC pay, for instance, facilitated the exchange of funds during covid. Similarly, security, facilitating conditions, affirm support, and trust had a substantial impact on the adoption of M-payment. People felt more assured using M-payment during quarantine because they received payment confirmation messages. The purpose of this research is to determine why there is an increase in the use of M-payments in Saudi Arabia and how the added value of M-payments affects consumers' propensity to use them. Adoption of mobile payments is crucial for Saudi Arabia due to its impact on its enterprises and economy. Improving the economy is a component of Saudi Arabia's vision 2030. This research will fill a void in the improvement of the economy by shedding light on the added value of mobile payments and their social effects.

#### *Research Aim and Objectives:*

This study investigates the factors that impact the added value of M-payments and how these factors (perceived value, enjoyment value, convenience value, risk value, social value, and monetary value) influence the propensity to use it. The following objectives are included:

- Examine how these suggested factors affect propensity to use M-payment in Saudi Arabia.
- Determine how these factors influence the added value of M-payment and people's attitudes towards its use in KSA.
- Determine which of these factors have a positive effect on and increase the propensity to use mobile payments.
- Determine which of these factors have a negative impact on the propensity to use mobile payments.
- Having a better understanding of Saudis behavior towards this technology will help them to know how to encourages the use of m-payment by highlighting on the factors that increase the willingness to use it and reducing the factors that decrease the willingness to use it there forward it will enhancing the economy in KSA.

#### *Research Questions:*

- How does perceived value influence the propensity to use M-payment?
- Does the perception of risk prevent individuals from using mobile payment?
- How do monetary value, social value, enjoyment value, risk perception, and convenience value affect the perceived value of M-payments?

#### *History of M-Payment:*

The first mobile payment via brief message services (SMS) occurred in Finland in 1997 (Dahlberg, Guo, and Ondrus, 2015). Using mobile network operators (MNOs), handset manufacturers made M-payment a reality (Ondrus, 2015). Since then, numerous researchers have investigated M-payment, its related issues, and a system that regulates the operation of mobile networks (Heijden, 2002; Dahlberg, Mallat, and Oorni, 2003). M-payment is essentially a digital cash-based transaction that incorporates the contactless feature (Ondrus, 2015), which has become a necessity as e-commerce has evolved into m-commerce (Ondrus and Pigneur, 2006; Chen, 2008). Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and other Asian nations adopted M-payment first (Ondru and Pigneur, 2009). Nokia, Sony, and Philips founded proximity M-payment in 2004. The intent of Near Field Communication (NFC) was to implement a communication protocol using touch-based consumer interaction. When MasterCard and Visa began using this feature in mobile devices, Samsung, Microsoft, and Motorola joined them. Now, all manufacturers of mobile devices support near field communication (de Reuver and Ondrus, 2017). Over the years, as M-payment began to be utilized on a daily basis, the number of researchers investigating this technology and its prospective applications has increased. Typically, researchers will focus on three key areas: the investigation of M-payment strategies and ecosystems, M-payment technology, and M-payment consumer adoption (Dahlberg et al., 2015).

#### *Mobile Payment Technology:*

Payment technology can be discussed at various points. For instance, a greater understanding of the various applications of this technology, a focus on security issues, the discovery of new M-payment solutions, and the improvement of its security.

#### *Perceived Value Theory and its Conceptualizations:*

The theory of perceived value is a value-based theory. It is a theory that based on the value that the customer is expecting or will received that will make them adopt something new. This study employs this theory because of its applicability. Regarding the concept of value in relation to technology, there are various definitions, including perspective, perceived value, consumer value, consumer perceived value, and consumption value (Sánchez-Fernández, Iniesta-Bonilla, and Holbrook, 2009), (Zeithaml, 1988), and (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991). According to Eggert and Ulaga (2002), perceived value can be explained by three common factors. Initially, perceived value is the exchange of benefits and costs. Second, consumers acknowledge that value is a

subjective concept that can be perceived differently by different customers. Third, market alternatives are compared to the perceived value.

## Method

### Research Design:

The purpose of this study is to determine the dependability of the suggested variables in influencing the propensity to adopt M-payment. In order to accomplish this, a survey is conducted to determine the opinions of the public. The quantitative method is utilized to validate hypotheses and theories (Bhandari, P., 2020). The research relies on quantitative methodology, which consists of a survey with various types of multiple-choice questions. Each variable is accompanied by at least four questions or sentences designed to elucidate the influence of that variable on people's propensity to use M-payment. The options represented varying degrees of agreement with this sentence or question. The options are concurred, disagree, agree strongly, disagree strongly, and disagree strongly.

### *Hypotheses:*

Value Perceived (H6): People weigh the perceived value of the technology against the sacrifices or hazards they are taking. Kim et al. (2007) found that the greater the service's benefits, the more willing people are to adopt this new technology. The perceived value of digital hedonic artefacts increases behavioral intent and propensity to provide word-of-mouth recommendations (Turel, Serenko, and Bontis, 2010). Another study (Cocosil and Trabelsi, 2016) indicated that perceived value positively influences behavioral intention. Due to the aforementioned, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H6: Perceived value has a positive impact on willingness to use the M-payment.

Monetary Value (H1): This is the perceived value that customers place on the products or services they purchase. According to Sweeney and Soutar (2001) and Pura (2005), a customer's perception of the value of a product or service is based on the perceived value of the benefits they will receive. According to (Pihlstrom and Brush, 2008), M-payment is used to save money, so consumers view it favorably because it can offer them direct and indirect financial benefits. Direct Financial benefits include cashback, loyalty programs, discounts, promotions, and any other financial incentive that encourages customers to use a company's services (Meuter et al., 2000; Mimouni-Chaabane and Volle, 2010; Liu, Zhao, et al., 2015). The indirect financial benefit is the service that enables users to reduce their spending. (Ching and Hayashi, 2010) It has been demonstrated that customers favor payment methods that allow them to limit or reduce their expenditure, such as credit cards, debit cards, and cash. According to Hayashi (2012), M-payment can help us control expenditures and stick to a budget. (De Kerviler, et al., 2016; Park, et al., 2019) Economic benefits of M-payments have a positive effect on propensity to use it.



H1: Monetary Value of M-payment Has a Positive Impact on the perceived value.

High self-esteem or a positive self-image when utilizing particular services is what is indicated by social values (H2). Some utilized services, such as M-payment, can demonstrate a positive self-image and unique identity (Park et al., 2019). Social value is an additional justification for using M-payment. It may be regarded as an influential factor. There is a positive correlation between customer propensity or intention to use M-payment and social value, according to studies (de Kerviler et al., 2016). When individuals are observed using cutting-edge technology, such as M-payment, they experience a sense of self-respect.

H2: The Social Value of M-payment Increases Its Perceived Value.

Convenience Value (H3): Utilizing M-payment facilitates the completion of various duties and has functional performance. According to Brown (1990), the use of convenience services has four dimensions: time, location, and acquisition. Use and acquisition related to the ease of using M-payment at any time and place reduce the limit to use the service, prevent squandering time, and facilitate access because the device is always on the user's person (Zhou, 2013). According to (de Kerviler et al., 2016; Gao and Waechter, 2017), there is a positive correlation between the convenience offered by M-payment and enrollment in or use of M-payment.

H3: There Is Positive Contribution From M-payment Convenience Value and The Perceived Value.

Enjoyment Value (H4): Emotional value is a crucial factor in people's acceptance of technology. (Sheth et al., 1991; Pura, 2005) "enjoyment value" refers to the positive emotion consumers experience when utilizing this technology. (Pihlstrom and Brush, 2008) Technology payment is not only about utilitarian benefits, but also about emotional value. Several studies have demonstrated a correlation between M-payment and satisfaction (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2015; Cocosila and Trabelsi, 2016). According to other studies (de Kerviler et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019), enjoyment is one of the reasons individuals use M-payment. The subsequent hypothesis is supported by these investigations.

H4: Enjoyment Value of Using M-payment Increases Its Perceived Value.

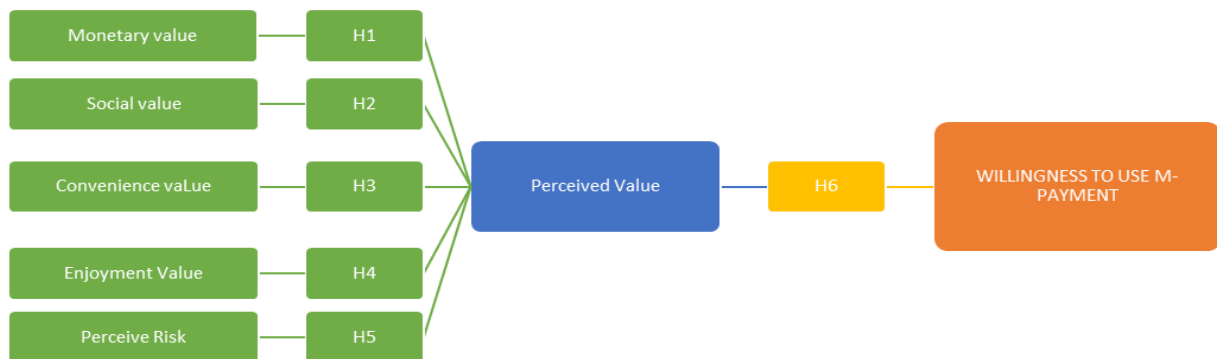
Perceived Risk (H5): The consumer's belief or sense of loss or risk resulting from uncertainty-inducing behaviours that can have negative consequences. This emotion influences consumer behavior, particularly in relation to financial decisions (Slade, Williams, et al., 2015). Intangible and intricate financial services, such as M-payment, instill in some individual's apprehension or a reluctance to use something of which they are unaware, which may have unforeseeable consequences. Customers are more likely to employ this payment method if they are familiar with the monetary transactions (de Kerviler, et al., 2016). Researchers demonstrate that the anticipated risk of M-payment affects the propensity to use it. Using M-payment makes some individuals feel as though they are jeopardizing their safety. According to Chandra et al. (2010), in order for consumers to utilize new technologies such as M-payment, they must have faith in the system. There are three



concepts that influence the propensity to adopt new technology: honesty, competence, and altruism. Integrity is customers' confidence that service providers will fulfil their promises. Customers must be confident that service providers have the necessary skills to fulfil their obligations. Consideration for the consumer's best interests is benevolence (Zhou, 2011). Studies (Slade, Williams, et al., 2015; Khalilzadeh, et al., 2017) have demonstrated the positive effect of trust on the propensity to use M-payment. The value of M-payment is affected by a sense of sacrifice or danger. This was the foundation for the subsequent hypothesis.

H5: Perceived Risk of M-payment has a negative impact on its Perceived Value.

**Hypotheses diagram**



*Research Population:*

According to (Sarstedt and Mooi,2014), "the population is the complete set of cases from which a sample is drawn." In this study, the population consists of the 102 individuals who responded to the survey; 54 are females (52.9%), 48 are males (47.1%), 5 are not Saudi (4.9%), and 97 are Saudi (95.1%). Nonetheless, 95 people (93.1%) reside in Saudi Arabia. 20.6% are between the ages of 18 and 25, 40.2% are between the ages of 26 and 34, 6.9% are between the ages of 35 and 43, and 32.4% are at least 44 years old.

*Research Instrument:*

The questionnaire consists of 30 multiple-choice questions. There are four to five queries for each of the six suggested independent variables to determine how they influence the propensity to use M-payment. In addition, some inquiries concern age, gender, nationality, and level of education. Each option was designated uniquely.

*Pilot Research Study:*

As mentioned previously, six variables influence the propensity to use M-payment in this study. The pilot sample consists of 20 respondent, and it is evaluated using mean, mode, and standard deviation. The mean is the average of the responses. The mode is the response frequency that occurs most frequently. The standard

deviation indicates the mean's reliability, and the closer it is to zero, the more reliable the data. Nonetheless, the first four queries of the survey concern the perceived value of M-payment. These are the questions or sentences: PV1: I prefer mobile payment over cards or currency, PV2: mobile payment has added value for its users, PV3: I am willing to use mobile payment due to its added value, and PV4: the perceived value of using M-payment is greater than the risk associated with its use. The total mode of the PV is 1, (strongly concur), which is the most frequently occurring option. Nonetheless, the second four queries concern monetary value. MV1: mobile payment helps me regulate my spending, MV2: people who use M-payment spend less than those who don't, MV3: mobile payment helps me reduce my expenses, and MV4: mobile payment helps me save more. The mean monetary value of the twenty responses is 3.86, and the mode is 3.75, which indicates disagreement. The third variable is social value, and it consists of the following four questions: SV1: people use mobile payment to flaunt, SV2: people who use mobile payment appear wiser than those who use cash or credit cards, SV3: I feel cool and intelligent when I use mobile payment, and SV4: people who use mobile payment appear wealthier than those who use cash or credit cards. The total mean for the social value is 3.62, and the mode is 2.50, indicating that the majority of respondents are neutral. The fourth variable is the convenience value, which has four queries. CV1: I find mobile payment simple and convenient, CV2: mobile payment is functional, CV3: mobile payment saves me time, and CV4: mobile payment is more convenient than card or currency. The cumulative mean for the four sentences or questions is 1.61, and the mode is 1, indicating that the sample does strongly agree with these statements. The fifth variable is the enjoyment value, with the following sentences: EV1: paying with currency or a with credit card is tedious compared to mobile payment. EV2: mobile payment positively affects my emotions EV3: there is a sense of enjoyment when using M-payment as opposed to paying with cash or a with credit card; EV4: I appreciate using mobile payment. The enjoyment standard deviation is 0.94 and the mode is 3, indicating that the majority of the sample neutral with these statements. The final variable is the risk perception. Unlike the other variables, it consists of five sentences with which the majority of individuals strongly agree. PR1: using mobile payment is risky, PR2: using M-payment increases the likelihood of fraud, PR3: using M-payment makes me feel uncertain and unsafe, PR4: some people do not use mobile payment because it is risky, and PR5: I feel safer using card or cash than mobile payment. With a mean of 2.66 and a mode of 2.2, the entire sample falls between agreeing and neutral.

#### *Data analysis:*

Researchers have distributed almost 150 links via email and different social media platform and we received 102 valid responses. use m-payment. Moreover, 68% response rate was relatively better than that reported in previous studies such as Lin et al. (2012) and Xiu et al. (2022). For the perceived value the mode is 2 which means it is the most frequent number, it represents that the 102 responses of the survey agree with perceived value questions. The perceived value increases the willingness to use m-payment. For the second variable which is MV, monetary value the mode is 4 which means the responses disagree that monetary value increases the perceived value to encourage the willingness to use m-payment. Regarding the social value the most frequent response was 3 which means the responses feel natural about it impacting the perceived value and willingness to use m-payment. Covariance value mode is 2 which means they agree it increases the perceived value there for

increases the willingness to use m-payment. Enjoyment value 3 which means it is natural it does not impact the perceived value or willingness to use m-payment. Perceive risk most frequent answer is 2 which means they agrees it decrease the perceived value there forward it decreases the m-payment.

#### *Control Variables:*

The researcher recognized several supposedly relevant control variables. The recent research controlled the demographic of the respondents which can influence the potential differences in willingness to adopt M-Payment behavior. In the line of this research, the controlled variables are respondents income gender, education level and age because these may influence willingness to adopt m-payment. The dependent variable that does not change throughout the course of the study and influences other variables (Bhandari.P, 2021). The dependent variable in this investigation is willingness to use M-payment. The independent variables are monetary value, social value, convenience value, enjoyment value, perceived risk, and perceived value.

## **Results**

### **Statistical Analyses**

The most frequently occurring number in the perceived value sentences is 1, which corresponds to the strongly agree option, according to a survey of over a hundred individuals and an analysis of a sample representing. The survey results indicate a correlation between propensity to use M-payment and its perceived value. The monetary value, the second variable, has two modes: 4 and 5. The most common response for the first two statements (MV1: mobile payment helps me control my budget and MV2: people who use M-payment spend less than those who don't) is 4, which indicates disagreement. People firmly disagree with the last two sentences regarding the monetary value (MV3: mobile payment helps me reduce my spending and MV4: mobile payment helps me save more). In general, the responses disagrees with the notion that monetary value influences propensity to use M-payment. The average of the social value's various modes is 3.75, which places them neutral. Therefore, it can be concluded that social value do not increases the propensity to utilize M-payment. Regarding the value of convenience, all respondents strongly concur that it influences willingness to use M-payment in Saudi Arabia, indicating that the mode is 1. In addition, the majority of respondents feels natural regarding the enjoyment value. The final variable is the perceived risk, which agrees with the sentences frequently.

#### *Discriminant Validity:*

As shown in table 1 below, the descriptive statistic represents the pilot study's research. Twenty survey respondents out of 102 were selected to examine the results in depth. This table displays the range statistic, which represents the difference between the greatest and lowest, or maximum and minimum, selections in the pilot. The range is essentially the difference between the utmost and minimum value. The meaning is the

average of responses, which is calculated by dividing the total number of responses by the number of responses. The standard deviation measures the data's proximity to the mean; in other words, it indicates whether the mean is comparable or not.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics								
	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance Statistic
PV	102	4	1	5	2.2304	0.08622	0.87079	0.758
MV	102	4	1	5	3.6765	0.9285	0.93779	0.879
SV	102	4	1	5	3.6642	0.8529	0.86136	0.742
CV	102	4	1	5	1.8529	0.7125	0.71956	0.518
EV	102	4	1	5	3.0319	0.7841	0.79188	0.627
PR	102	4	1	5	2.7275	0.8488	0.85725	0.735

*Structure Model Evaluation:*

In addition to being customers and consumers, some users of m-payment services are also producers and vendors. Some theories, such as the rational behavior theory and the acceptance model theory, measure the adoption of online payment (Huang.W, Chuan Chen, S,2022). Value-based adoption model (VAM) is a theory that suggests people's beliefs and emotions regarding the benefits they receive from using a product or service influence their willingness to use or purchase it. Tam is another theory stated that the acceptance of the new technology depends on two things: ease of the use and the usefulness. These two points summarize users attitude towards new technology. If people believe this technology will increase their performance and make their life easier, they will adopt it (Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1989). TAM is the most used model in research's regarding m-banking, m-commerce and M-payment (Slade, Williams and Dwivedi, 2014).(Huang.W, Chuan Chen, S,2022) Additional people's perspectives or perceptions of the value of m-payments could influence their propensity to use it. The perceived gain and loss affect the perceived value, which in turn influences the propensity to use M-payments. (Huang.W, Chuan Chen, S,2022). It is anticipated that the variables chosen for the research model will affect the perceived value. Monetary value (H2), social value (H3), convenience value (H4), enjoyment value (H5), and perceived risk (H6) impact perceived value (H1). These variables are anticipated to increase or decrease the perceived value of the M-payment, thereby influencing the propensity to utilize it. Before utilizing M-payment, individuals compare the benefits and drawbacks and weigh the risks. Kim et al. (2007) found that consumers' willingness to implement M-payment increases in proportion to the number of benefits they anticipate receiving. This is why these variables were selected as the primary factors in this study. The purpose of this study is to determine how these factors affect the perceived value, both positively and negatively, and how this, in turn, affects the willingness to use M-payment in Saudi Arabia. Monetary value refers to the discount consumers can receive when using M-payment. This value also aids in budget management (de Kerviler et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019). Regarding monetary value, however, the survey results were negative; respondents did not agree that monetary value encourages them to use M-payment. On the other hand, , convenience value, contribute benefits or increase the perceived value that motivates people to adopt M-payment, and survey respondents concur. Additionally, they concur that risk perception dictates their propensity to use M-payment. the social value enjoyment value results were neutral.

*Reliability of the Construct:*

Table 2 below demonstrates construct reliability and validity. This table contains various metrics of reliability. In 1951, Lee Cronbach created Cronbach's Alpha theory. It determines the consistency of the data to determine its dependability. It is a value between zero and one, with zero indicating that there is no correlation and one indicating that the data is more reliable. Analysts are well aware that 0.7 is acknowledged as a reliable measure (Frost. J). Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.7 for all variables, indicating that the data in this study are reliable. Composite reliability is another reliability metric. Both are employed to ensure the variables' internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha is utilized in exploratory factor analysis (EFA), whereas composite reliability is utilized in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Similar to Cronbach's alpha, 0.7 indicates Composite reliability. Almost all variables are greater than 0.7, which is acceptable. Average variance extracted (AVE) gauges measurement error variance. 0.5 is the minimal acceptable AVE measurement. The table below demonstrates that AVE is acceptable.

Table 2. Construct reliability and validity

	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Composite reliability (rho_a)</b>	<b>Composite (rho_c)</b>	<b>reliability</b>	<b>Average variance extracted (AVE)</b>
<b>CV</b>	0.852	0.873	0.852		0.595
<b>EV</b>	0.803	0.814	0.773		0.472
<b>MV</b>	0.906	0.961	0.905		0.718
<b>PR</b>	0.866	0.909	0.853		0.562
<b>PV</b>	0.816	0.829	0.823		0.539
<b>SV</b>	0.832	-0.977	n/a		n/a

Note: CV=convenience value, EV=Enjoyment Value, MV=Minatory value, PR=Perceived Risk, PV=Perceived value, SV=Social Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.70, indicating that the data in this investigation are reliable.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that could increase the propensity to use M-payment. It selects suggested factors from previous research that have been shown to influence the propensity to use M-payment. This quantitative research is conducted in Saudi Arabia with the majority of participants being Saudis. After examining the survey results in detail, the following can be determined: In Saudi Arabia, the perceived value, and convenience value, can increase the propensity to use M-payment. However, monetary value, social value, enjoyment value, and perceived risk do not increase the propensity to use mobile payments. In another study conducted in the U.K the enjoyment value and the social value shows a positive impact on willingness to use m-payment unlike this study, these two factors are related to the culture and this could be the reason why the results are different. Also, monetary value results were different. However, convenience, perceived value and

perceived risks had the same results. After recognizing its benefits, a large number of Saudis adopted M-payment. Since the pandemic began, the number has been growing. However, research indicates that global adoption of this novel technology is slow. This may be due to aversion to change, ignorance of the purported benefits of M-payment, or unwillingness to abandon traditional payment methods. The end user is ultimately responsible for determining whether the perceived value of M-payment warrants a trial. Knowledge and emotions of the user are the primary motivations for employing this technology.

## Conclusion

Saudi Arabia is on an ambitious journey to transform its economy and society through Vision 2030, an initiative encompassing various domains like tourism, agriculture, women's empowerment, art, health, and technology. As part of this vision, the country is embracing mobile payment (M-payment) technology, which holds the potential to significantly boost economic growth. This shift to M-payment represents more than just a technological upgrade; it is a leap toward modernizing everyday transactions, making them quicker, more efficient, and cost-effective. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Saudi authorities made it mandatory for all retail stores to have card reader machines, laying the groundwork for a cashless society. M-payments play a key role in this transition, offering convenience to both consumers and businesses. However, for M-payments to be successful, a secure infrastructure and high-speed internet connections are crucial. Saudi Arabia's progress in developing robust technological systems and broadband networks is a significant step in this direction. To encourage the widespread adoption of M-payments, it's essential to address public concerns and misconceptions. Raising awareness about the benefits of M-payments and emphasizing their security features can reduce skepticism and build trust. A survey conducted as part of this study gathered responses from 102 Saudis, providing insights into their attitudes toward M-payments. Despite the limited sample size, the survey highlighted key factors influencing the willingness to adopt M-payments, as well as perceived barriers, such as concerns over security risks. The study's findings offer valuable information for policymakers and business leaders in Saudi Arabia. While many respondents acknowledged the convenience and speed of M-payments, some were hesitant due to concerns about data privacy and potential fraud. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to educate the public about the safety measures in place and the advantages of a cashless economy. As Saudi Arabia moves toward its Vision 2030 goals, the successful integration of M-payment technology is a significant indicator of progress. By reducing barriers to adoption and reinforcing the security of M-payments, the Kingdom can continue to advance toward a modern, digitally connected society that benefits all its citizens.

## Limitations and Future Directions

The study relies on responses to a survey about how respondents feel about specific sentences and to what extent they concur with them. The accumulation of the survey's data is the study's limitation. 102 individuals responded to the survey in total. The survey has been created and distributed at random to acquaintances, family

members, and coworkers. 102 people is a small number compared to the population of Saudi Arabia. As a possible future trajectory, this study could be expanded to include a larger sample of Saudis in order to gain a clearer understanding of their perspectives on M-payments. Future research could also be conducted on the feasibility of implementing digital payment in its entirety. This could take some time to occur. However, now that the Saudi government has mandated that all establishments provide electronic payment devices, Saudis can make all purchases using M-payment and cards. In addition, the simplicity and convenience of payment applications altered the Saudis' lifestyle, which could lead to their exclusive use of digital currency. This research could be implemented in other nations as a potential next step. This study examined how the perceived value of M-payment affects the propensity of Saudi Arabian citizens to adopt it. It could also be conducted in multiple nations.

## Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to express their gratitude to PMU and COBA for their assistance in conducting this study.

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## Road To Renaissance: An Empirical Assessment of Saudi Tourism's Future with Vision 2030

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**Abstract:** Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aims to revolutionize its economy and reduce its reliance on oil. The region is known for its tourism offerings, including top-notch hotels and vibrant nightlife. As part of this plan, the government recognizes the importance of developing and growing the tourism sector. Various initiatives and projects have been put in place to promote tourism actively. This study focused on analyzing Vision 2030's impact on enhancing the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. The researcher used stratified random sampling to collect responses from 100 respondents. Sequential Equation Model (SEM) and Confirmatory Factor analysis were applied to investigate the attitudes, perceptions, and intentions of tourists toward tourism and how they align with the objectives of Vision 2030. The analysis involved dimensions measured using six variables. An analysis of the participant's responses, including the means and the standard deviations, showed variable deviations from the means were above 0.7357, with the highest record at 0.88912, showing discrimination in the variable indicators. The results suggest a positive but low degree correlation between Saudi Tourism and elements of Vision 2030, including Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources (CPN), Economic Diversification Through Tourism (EDT), and Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities (EILC). There was also a positive correlation between the Development and Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure (DMTI) and the Quality of Tourism Services and Hospitality (QTSH). The research findings suggest that Vision 2030 projects and initiatives are crucial to turning the country into a tourism hotspot that substantially contributes to the diversification of the economy.

**Keywords:** Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030, Tourism, industry, economic development

**Citation:** Hasreem, O., Adnan, N., Sanyal, S. (2024). Road To Renaissance: An Empirical Assessment of Saudi Tourism's Future with Vision 2030. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 536-572), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Having long been renowned as one of the world's foremost oil and natural gas producers, Saudi Arabia has embarked on a transformative journey with Vision 2030. A pivotal aim drives this ambitious blueprint: to diversify revenue streams beyond the nation's historical dependence on oil exports. At its core lies the recognition that sustainable economic growth and stability necessitate reducing reliance on the petroleum sector. This paradigm shift is critical for economic sustainability and imperative for generating employment opportunities and ensuring long-term prosperity for the Saudi population (Grand and Wolff, 2020).

While the impetus for this shift is clear, a comprehensive assessment of Vision 2030's tourism initiatives' specific impact on the economy and society remains conspicuously absent within existing literature. This research endeavors to fill this gap, delving into the intricate web of strategies, programs, and projects that constitute the developmental backbone of Saudi Arabia's burgeoning tourism sector. Beyond mere scrutiny, this study seeks to proffer a multifaceted evaluation that encompasses not only economic implications but also the broader societal resonance of these initiatives. In order to achieve this, an extensive sample size of 245 respondents participated in an online survey, meticulously selected through stratified random sampling techniques (Grand and Wolff, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2021).

A theoretical framework rooted in the destination development theory underpins this research endeavour. This theory provides a robust platform for unraveling the diverse factors that underlie the allure and competitiveness of a tourism destination. Here, elements such as infrastructure, cultural heritage, and the overall visitor experience take center stage, offering a holistic lens through which to assess the sector's evolution (Cavalheiro et al., 2020). Drawing from this framework, six critical variables emerged: Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources (CPN); Economic Diversification Through Tourism (EDT); Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities (EILC); Alignment of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles (APST); Development and Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure (DMTI); and Quality of Tourism Services and Hospitality (QTSH).

Within the contours of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has meticulously outlined strategic focal points designed to catalyze the growth of its tourism sector. Central to this blueprint is the imperative of refining and enriching the visitor experience. A concerted investment in tourism infrastructure projects seeks to augment accessibility and convenience for both domestic and international visitors. Moreover, the promotion of domestic tourism serves as a dual-purpose strategy, not only enhancing local engagement but also fortifying the sector's resilience against external economic fluctuations. In tandem with these efforts, the harnessing of digital marketing technologies stands as a testament to Saudi Arabia's commitment to not only embrace but also lead in the digital age (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

In a paradigm-shifting move, Aramco, a linchpin in Saudi Arabia's economic landscape since its establishment in 1938, has embarked on an innovative training program. Launched in late 2018, this program epitomizes Aramco's dedication to instilling a culture of hospitality and elevating customer service standards among its

workforce. By doing so, Aramco not only reaffirms its commitment to Vision 2030's goals but also exemplifies how even traditional industries can be at the vanguard of transformative change (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

In sum, Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is more than a strategic plan; it represents a resolute commitment to chart a new course toward economic diversification and sustainable growth. Within this framework, the tourism sector emerges as a linchpin, poised to drive not only economic prosperity but also to weave a tapestry of societal benefits. This research endeavors to shed light on the nuanced interplay of strategies and their far-reaching consequences, providing a compass to navigate the uncharted waters of Saudi Arabia's tourism revolution. Through meticulous analysis and insightful exploration, it is our aspiration that this study will contribute meaningfully to the ongoing narrative of Vision 2030 and, by extension, to the future trajectory of Saudi Arabia itself.

## Literature Review

### Overview of Saudi Arabia's Tourism Sector:

Saudi Arabia boasts a wealth of heritage and natural beauty, making it an extraordinary tourist destination. The country is home to notable cultural sites such as Madain Saleh and Diriyah, both UNESCO World Heritage sites (Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2020). These remarkable attractions offer glimpses into the Saudi state's civilization and birthplace. Moreover, Saudi Arabia offers captivating attractions like the Rub Al Khali desert and Al-Hijr. The tourism industry presents an avenue for employment growth in the country. The Kingdom has implemented measures to enhance its tourism infrastructure by developing airports, hotels, and transportation networks.

Religious tourism has always played a crucial role in Saudi Arabia's tourism industry, with the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Every year, millions of Muslims from all over the world visit these cities. However, Vision 2030 has set its sights on expanding beyond religious tourism to explore leisure, business, and cultural areas. In addition to improving infrastructure, Saudi Arabia has implemented policies to make the country more appealing for domestic and international tourism. For instance, in 2010, the government lifted the ban on women driving to empower them as breadwinners (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2023). Another noteworthy aspect of Vision 2030 is its focus on promoting tourism in regions outside the cities across the Kingdom. These policy changes created economic opportunities for women and provided families with additional leisure activities.

While Saudi Arabia's tourism sector has developed over decades, it also faces significant challenges. An increase in tourist arrivals in recent years can be attributed to the introduction of the electronic visa system in 2019 that streamlined visa processes for international visitors (Khan, 2020). However, more must be done to expand the variety of tourist attractions. There's still room for improvement regarding the marketing strategy promoting Saudi tourism. Efforts tend to be region-specific rather than national campaigns targeting tourists nationwide.



*The Implementation of Vision 2030:*

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is transforming significantly to become a premier tourist destination in the Middle East and the world. The implementation of Vision 2030, a strategic plan aimed at reducing dependence on oil revenues and diversifying the economy, plays a crucial role in this transformation. Albuhlul (2022) established that tourism drives economic diversification, that is, substitute revenue sources for oil revenues. Saudi Arabia has always been marketed as an attractive destination for luxury travel due to the numerous historical sites and the breathtaking nature it hosts. The country offers diverse natural landscapes, such as the Al-Najd plateau, the expansive Rub' al Khali desert in Eastern Saudi Arabia, and the Red Sea coastline on its western border.

The tourism vision 2030 plan is built on three key pillars. The foundation of Vision 2030 comprises a dynamic community, a flourishing economy, and an aspiring nation. According to Khan (2020) and Ibrahim et al. (2021), each pillar encompasses a set of goals and objectives designed to address the country's most pressing challenges and unlock its full potential. The first pillar is a vibrant Society. This pillar promotes cultural diversity, enhances social cohesion, and preserves the nation's rich heritage. It aims to build a strong national identity, promote healthy lifestyles, and provide world-class educational opportunities for the Saudi population. Many government members maintain that it strives to create jobs for the country's youth by developing new industries. It is also meant to increase tourism and diversify the economy. Therefore, the pillar seeks to remove the country's dependence on oil revenues by developing alternative sources of income, such as technology and tourism.

The KSA government recognizes the need to diversify its economy and reduce dependence on oil revenues, identifying tourism as a crucial sector for development. However, there is limited research on the strategies and initiatives taken to develop the tourism sector under Vision 2030 and the potential impacts of these efforts on the economy and the Saudi population. The thriving Economy pillar targets the diversification of the economy by encouraging private sector growth and developing non-oil industries. The government aims to generate novel employment prospects and aid small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). According to Al-sakkaf et al. (2020), the Ambitious Nation pillar aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government institutions, enhance transparency, and combat corruption. Saudi Arabia's Export Strategy for Tourism 2020+. The Ministry of Commerce and Investment (MOCI) released a report highlighting its plans to promote tourism and develop the country into a top international destination by 2020. The initiative aligns with Saudi Arabia's objective to expand its economic horizons and lessen its reliance on oil-generated income, as stipulated in Vision 2030. The "Tourism 2020+" strategy is a collaborative effort between several government agencies to create favourable investment conditions to achieve the objectives outlined in Vision 2030. Therefore, the Vision involves investing in advanced technologies, promoting e-government services, and strengthening the rule of law to create a more stable and prosperous nation.

Tourism plays a crucial role in the achievement of Vision 2030. Ambitious goals have been established by the government for the tourism industry, such as augmenting the count of inbound international visitors and



elevating the sector's contribution to the country's GDP. According to Grand and Wolff (2020), to achieve these goals, the government has initiated several mega-projects, such as the Red Sea Project, NEOM, and the development of historical sites like AlUla. Moreover, the government has implemented various reforms to facilitate tourism, such as introducing tourist visas and relaxing certain social norms. Saudi Arabia aims to create new job opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and improve its citizens' overall quality of life. Vision 2030 provides a comprehensive roadmap for the nation to transform into a leading tourist destination, contributing to a more vibrant, diversified, and prosperous future for the Kingdom. As such, the government is proactively preserving its heritage and developing new industries to generate employment opportunities for citizens.

#### *Role of Tourism in Vision 2030:*

Tourism is a critical component of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. It can significantly contribute to the country's economic diversification and the region's development. According to Grand and Wolff (2020), investing in and promoting the tourism sector has allowed the government to achieve several key objectives outlined in its strategic plan. It can be attributed to the fact that this sector plays a critical role in the national economy. It has continued to generate many jobs and generates income, provides investment opportunities, and contributes to the overall well-being of Saudi citizens. The tourism sector is designed to provide several benefits to the Kingdom. It often enhances international interest in Saudi Arabia by attracting foreigners who want to visit this spectacular country. At the same time, it contributes significantly to meeting national development goals by stimulating economic growth and creating jobs for citizens. The country currently has only a few of its large population engaged in tourism-related activities & also lacks a comprehensive plan for promoting tourism.

Economic diversification is another vital issue. Developing the tourism industry helps to reduce Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil revenues and create a more resilient economy. Chalastani et al. (2020) found that oil and gas accounted for most of the country's total revenue in 2017. According to Waheed (2022), the income from the tourism industry can be earmarked for new developments that are not dependent on oil revenues, thus reducing Saudi Arabia's vulnerability to fluctuations in oil prices. Recognizing the importance of tourism has allowed the Saudi government to launch several mega-projects to develop this sector. It has also expanded the tourism sector, allowing the government to generate new revenue streams and foster the growth of hospitality, retail, and transportation.

Job creation is a significant advantage of the strategic plan. As the tourism industry grows, it creates numerous direct and indirect employment opportunities for Saudi citizens. According to Alahmadi et al. (2022), jobs have been created in hotels, restaurants, tour companies, and other tourism-related businesses. These jobs can be more attractive than most available positions in the private sector since they offer flexible hours and enable employees to work part-time. The tourism industry is also a source of employment for women and minorities who often face limited job prospects in the labour market. Investing in and promoting tourism protects and showcases Saudi cultural heritage, enhances its international reputation, creates diverse job opportunities, and

improves its people's overall quality of life. The tourism sector also supports the growth of related industries such as construction, further contributing to job creation. Therefore, tourism plays a vital role in achieving the Kingdom's vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Tourism enables Saudi Arabia to showcase and safeguard its cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and natural wonders. Shabir and Sharma's (2019) findings suggest that Saudi tourism raises awareness about the country's treasures while strengthening its national identity. It fosters a sense of pride and unity among those who take pride in their history and culture. Tourism also contributes to growth by stimulating other business sectors and expanding the country's export opportunities. As a result, there has been an increase in income from tourism-related activities.

The Saudi tourism sector has witnessed extensive growth in recent years. Saudi Tourism Authority (2023) records show that in 2008, around 4.4 million tourists visited the country for leisure, business, and religious purposes. By 2015, this figure had jumped to 8.2 million tourist arrivals and is expected to reach 12.3 million by 2020. Much of this can be attributed to the introduction of new airline routes and the expansion of specific tourist sites, such as Al Ula, in 2009. As a result, tourism enriches inhabitants' living standards, rendering the nation more appealing for residency, employment, and visitation. Therefore, developing the tourism sector is integral to the success of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

The current literature on Vision 2030 mainly focuses on its economic diversification and overall development goals. Launched in April 2016 by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Vision seeks to transform the Kingdom into a global investment hub by fostering innovation, supporting the private sector, and enhancing the quality of life for its citizens. According to Al-Malki et al. (2022), developing the tourism sector complements other pillars of the Kingdom's Vision 2030. The Kingdom has a strategy to develop the tourism sector that supports these objectives. The focus is on increasing the attractiveness of Saudi Arabia as a destination and fostering foreign investment. Therefore, the primary effect is creating employment opportunities and stimulating growth in domestic industries. As such, the plan will help Saudi Arabia achieve its goal of becoming a major international tourist destination.

A critical review of existing literature on the impact of Vision 2030 on the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia yields mixed results. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is a comprehensive reform plan aimed at diversifying the country's economy away from its heavy reliance on oil revenues. Among its many ambitious goals, Vision 2030 seeks to transform Saudi Arabia into a global tourism hub. For instance, Abuhjeeleh (2019) delved into Vision 2030 policy initiatives, infrastructure development, and marketing strategies, providing a holistic view of the subject. Some studies adopt a multidisciplinary approach in investigating the impact of Vision 2030 on Saudi tourism, combining insights from economics, tourism studies, and political science (Aliedan et al., 2021). This interdisciplinary perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play. Other studies incorporate empirical data, including surveys, interviews, and statistical analysis on the impact of Vision 2030 on Saudi tourism (Alshammari et al., 2023). This empirical evidence adds credibility to their arguments

and allows for a more grounded assessment of the impact. The preponderance of previous research offers comprehensive coverage of the various aspects of Vision 2030's impact on tourism. They have different strengths, weaknesses, and limitations – creating a gap in the literature for this study to fill.

Most previous studies on the impact of Vision 2030 on Saudi tourism tend to be overwhelmingly positive about Vision 2030's potential for the tourism sector. They lack a critical analysis of the challenges and potential drawbacks, such as environmental concerns, cultural preservation, and socioeconomic inequalities. For instance, Aliedan et al.'s (2021) study relied heavily on official government statements and documents. Moreover, Abuhjeeleh's (2019) study did not consider the dynamic nature of Vision 2030 and the tourism sector. While these sources provide valuable insights, they may lack objectivity and could be influenced by political agendas, raising questions about their credibility. This study will add a more recent source to the existing literature, capturing the latest developments and assessing whether the initial expectations are being realized.

#### *Transformation of Saudi Arabia's Economy through Vision 2030 and Tourism:*

In analysing the growth and development of tourism in Saudi Arabia and its progress, it is crucial to analyze the past research works of authors that have also addressed the topic. Ayad et al.'s (2022) study reviews the history of Saudi tourism dating back to when the country welcomed its first religious pilgrims. Over the years, the Saudi government has taken deliberate action to promote and develop the tourism sector. It has not only created opportunities for residents but also contributed to the growth of other industries. Presently, Saudi Arabia's tourism industry is thriving, with an influx of tourists arriving at airports and seaports every month. While there are benefits associated with promoting tourism, there are also challenges that need to be addressed to achieve Vision 2030 goals. One major challenge policymakers face in Saudi Arabia is balancing promoting tourism and preserving its historical sites, natural attractions, and cultural artefacts.

During the early phases of Saudi tourism development, most visitors were pilgrims who travelled to Mecca and Medina for the Hajj pilgrimage and Umrah. In the 1950s, a few individuals also started visiting the country for leisure, often taking road or rail routes to Egypt or Jordan. According to Alhamad and Singh (2021), in 1969, when King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud became the monarch, a hotel was constructed in Madinah. Through a walkway, the King Faisal International Hotel was directly connected to the Prophets Mosque (Masjid al Nabawi). At that time, Madinah and Riyadh had three hotels. However, by 1980, the number of hotels had increased to 85. Today, over 3,000 hotels are operating across Saudi Arabia. Thus, the government's contributions to the tourism industry focused on providing services catering to religious pilgrims' needs.

In the 1960s, the Saudi government began recognizing the potential of tourism as a means to drive growth and diversify the economy. It established the Ministry of Information in 1968 to support this vision. This ministry was responsible for promoting tourism and developing infrastructure for visitors (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2023). In 2000, an important milestone was reached by establishing the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH). As an independent commission reporting directly to the King, SCTH plays a vital

role in diversifying the economy. It oversees the Ministry of Culture and Information, established in 1975. Saudi Arabia boasts more than 333 registered archaeological sites, carefully maintained, restored, and promoted by SCTH for international tourists. The government has implemented programs to ensure these cultural heritage sites remain sustainable. Through Al Shoura (Citizens Consultative Assembly), different interest groups within society are consulted to determine how best to utilize tourism as a tool for development while preserving Saudi cultural assets. The government has long had the Vision of making Saudi Arabia a region that attracts tourists from across the globe.

Expansion beyond religious tourism comes with the growing recognition of the potential of tourism. Saudi Arabia began to explore opportunities beyond religious tourism. The government has identified areas with potential for growth, including historical and leisure tourism. According to a study conducted by Bhatti et al. (2022), the development of these tourist attractions has been a focus at regional and international conferences like the Arab Tourism Forum, World Travel Market, and Arabian Travel Market. In 2003, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud declared that 2011 would be the "Visit Saudi Arabia Year" to promote the country to tourists worldwide. This initiative was followed by the International Tourist Year in 2013 and the National Tourism Sector Year in 2015. Efforts were made to improve infrastructure and create attractions, like museums, archaeological sites, and recreational facilities, to cater to a wide range of tourists.

Tourism in Saudi Arabia reached a different level with the launch of Vision 2030. The government set goals for the industry, such as attracting international tourists and increasing tourism's contribution to the national GDP. Several mega projects like the Red Sea Project, NEOM, and the development of sites like AIUla have been initiated to achieve Vision 2030 targets. Furthermore, existing attractions are being renovated to attract more tourists. Although Vision 2030 aims to promote Saudi Arabia and make a \$45.5 billion contribution to the GDP, its implementation is an ongoing process that will require time. The government has introduced reforms such as issuing tourist visas and relaxing norms as part of efforts to facilitate tourism. These reforms reflect the history of tourism in Saudi Arabia and its transition to a more diverse industry encompassing cultural, historical, and leisure sites. Incorporating such reforms into the Vision 2030 agenda highlights the government's dedication to nurturing the industry. It showcases the promise of tourism as a catalyst for employment generation and socioeconomic advancement within the Kingdom.

#### *Previous Research Frameworks:*

Scholars have examined the relationship between Saudi Arabia's tourism industry and Vision 2030 using different frameworks and theoretical approaches. The Destination Competitiveness Model has been utilized to evaluate Saudi Arabia's competitiveness as a tourist destination. This model assesses factors such as tourism infrastructure, cultural resources, natural attractions, policy environment, and human resources to determine how attractive and competitive the country is in the tourism market. The model informed the study on Saudi Arabia's adherence to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) guidelines for all its operations by promoting sustainable business practices. The country's approach to responsibility is a twofold process focusing on social

responsibility and providing tourists with a positive experience. The "Daughters of Allah" program is an example of an initiative that fosters responsibility in an environment where women are primarily targeted. Still, men can also participate if their workplace is supportive. Such initiatives highlight the Saudi authorities' commitment to implementing safety, environmental protection, and responsible product development programs.

The other framework is Cultural Tourism. Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage and historical sites play a significant role in its tourism sector. The research focuses on the country's cultural and historical sites and their potential for further growth in this sector. As this research is ongoing, recent publications have used different frameworks. The tourism industry in Saudi Arabia is primarily domestic, but demand for international tourism is rising steadily, especially from neighboring countries within the Middle East and Asia. Saudi Arabia aims to diversify its tourism offerings by expanding beyond religious tourism into other markets, such as business and leisure tourism, to boost its appeal as a tourist destination. Saudi Arabia has sought to attract more visitors through its marketing initiatives, highlighting its cultural heritage and religious sites as top attractions. Therefore, research studies have employed cultural tourism frameworks to examine the potential of Saudi Arabia's cultural assets and heritage sites in attracting tourists, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

The study used the theoretical frameworks as guidelines for developing and attaining its research objectives. The Destination competitiveness model will oversee the preservation and promotion of Saudi Arabia's cultural and natural heritage through sustainable tourism practices to enhance its cultural tourism potential and positively influence visitor satisfaction and destination loyalty. It will guide effective stakeholder engagement and collaboration in developing and implementing sustainable tourism initiatives in Saudi Arabia, leading to improved governance, policy alignment, and overall destination sustainability. The cultural tourism model will inform the enhancement of quality tourism infrastructure, including accommodation facilities and transportation networks in Saudi tourism and cultural sites, which positively influence the competitiveness and attractiveness of Saudi Arabia as a tourism destination.

#### *Government Policies and Strategies for Tourism Development:*

Over the years, the Saudi Arabian government has implemented various policies and strategies to develop and promote the tourism sector. Efforts have been made to diversify the industry, enhance infrastructure, and attract international visitors. Almathami and Mair (2023) investigated the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) and its efforts toward planning, regulating, and promoting tourism. Their findings highlighted the commission's functionalities, including formulating tourism policies, safeguarding and promoting Saudi heritage, and overseeing the licensing and regulation of tourism-related businesses. In 2005, a National Tourism Strategy was launched to build a competitive tourism sector by focusing on developing infrastructure, nurturing human resources, and implementing effective marketing strategies. These initiatives marked the beginning of an era for Saudi Arabia's tourism program, showcasing its historical sites, cultural attractions, recreational spots, and eco-friendly activities. The King declared 2013 the "International Tourist Year" and 2015 the "National

Tourism Sector Year." These declarations laid a foundation for the sector's growth by providing a vision and roadmap for advancing tourism within the country.



Figure 5. Vision 2030 Transformation Economy in Saudi Arabi (Ranjan, 2016)

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 was introduced in 2016 to reduce its dependence on oil revenues and diversify its economy. Al Shoura, or Citizens Consultative Assembly, approved the 14-year government plan. It aimed to contribute more than \$86 billion to the Kingdom's GDP. Vision 2030 aims to create over 450,000 job opportunities and increase the oil sector's contribution to around half of the country's GDP (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2023). Tourism is a crucial aspect of the vision, which is expected to play a vital role in expanding opportunities and reducing unemployment. The government has set targets for tourism, including attracting international tourists and boosting its contribution to the national GDP. Several large-scale projects have been initiated as part of this strategy, such as the Red Sea Project, NEOM, and developing sites like AIUla. Significant changes were made to Saudi Arabia's visa policies in 2019, enabling tourists from 49 countries to obtain e-visas for leisure travel. The decision was made to encourage tourism and improve the country's accessibility to tourists from multiple countries.

The Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) launched the "Visit Arabia" campaign to promote tourism. The 2012 project explored Saudi Arabia's historical and cultural sites and other tourist attractions, such as recreational destinations and ecotourism activities. According to Abuhjeeleh (2019), the project was followed by National Tourist Year (2013) and International Tourist Year (2013). The project is focused on developing a sustainable and competitive tourism industry by focusing on critical areas such as infrastructure development, human resources, and marketing. Investment in infrastructure is when the



government has significantly improved the country's infrastructure to support the growth of the tourism sector. It includes the development of airports, roads, and public transportation systems; therefore, the development of the Vision has led to the construction of new hotels and tourism facilities.

The Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) launched spur investment and development in the tourism sector. The government has encouraged public-private partnerships. According to Chalastani et al. (2020), the collaborations involve the government and private sector entities working together on various tourism projects, such as developing new attractions and improving existing facilities. The government has tried to attract more tourists by improving the country's infrastructure, providing services and amenities, and developing a national brand. Visitor arrivals in the country were estimated at 2.67 million in 2013, according to Saudi Arabia Tourism Statistics. The number of visitors has increased significantly since 2002, when the total number was 1.4 million. In 2008, the Ministry of Culture and Information launched a five-year plan to develop the tourism industry by promoting cultural heritage landmarks and developing new attractions. Therefore, the program is intended to promote tourism by preserving and increasing public awareness of Saudi Arabia's unique cultural heritage sites and adding new sites through community-based programs for tourists and international tour operators.

The government has been actively promoting Saudi Arabia as a tourist destination through marketing campaigns, participating in international tourism fairs, and collaborating with global partners in the tourism industry. According to studies by Al Malki et al. (2022) and Khan (2020), these efforts aim to increase awareness about the country's attractions and position Saudi Arabia as a top choice for leisure and business travellers. The Saudi Arabian government has implemented policies and strategies to support the growth of the tourism sector. These initiatives have successfully transformed the industry from being focused on tourism to encompassing a wider range of experiences, such as cultural, historical, and leisure activities. The government's continued dedication to developing this sector demonstrates that incorporating tourism into the Vision 2030 strategy is crucial for driving growth and social progress in the Kingdom.

#### *Case Studies of Successful Tourism Projects:*

Tourism festivals in Saudi Arabia attract visitors, stimulate the economy, and showcase the country's cultural heritage. Some notable examples include the Riyadh Season festival, the Red Sea Project, and the NEOM and AIUla. Ibrahim et al.'s (2021) study defines the Riyadh Season as a festival of culture and entertainment held in Saudi Arabia's capital city. Since its launch in 2019, the event has featured a range of activities such as concerts, theatre performances, and food festivals. The festival has attracted millions of visitors from both international backgrounds, leading to growth in the region's tourism sector. These tourism projects bring benefits and contribute to broader economic and social development across Saudi Arabia. Moreover, there is evidence of a correlation between increased per capita income and domestic investment. Opening new hotels, offices, and other tourism-related facilities stimulates growth and contributes to job creation in the Kingdom. The success of Riyadh Season showcases the potential of cultural and entertainment events to attract tourists and stimulate economic activity.



The Red Sea Project is an ambitious tourism development initiative aimed at creating a luxury destination along the pristine coastline of the Red Sea. The project includes the development of luxury resorts, residential areas, and entertainment facilities on more than 50 islands. According to Al-sakkaf et al. (2020), at the opening ceremony for the project in September 2018, Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, said that "the Red Sea Project created an unprecedented economic and social impact" on the region where it is located. The statement indicates this project's intended impact on the local community and the broader economy. This project contributes to development in many areas, including infrastructure and transportation. The Red Sea Project is a long-term plan that profoundly motivates visiting tourists and increases economic impact in the region. The Red Sea Project promotes tourism by integrating eco-friendly technologies and practices such as renewable energy, water preservation, and preserving the region's unique ecosystem. Its success demonstrates how sustainable luxury tourism can attract visitors and contribute to the growth of the country's tourism industry.

Another significant undertaking is the NEOM project, a planned mega-city in northwest Saudi Arabia. Covering an area of around 26,500 kilometers, this project presents an opportunity for diversifying development in the region. NEOM is being developed to attract high-end international tourists by highlighting distinctive attractions and providing luxurious services. Apart from becoming a destination itself, NEOM also aims to draw visitors from all over the world. It boasts cutting-edge technology and opulent hotels, resorts, and vacation spots. The city is envisioned as a centre for innovation, technology, and sustainability, focusing on nine sectors, including tourism. NEOM's plans for tourism encompass the creation of resorts, cultural landmarks, and thrilling adventure sports facilities while emphasizing practices and environmental conservation. The project seeks to allure both global tourists and businesses and investors contributing to the expansion of the tourism industry in the area.

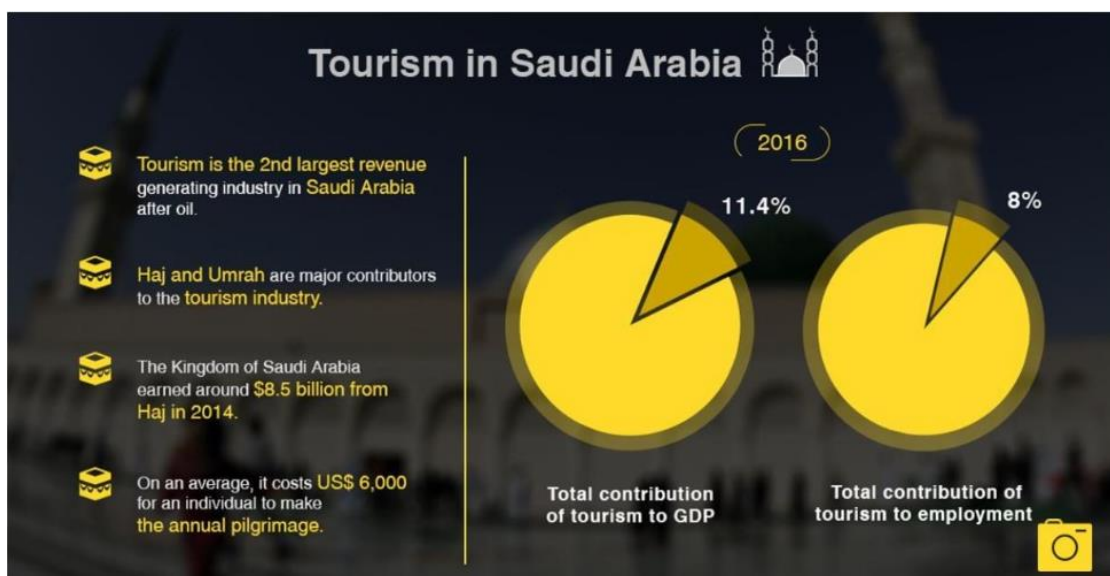


Figure 6. Tourism Progress concerning Vision 2030 In Saudi Arabia (WEF).

Located in northwest Saudi Arabia, AIUla is a region that boasts numerous archaeological sites, including the renowned ancient city of Hegra – which is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Saudi government has taken steps to transform AIUla into a cultural tourism destination. Waheed (2022) explains that the 'AIUla Program' aims to safeguard and enhance sites, enhance the transportation infrastructure, and upgrade facilities at tourist attractions. This comprehensive initiative not only promises growth but also has the potential to create up to 30,000 jobs in the region. The initiative aligns with Vision 2030 since it aims to attract visitors from around the globe and promote tourism. It embodies the Saudi government's aspiration of establishing Saudi Arabia as a sought-after, culturally-diverse tourist hotspot. Crucial components of these efforts include establishing the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU), which oversees the development and formulation of the AIUla Framework Plan. The commission outlines sustainable tourism growth objectives for the area. AIUla's success as a tourism destination is a testament to Saudi Arabia's commitment to leveraging its heritage to stimulate growth through a vibrant tourism sector.

#### *Research Gap:*

Previous studies on the impact of Vision 2030 on Saudi Arabia's tourism sector have inherent gaps and limitations. Abuhjeeleh's (2019) study did not address the environmental and sustainability implications of Vision 2030's tourism objectives. This is a significant gap, as the rapid development of infrastructure and mass tourism could have adverse effects on Saudi Arabia's delicate ecosystems. Aliedan et al.'s (2021) study did not comparatively evaluate the Saudi Arabian tourism sector against other successful or struggling examples that would provide valuable insights. Such a scholarly inquiry could help identify best practices and potential pitfalls in tourism development. Moreover, there is limited research exploring the potential social and cultural impacts of increased tourism. The effects on local communities, cultural preservation, and social dynamics remain understudied.

While the existing literature on the impact of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 on the tourism sector offers valuable insights, it exhibits some notable strengths and weaknesses. The strengths lie in its comprehensive coverage, use of empirical data, and multidisciplinary approaches (Alshammari et al., 2023). However, weaknesses include an overly positive bias, overreliance on official sources, and temporal limitations (Aliedan et al., 2021). To advance the field, this study aimed to address the gaps related to the Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources (CPN); Economic Diversification Through Tourism (EDT); Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities (EILC); Alignment of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles (APST); Development and Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure (DMTI); and Quality of Tourism Services and Hospitality (QTSH). The researcher approached this topic with a critical and balanced perspective to provide a more accurate assessment of the challenges and opportunities associated with Vision 2030's tourism goals.

#### *Conceptualisation of Frameworks and Hypothesis Development:*

The main goal of the cultural tourism framework is to assess Vision 2030's potential for promoting tourism

growth in Saudi Arabia. The objective is to understand factors that contribute to tourism and explore how they are interconnected. Such factors include Environmental Sustainability, Economic diversification through tourism and Empowerment, and inclusion of communities in tourism development. Sustainable tourism has emerged as an approach that complements traditional models in tackling contemporary challenges. The framework explores the relationships and connections between these dimensions, acknowledging that a comprehensive and integrated approach is necessary for tourism development in Saudi Arabia. For instance, it investigates how sustainable practices can affect both visitors' experiences and the economic benefits generated by the tourism industry. It also explores the role of governance and policies in driving tourism activities without compromising the local community's well-being.

This study utilized the destination development theory to investigate the impact of Vision 2030 on the Saudi tourism industry. Cavalheiro et al.'s (2020) findings suggest that the theory provides a framework for understanding the factors that influence the appeal and competitiveness of a tourism destination. It considers infrastructure, services, cultural heritage, natural attractions, and visitor experience. The researcher used this theory to examine the socioeconomic impacts associated with tourism growth in Saudi Arabia. The tourism industry has significant implications for all aspects of Saudi society, including its economy and international standing.

#### *Destination Development Theory:*

The destination development theory was used to assess the measures taken by Saudi Arabia in upgrading its tourism sector, focusing on Vision 2030. Such measures include creating new attractions, improving infrastructure, and providing services that meet the expectations of both domestic and foreign visitors (Mir & Kulibi, 2023). In addition, it was relevant to consider the development of a new image for Saudi Arabia as a destination that is suitable for high-end international tourism. Such an approach would help the Saudi government to demonstrate its commitment to Vision 2030 by touting the changes it has implemented thus far. The Saudi government's program was unveiled in December 2014 and aims to diversify the economy and make it less dependent on oil revenue to reduce its large fiscal deficit. The destination development theory was also used to comprehensively assess Saudi tourism development's potential economic and societal impacts under Vision 2030. It helped in understanding how the growth of the tourism sector can contribute to job creation, economic diversification, and quality of life for Saudi citizens.

The destination development theory provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted aspects that contribute to the growth and sustainability of tourism in Saudi Arabia. It served as a lens through which the impact of various variables on the success of Saudi Arabia's tourism industry were analyzed. The variables identified included Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources (CPN), Economic Diversification Through Tourism (EDT), Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities (EILC), Alignment of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles (APST), Development and Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure (DMTI), and Quality of Tourism Services and Hospitality (QTSH) - represent critical components

in the destination development process.

The hypotheses formulated aligned with the key principles of the destination development theory, emphasizing the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, social, governance, and infrastructure factors in shaping a sustainable and attractive tourism destination. The first hypothesis (H1) postulated that integrating environmental sustainability measures within Vision 2030 positively affects tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia. This was based on the perception that the destination is environmentally responsible and attractive. The measures include the preservation and protection of natural resources, reduction in water and energy consumption, and effective waste management practices. This aligned with the destination development theory, which emphasizes the importance of environmental sustainability in attracting and retaining tourists.

The second hypothesis (H2) suggested that economic sustainability initiatives implemented under Vision 2030 positively influence tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia. The perception was that the destination offers economic opportunities and benefits for local communities, including increased foreign exchange earnings, job creation, and safety measures. Economic diversification through tourism is a key element in the destination development theory, emphasizing the role of tourism in stimulating economic growth and providing socio-economic benefits. Hypothesis three (H3) focused on social sustainability factors, asserting that Vision 2030's emphasis on cultural preservation, community engagement, and inclusivity positively influences tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia. The perception is that the destination is socially responsible and offers authentic experiences. The destination development theory underscores the significance of community involvement and cultural preservation in creating a unique and attractive destination.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) posited that effective governance and policy measures implemented under Vision 2030 positively influence tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia. This was based on the perception that the destination is well-regulated, safe, and secure. The destination development theory emphasizes the role of governance and policy in shaping the overall tourism experience and ensuring the safety and satisfaction of tourists. Hypothesis five (H5) suggested that the development and improvement of tourism infrastructure and resources under Vision 2030 positively influences tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia. The perception was that the destination provides convenient and high-quality services and facilities. The destination development theory recognizes the crucial role of infrastructure in enhancing the overall attractiveness and accessibility of a destination.

Table 14. Indicators of the Conceptual Framework

Dimensions	Variables	Indicators
Environmental Sustainability	Conservation and	Percentage of protected areas
	Preservation of Natural	Water and energy consumption reduction measures

	Resources (CPN)	Waste management practices
Economic Sustainability	Economic Diversification Through Tourism (EDT)	Contribution of tourism to GDP Foreign exchange earnings from tourism Number of jobs created in the tourism sector
Social Sustainability	Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities (EILC)	Percentage of tourism businesses owned by locals Community engagement in tourism decision-making Local participation in cultural events and festivals
Governance and Policy	Alignment Of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles (APST)	Existence of sustainable tourism policies and regulations Stakeholder engagement in policy development Monitoring and enforcement of sustainable practices
	Alignment Of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles (APST)	Existence of sustainable tourism policies and regulations Stakeholder engagement in policy development Monitoring and enforcement of sustainable practices
Infrastructure and Resources	Development And Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure (DMTI)	Number of hotels and accommodations Quality of transportation networks Availability of skilled workforce in the tourism sector
Visitor Experience	Quality Of Tourism Services and Hospitality (QTSH)	Customer satisfaction ratings Cultural authenticity ratings Safety and security measures

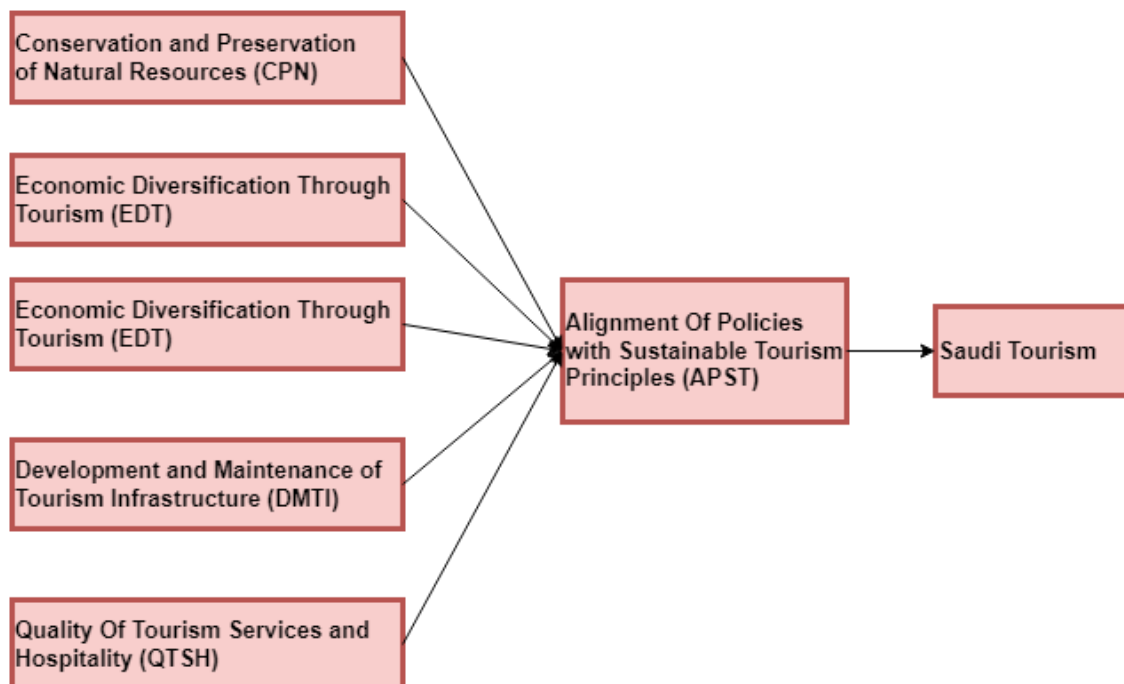


Figure 7. Conceptual Research Model.

*Hypotheses:*

The factors in the table 1 and the conceptual model above were considered in developing the hypotheses for the study. Vision 2030's focus on enhancing the overall visitor experience by introducing new attractions, cultural events, and entertainment options positively influences tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia, as they perceive the destination as offering unique and memorable experiences. As a result, the following hypotheses were developed.

H1: Integrating environmental sustainability measures within Vision 2030 positively affects tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia, as they perceive the destination as environmentally responsible and attractive. These measures include preservation and protection of natural resources, water and energy consumption reduction, and effective waste management practices.

H2: Economic sustainability initiatives implemented under Vision 2030 positively influence tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia, as they perceive the destination as offering economic opportunities and benefits for local communities. These initiatives include increasing foreign exchange earnings, creating jobs, and implementing safety measures in tourist destinations.

H3: Vision 2030's emphasis on social sustainability factors, such as cultural preservation, community engagement, and inclusivity, positively influences tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia, as they perceive the destination as socially responsible and offering authentic experiences.

H4: Effective governance and policy measures implemented under Vision 2030, including increased availability of accommodation, improved emergency response systems, and involving all stakeholders in policy implementation, positively influence tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia, as they perceive the destination as well-regulated, safe, and secure.

H5: The development and improvement of tourism infrastructure and resources, such as transportation networks, availability of quality hotels and accommodation, and availability of skilled personnel, under Vision 2030 positively influence tourists' intention to engage in tourism activities in Saudi Arabia, as they perceive the destination as providing convenient and high-quality services and facilities.

**Research Methodology****Sampling Method:**

Appropriate choice of sample size is crucial in quantitative research to identify the requisite comparisons and correlations. A sample size of 245 was chosen to assess variables using structural equation modelling. The process involved selecting respondents who could provide an accurate position on the state of Saudi tourism. The researcher used stratified random sampling to collect responses from 100 respondents. The choice of respondents for this study was based on their potential perspectives on how Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030



integrates initiatives in the tourism sector.

The survey focused on the participants' views on the need to offer a range of attractions to cater to different types of tourists. Smith and Abuhjeeleh's (2019) findings suggest efforts have been made to streamline the visa process and enhance the tourist experience. The survey was sent to representatives from hotel chains to provide a perspective on Saudi Arabia's hospitality industry, highlighting challenges related to workforce development, regulations, and competition. They were expected to share perspectives on growth opportunities in the sector, such as increased demand for leisure tourism and the necessity for friendly accommodations. The survey was also sent to consultants to outline the challenges faced in the tourism sector, including recruitment of employees and a lack of international events or sports competitions. They were expected to leverage their expertise on growth opportunities from increased tourists from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Asian nations. The researcher contacted 100 industry experts who provided insights about the industry's state.

*Measurement variables:*

The research methodology integrated quantitative data collection techniques such as surveys investigating the impact of Vision 2030 on Saudi Arabia's tourism industry. Al Almathami and Mair's (2023) research findings highlight governments' initiatives to enhance the tourism sector. Such efforts focus on infrastructure development, marketing strategies, and collaborations between private entities. Multiple journal articles on government policies and strategies for tourism growth were reviewed to obtain secondary data.

This research used a quantitative approach to understand the Saudi tourism industry and its challenges. The design addressed opportunities and potential for growth compared to other destinations in the Middle East, such as Dubai. Smith and Abuhjeeleh (2019) also compared Saudi Arabia's tourism industry with Dubai, examining the differences in cultural and social aspects, tourism offerings, and sustainability initiatives. The choice to utilize quantitative research in this study was informed by the need to empirically examine the social and cultural factors that impact the growth of Saudi Arabia's tourism sector.

A survey using Google Forms was conducted to gather primary data. Secondary data was collected from credible sources, including journal articles, books, government policies, and reports on the Saudi tourism industry. This comprehensive process yielded information regarding the state of the industry and the government's developmental plans vis-à-vis Vision 2030. The study adopted a framework rooted in tourism theory, offering insights into the factors influencing a specific destination's development and its standing within its region. Moreover, sustainability perceptions and industry development were examined in different tourist locations. The survey was distributed to stakeholders within Saudi Arabia's tourism industry, including government officials, experts, and representatives from tourism-related businesses. The study findings provided insights into challenges faced by the industry and opportunities and growth potential – from a Vision 2030 perspective.



Table 15. Respondents Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Classification	Frequenc y	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>	Male	61	61.10
	Female	39	38.90
<i>Age</i>	Under 18	2	1.60
	18–29	4	4.10
	30–39	14	13.50
	40–49	19	19.20
	50 and above	62	61.60
<i>Education level</i>	Primary School	20	19.70
	Secondary School	44	44.40
	Diploma	22	22.00
	Bachelor's Degree	13	13.30

*Data Analysis and Procedure:*

This research study utilized the Sequential Equation Model (SEM) and Confirmatory Factor analysis. The analysis examined the attitudes, perceptions, and intentions of tourists towards tourism and how it aligns with the objectives of Vision 2030. It relied on data on various aspects of environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability, governance and policy infrastructure and resources, and visitor experience. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale where respondents rated their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Before conducting the survey, we conducted a pilot test with a group of potential respondents to assess our questionnaire's clarity, comprehensibility, and reliability. Based on feedback from the pilot test participants, we made necessary revisions to improve any unclear items while ensuring face validity.

*Descriptive Statistics:*

Environmental Sustainability. Fifty-nine respondents agreed (26 strongly agreed and 33 agreed) that the KSA government has implemented strategies to protect and preserve its natural resources. In comparison, 41 respondents (26 strongly disagreed and 15 disagreed) observed otherwise, and 23 remained neutral. On water and energy reduction measures, 32 strongly agreed, and 35 agreed that the KSA administration has to initiate strategies to regulate water and energy consumption.

The study also sought the participants' opinions on implementing waste management practices in various management sites. The data shows that 12 tourists strongly agreed, and 36 agreed that the KSA had

implemented waste management practices at various tourist sites. Thirty-three participants (21 disagreeing and 12 strongly disagreeing) opposed the existence of these waste management activities, whereas 24 participants remained neutral about the matter. Alternatively, the study sought the participants' opinions on the KSA government modifying its education and career sectors to facilitate increased availability of skilled tourism personnel.

**Economic Sustainability.** 26 and 32 respondents strongly agreed and agreed that tourism contributes significantly to KSA's GDP. Twenty-four remained neutral, while 36 (10 disagreed and 26 strongly disagreed) felt otherwise. On the foreign exchange earnings that KSA derives from tourism and their contributions to the Saudi Arabian economy, 26 respondents strongly agreed, and 30 agreed that tourism earnings have a mammoth effect. Twelve disagreed, and 26 strongly disagreed that tourism-backed foreign currencies do not impact the KSA economy. In all cases, 22 respondents remained neutral on the issue. The researcher also sought the respondents' opinions on the impact of tourism job opportunities due to the implementation of Vision 2030. Thirty-five strongly agreed, and 30 agreed that the Vision 2030 goal has increased tourism jobs in the country. However, 17 disagreed, and 35 strongly disagreed, affirming that the strategic plan has not created additional jobs in the Saudi tourism sector. However, 12 respondents opted to take no side on the job opportunities issue. The respondents also opined on the presence of safety measures that have influenced their tourism satisfaction and dissatisfaction in KSA. Eighteen respondents strongly agreed, 29 agreed that safety measures influenced their tourism experiences in the KSA, 15 disagreed, and 18 strongly disagreed. However, 24 respondents remained neutral on the safety measures matter.

**Social Sustainability.** Asked about locals owning and operating tourist spots and sites in the KSA, 42 respondents agreed, and 13 strongly agreed that the locals own and operate most of the businesses. While 20 respondents remained neutral, 16 disagreed, and 13 strongly disagreed that it is not the locals who own and operate a majority of these Saudi Arabian tourism businesses. Whether Saudi Arabian locals have a say in formulating tourism-related decisions, 18 respondents strongly agreed, 31 agreed, 22 remained neutral, 18 disagreed, and 18 strongly disagreed. The researcher also asked the respondents if they had spotted Saudi Arabian locals participating in festivals and cultural events that pertain to the country's tourism. Fifteen strongly agreed, 46 agreed, 26 remained neutral, five disagreed, and 15 strongly disagreed.

Further, 45 respondents indicated they had encountered instances where KSA's tourism offerings violated the country's cultural authenticity, while 55 replied no. The compromise triggered the researcher to question the participants if it was paramount for Saudi Arabia to promote and maintain its cultural authenticity as a tourist attraction site and destination. Forty-one strongly agreed, 28 agreed, ten remained neutral, nine disagreed, and 41 strongly disagreed.

**Governance and Policy.** Questioned about their awareness of sustainable tourism policies and regulations in the Saudi Arabian context, 51 respondents agreed, whereas 48 indicated they did not know. Further, respondents opined on their level of satisfaction concerning stakeholder engagement in formulating tourism policies in the

KSA. Twenty strongly agreed, and 33 agreed with the level of stakeholder engagement in formulating tourism-related policies. Twenty-four remained neutral, whereas 17 respondents disagreed and 20 strongly disagreed with the current level of stakeholder engagement in policy formulation. On the need to improve emergency response systems and advance communication channels to enhance tourists' safety during their visits to the KSA, 17 respondents strongly agreed, 35 agreed, 21 remained neutral, 18 disagreed, and 17 strongly disagreed.

Infrastructure and Resources. The research asked the participants if they highly rated the availability and quality of Saudi Arabian hotels located in the country's tourist sites after implementing the Vision 2030 goal. Sixteen respondents strongly agreed, 28 agreed, 26 remained neutral, 17 disagreed, and 16 strongly disagreed. On their satisfaction with the existing transportation networks in the country's tourist attraction destinations, 17 respondents were strongly satisfied, 29 were satisfied, 15 remained neutral, 19 were dissatisfied, and 17 were strongly dissatisfied. The participants also opined on the availability of a skilled workforce in the Saudi Arabian tourism industry. 18 strongly agreed, 28 agreed, 24 remained neutral, 22 disagreed, and 18 strongly disagreed that the country's tourism sector lacks skilled personnel.

#### *Respondent Profile:*

The responses regarding if the participants were extremely satisfied with their general tourism experience in Saudi Arabia show that 18 strongly agreed, 33 agreed, 22 remained neutral, 16 disagreed, and 18 strongly disagreed. On whether Saudi Arabia's tourist destinations presented the respondents with authentic cultural experiences, 21 respondents strongly agreed, and 31 agreed. However, 12 disagreed, 21 strongly disagreed, and 27 remained neutral. The study also asked the respondents if they felt that Saudi Arabian tourist destinations were extremely safe, and 41 respondents strongly agreed, with 17 agreeing. Contrariwise, 9 respondents disagreed, while 41 others strongly opined that Saudi Arabian tourist destinations are not extremely safe. In all cases, 22 respondents remained neutral on the matter.

## **Results**

### **Measurement model:**

This study utilized the destination development theory to investigate the impact of Vision 2030 on the Saudi tourism industry. The theory provided a framework for understanding the factors that influence the appeal and competitiveness of Saudi tourism destinations (Cavalheiro et al., 2020). It formed the basis for examining the socioeconomic impacts associated with tourism growth in Saudi Arabia. The conceptual framework was developed from six variables identified based on the destination development theory. The identified variables included Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources (CPN); Economic Diversification Through Tourism (EDT); Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities (EILC); Alignment of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles (APST), Development and Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure (DMTI); and Quality of Tourism Services and Hospitality (QTSH)

*Construct Convergent reliability and Discriminant validity*

The researcher examined the coherence between intended latent and observable variables using a construct reliability test. The composite reliability scores were in the 0.760-0.841 range, and the Cronbach's alpha value was in the 0.715-0.826 range. These results suggested reliable internal consistency. The mean values also indicated reliability robustness of reliability. Moreover, there was no collinearity due to minimal correlations in independent constructs. There were significant correlations between variables, indicating convergent validity. This result indicated the variables effectively represented Saudi tourism. In sum, the analysis suggested satisfactory discriminant validity in the model.

Table 16. Convergent Validity Results.

Construct	Code	$\alpha$	CR	AVE	VIF
Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources	CPN	0.82	0.84	0.658	0.9
Economic Diversification Through Tourism	EDT	0.78	0.82	0.585	1.42
Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities	EILC	0.81	0.56	1.563	0.77
Alignment Of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles	APST	0.77	0.81	0.564	1.56
Development And Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure	DMTI	0.84	0.85	0.699	0.98
Quality Of Tourism Services and Hospitality	QTSH	0.77	0.8	0.556	1.5

NB:  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha; VIF = Variance inflation factor; C.R. = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

Table 17. Discriminant Validity Results

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources	0.770					
2. Economic Diversification Through Tourism	0.286	0.726				
3. Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities	0.266	0.467	0.714			
4. Alignment of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles	0.439	0.448	0.467	0.709		
5. Development and Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure	0.197	0.153	0.200	0.302	0.725	
6. Quality of Tourism Services and Hospitality	0.289	0.140	0.143	0.421	0.231	0.681

*Structure Model Evaluation*

The impact of Saudi Vision 2030 pillars on the tourism industry was also measured using the Structural Equation model (SEM) and Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). According to Moreno et al. (2014), SEM relates response patterns to a set of latent factors based on multivariate regression. The Vision 2030 pillars investigated in this study included Visitor Experience (VE), Environmental Sustainability (E.S.), Economic

Sustainability (ECOS), Social Sustainability (S.S.), Government and policy (G.P.), Infrastructure and Resources (I.R.), and Sustainable Tourism (S.T.). The goodness criteria and adjusted theoretical model were modelled using Lagrange and Wald tests.

*Item Analysis*

From the conceptualization of frameworks section in Chapter 2, the analysis involved dimensions measured using six variables. The table below shows an analysis of the participant's responses, including the means and the standard deviations. The deviations of the variables from the means are above 0.7357, with the highest record at 0.88912, showing discrimination in the variable indicators.

Table 18. Descriptive Statistics (From IBM SPSS 24)

		CPN		EDT		EILC		APST		DMTI		QTSH	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Mean		2.44	0.07	2.50	0.08	2.52	0.08	2.62	0.09	2.84	0.09	2.53	0.09
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	2.30		2.33		2.36		2.44		2.67		2.35		
	2.59		2.66		2.67		2.79		3.02		2.70		
5% Trimmed Mean		2.43		2.48		2.49		2.58		2.82		2.52	
Median		2.25		2.50		2.50		2.50		3.00		2.33	
Variance		0.54		0.68		0.61		0.79		0.81		0.79	
Std. Deviation		0.74		0.82		0.78		0.89		0.90		0.89	
Minimum		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
Maximum		4.25		4.75		4.75		5.00		5.00		4.33	
Range		3.25		3.75		3.75		4.00		4.00		3.33	
Interquartile Range		1.00		1.19		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.50	
Skewness		0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.50	0.24	0.47	0.24	0.33	0.24	0.12	0.24
Kurtosis		-0.45	0.48	-0.45	0.48	-0.15	0.48	0.04	0.48	-0.14	0.48	-0.88	0.48

The skewness analysis on the variable indicators showed an abnormal distribution; the Kolmogorov-Smirnov skewness scores were all less than 0.05, implying statistical significance.

Table 19. Test for Normality

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
CPN	0.143	100	0.000	0.970	100	0.021
EDT	0.098	100	0.020	0.980	100	0.123
EILC	0.104	100	0.009	0.968	100	0.016
APST	0.136	100	0.000	0.951	100	0.001

DMTI	0.151	100	0.000	0.968	100	0.015
QTSH	0.103	100	0.011	0.964	100	0.007
KEY						
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction			Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources (CPN)			
Economic Diversification Through Tourism (EDT)			Alignment Of Policies with Sustainable Tourism Principles (APST)			
Empowerment and Inclusion of Local Communities (EILC)			Development And Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure (DMTI)			
Quality Of Tourism Services and Hospitality (QTSH)						

Similarly, the plot of the log transforms of the data indicated a lack of normality on the variable indicators. The values of Kolmogorov-Smirnov were between 0.00-0.021, which was statistically significant.

Table 20. Normality of the Log Transforms.

Log of Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
log_CPN	0.130	100	0.000	0.954	100	0.001
log_EDT	0.117	100	0.002	0.965	100	0.009
log_EILC	0.097	100	0.021	0.981	100	0.157
log_APST	0.137	100	0.000	0.951	100	0.001
log_DMTI	0.147	100	0.000	0.959	100	0.004
log_QTSH	0.133	100	0.000	0.944	100	0.000
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis using IBM SPSS 24 and AMOS.*

A factor analysis of the questionnaire sought to improve the survey by employing its three structural model configurations based on a maximum likelihood criterion predicated on item multivariate normality criteria. In this analysis, each model was mediated by a set of adjustment indices, and theoretical framework modifications were generated from the analysis of the parameter estimation variations, residual values, and modification tests.

The chi-square value of the above model suggests that the model is a good fit for the data. Similarly, the normed chi-square value was 1.697, greater than 0.3. The RMSEA of the model was 0.131, which is greater than the desired value of less than 0.08, confirming the model's fitness. An improved model was tested, as shown below

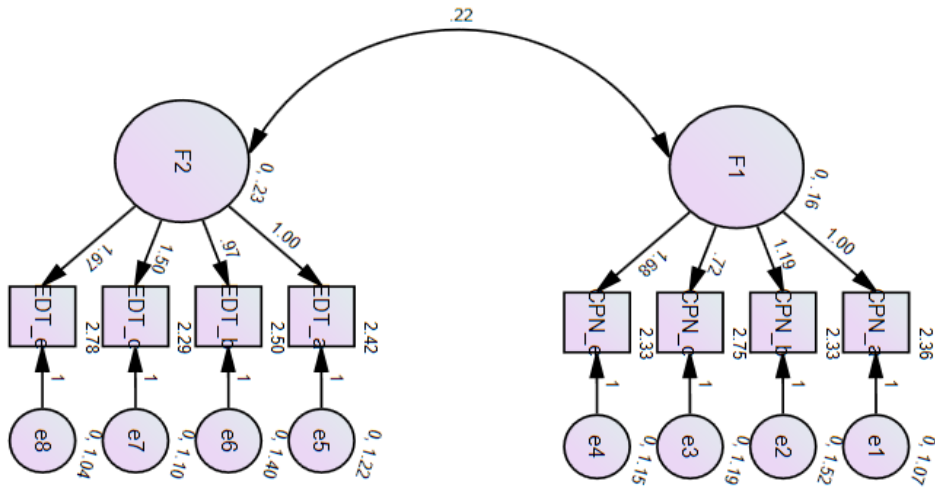


Figure 8. Model 1: With Two Factors

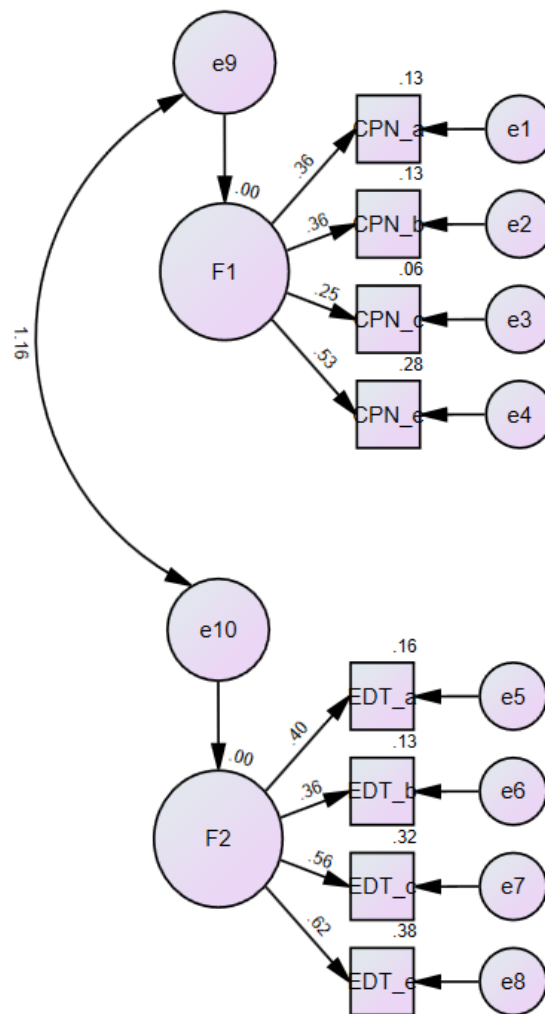


Figure 9. An Improved Model of Test Model 2



In the model of Figure 10 above, two disturbances were added, and the estimates were measured. All the variances for the disturbances were statistically significant, with a covariance of 0.017. Moreover, the multivariate normality had an absolute value of 8.814, greater than 5, confirming the denormal in the multivariate data.

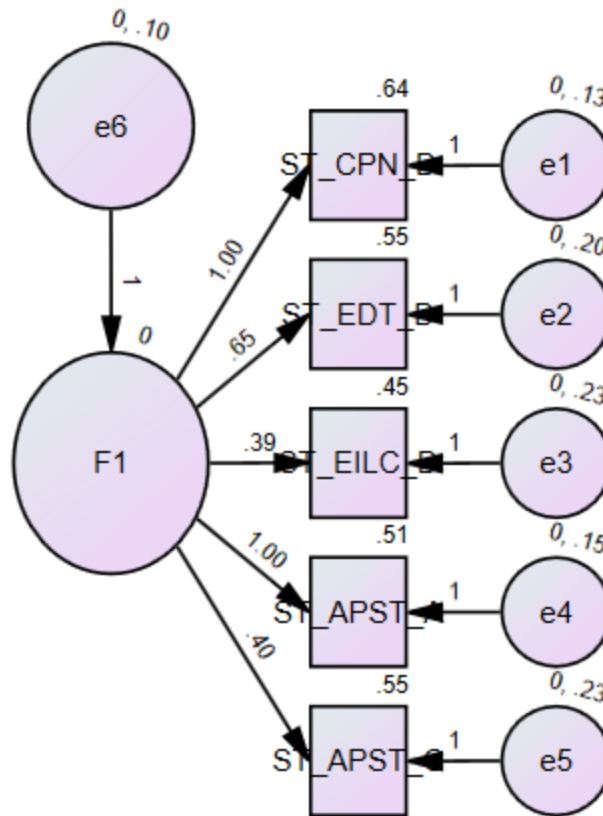


Figure 10. Improved the Dependent (Sustainable Tourism) Variable CF Analysis

In Figure 11, the dependent variable (vision 2030) model was tested, and the estimates show a chi-square value of 12.292 at a probability level of 0.031, implying the data fit the model well. In this analysis, the regression and standard regression weight values suggest that all the independent variables in the measurement of sustainable tourism had positive direct effects on sustainable tourism. In addition, the model fit of the data shows that there is no significant difference between the model and the underlying data in our assumptions.

The chi-square and normed chi-square values are 12.292 at a probability level of 0.031 and 2.458, respectively. The normed chi-square value is statistically insignificant and not greater than the recommended maximum value of 3, showing that the model does not violate our assumptions and is a good fit. In addition, the comparative fit statistics values, CFI, and Tucker-Lewis Index, TLI, in the baseline comparison table were found to be 0.803 and 0.408, respectively. These values are greater than the recommended minimum of 0.09, further indicating that our assumptions for the model fit have not been violated.

*Table 21. Regression and standard Regression Weights.*

Maximum Likelihood Estimates							
<b>Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)</b>							
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
ST_CPN_D	<---	F1	1				
ST_EDT_D	<---	F1	0.651	0.23	2.833	0.005	
ST_EILC_D	<---	F1	0.386	0.206	1.878	0.06	
ST_APST_A	<---	F1	1	0.321	3.114	0.002	
ST_APST_C	<---	F1	0.404	0.207	1.953	0.051	
<b>Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)</b>							
			Estimate				
ST_CPN_D	<---	F1	0.669				
ST_EDT_D	<---	F1	0.42				
ST_EILC_D	<---	F1	0.249				
ST_APST_A	<---	F1	0.643				
ST_APST_C	<---	F1	0.261				

*Table 22. CFA Model fit Summary for the Improved model*

Model Fit Summary					
CMIN					
Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	15	12.292	5	0.031	2.458
Saturated model	20	0	0		
Independence model	5	51.957	15	0	3.464
Baseline Comparisons					
Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2	
Default model	0.763	0.29	0.845	0.408	0.803
Saturated model	1		1		1
Independence model	0	0	0	0	0

*Sequential Equation Model (SEM) Analysis (Using IBM SPSS Amos).*

The model in Figure 12 below was used in the analysis to determine the direct and indirect cause-effect of the factors.

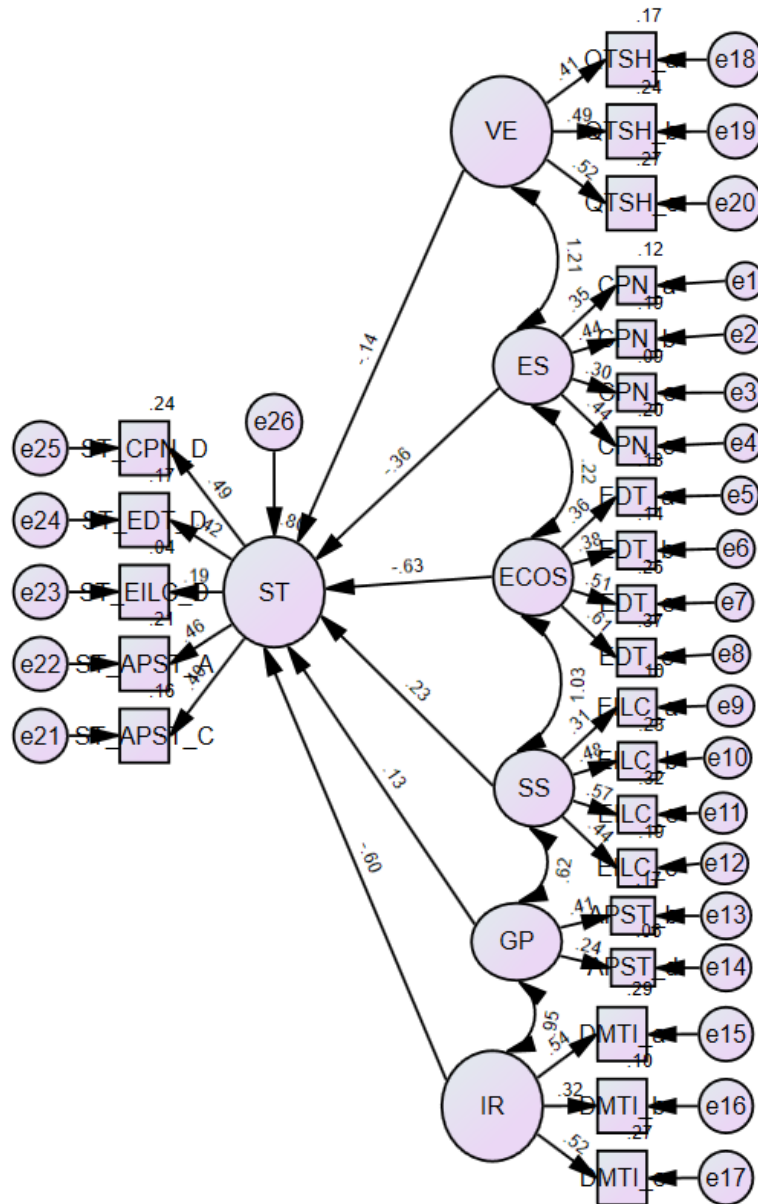


Figure 11. SEM Analysis

In the above path, the normality, estimates, and direct and indirect effects of the model were tested, and relevant values like regression weights, standardized regression, and model fit were determined. The chi-square and normed chi-square values were found to be 594.286 and 2.209, respectively. The normed value chi-square value is below the recommended value of 3, showing that there is no discrepancy with the underlying data. Therefore, the model is a good fit. Furthermore, the comparative fit statistics values, CFI, and Tucker-Lewis Index, TLI, in the baseline comparison table were found to be 0.277 and 0.126, respectively. These values are greater than the recommended minimum of 0.09, further indicating that our assumptions for the model fit have not been violated as shown in the below tables.

Table 23. SEM Model fit Summary

Model Fit Summary					
CMIN					
Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	81	594.286	269	0	2.209
Saturated model	350	0	0		
Independence model	25	774.828	325	0	2.384
Baseline Comparisons					
Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2	
Default model	0.233	0.073	0.357	0.126	0.277
Saturated model	1		1		1
Independence model	0	0	0	0	0

Table 24. Regression Weight for the SEM Analysis

Maximum Likelihood Estimates						
Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)						
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Label
ST	<---	VE	-0.213	0.123	-1.739	0.082
ST	<---	ES	-0.289	0.196	-1.477	0.14
ST	<---	ECOS	0.02	0.048	0.419	0.675
ST	<---	SS	-0.155	0.13	-1.187	0.235
ST	<---	GP	0	0.181	-0.002	0.998
ST	<---	IR	-0.082	0.056	-1.476	0.14
CPN_a	<---	ES	1			
CPN_b	<---	ES	2.659	1.558	1.706	0.088
CPN_c	<---	ES	1.306	0.804	1.624	0.104
CPN_e	<---	ES	1.515	0.923	1.642	0.101
EDT_a	<---	ECOS	1			
EDT_b	<---	ECOS	0.379	0.268	1.414	0.157
EDT_c	<---	ECOS	2.514	1.365	1.842	0.066
EDT_e	<---	ECOS	0.945	0.322	2.938	0.003
EILC_a	<---	SS	1			
EILC_b	<---	SS	2.535	1.388	1.826	0.068
EILC_c	<---	SS	1.733	0.942	1.839	0.066
EILC_e	<---	SS	1.901	1.068	1.779	0.075
APST_b	<---	GP	1			
APST_d	<---	GP	0.003	1.417	0.002	0.998
DMTI_a	<---	IR	1			
DMTI_b	<---	IR	0.677	0.363	1.865	0.062
DMTI_c	<---	IR	0.564	0.305	1.852	0.064
QTSH_a	<---	VE	1			
QTSH_b	<---	VE	1.109	0.538	2.061	0.039
QTSH_c	<---	VE	1.593	0.766	2.08	0.038
ST_APST_C	<---	ST	1			
ST_APST_A	<---	ST	1.188	0.498	2.384	0.017
ST_EILC_D	<---	ST	0.442	0.368	1.204	0.229
ST_EDT_D	<---	ST	1.152	0.488	2.359	0.018
ST_CPN_D	<---	ST	1.191	0.49	2.431	0.015

Table 25. Standard regression Weights SEM

<b>Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)</b>			<b>Estimate</b>
ST	<---	VE	-0.563
ST	<---	ES	-0.486
ST	<---	ECOS	0.054
ST	<---	SS	-0.265
ST	<---	GP	-0.016
ST	<---	IR	-0.371
CPN_a	<---	ES	0.28
CPN_b	<---	ES	0.625
CPN_c	<---	ES	0.36
CPN_e	<---	ES	0.371
EDT_a	<---	ECOS	0.416
EDT_b	<---	ECOS	0.149
EDT_c	<---	ECOS	0.991
EDT_e	<---	ECOS	0.365
EILC_a	<---	SS	0.272
EILC_b	<---	SS	0.638
EILC_c	<---	SS	0.515
EILC_e	<---	SS	0.436
APST_b	<---	GP	6.004
APST_d	<---	GP	0.019
DMTI_a	<---	IR	0.662
DMTI_b	<---	IR	0.403
DMTI_c	<---	IR	0.387
QTSH_a	<---	VE	0.39
QTSH_b	<---	VE	0.448
QTSH_c	<---	VE	0.565
ST_APST_C	<---	ST	0.382
ST_APST_A	<---	ST	0.458
ST_EILC_D	<---	ST	0.165
ST_EDT_D	<---	ST	0.445
ST_CPN_D	<---	ST	0.48

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to explore the strategies and initiatives taken by the KSA government to develop its tourism sector under Vision 2030 and the potential effects of these strategies on Saudi Arabians and the country's economy. The findings suggest that Saudi Arabians and tourists have seen sustainable practices by the Saudi government in various tourist destinations. 48% and 45% of the study participants indicated that they know the

Saudi government's efforts to protect and preserve its natural resources and waste management efforts in tourist scenes, respectively. Although some respondents remained neutral on the issues and another majority disagreed (33% and 31% for protecting natural resources and waste management), it is evident that the Saudi government has executed various strategies and practices to guarantee its environmental sustainability. It is a strategy to meet the tourists' changing consumption trends as they visit locations that value, protect, and conserve the environment.

Recently, tourists have become more environmentally conscious, opting to tour areas that conserve and preserve the environment. Grand and Wolff (2020) asserted that the NEOM project would become a successful venture for the Saudi Arabian tourism sector because it prioritizes environmental protection using innovative means. This explains why environmental sustainability is one of the key pillars of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 strategy. This study's findings validate the study's first hypothesis (H1) since current and potential tourists view Saudi Arabia as an environmentally responsible and attractive place, prompting them to visit it.

The study investigated the impact of Vision 2030 on the Saudi Arabian tourism sector's economic sustainability. 49% of the respondents stated that tourism has contributed greatly to the country's GDP, while 30% disagreed. 50% of the respondents affirmed that the tourism sector had increased the number of available employment opportunities after implementing Vision 2030, whereas 40% disagreed. The results suggest that tourism has contributed significantly to the country's economy. According to Albuhlul (2022), tourism contributes to the Saudi economy through foreign exchange, which helps stabilize the national currency. Moreover, tourism creates extensive job opportunities for the Saudi Arabian people. It directly employs people in hotels, transportation, and tour agencies and indirectly through stimulating other sectors, such as agriculture, handicrafts, and retail. The employees earn salaries and wages, improving the living standards while also earning the Saudi government revenues for developing its sectors. The development paints Saudi as a country that invests in its people and economic sectors. Consequently, more tourists will want to tour Saudi Arabia because the place has a conducive environment that favors the nourishment of economic development initiatives.

On the role of tourism in Saudi Arabia's social sustainability, the current study focused on cultural preservation, stakeholder engagement, and inclusivity. 54% of the respondents agreed that the country should maintain and promote its cultural authenticity to attract tourists. However, 39% refuted the stance. Shabir and Sharma (2019) averred that the Saudi Arabian government can increase the pride of its tourism sector by investing more in its culture. The investment would increase the people's pride in their cultures, making it an attractive feature for tourists to come and see.

Moreover, increased community engagement would increase tourists' experiences in the Saudi Arabian sites. Roxas et al. (2020) affirmed that engaging all stakeholders in governance was necessary to share tourism benefits effectively. It helps to determine the local communities' long-term interests concerning tourism. Further, there are situations where people view tourism as harming their ecological systems. Involving them in

the governance will help minimize the problems, for instance, investing in green technologies, increasing waste management, and advancing firm performances to meet locals' and tourists' expectations. Therefore, increased stakeholder engagement and cultural preservation initiatives increase the sector's value chain, increasing the likelihood of tourists visiting Saudi Arabian tourist sceneries.

The study findings validate hypothesis (H3) that tourists will likely visit places that promote social sustainability. Su et al. (2020) established that when tourists positively attribute a location's social responsibility to their intrinsic motives, they increase their trust in the region, increasing their likelihood of visiting it. As tourists view Saudi tourist destinations as culturally authentic and value the festivities of its locals, they will trust the place to offer them the best experiences. Therefore, increased participation of locals in tourist activities and policy implementation increases the country's tourism sector, helping it attain its Vision 2030 tourism goals.

Sustainable governance and policing are critical to the success of any country's tourism sector. 51 respondents indicated that they know the country has implemented and adheres to these policies and regulations, while 48 were unaware. 46% of the respondents were also satisfied with stakeholder engagement in formulating tourism-related policies, while 34% were not. The responses show that tourists and locals see the impact of the Vision 2030 strategic plan through stakeholder engagement in developing tourism policies, regulations, and security measures. Iswan et al. (2021) argued that Vision 2030 improved Saudi Arabia's tourism sector by introducing tough regulations that have increased its offerings, minimized pollution, increased infrastructural development, and promoted tourism. The policies have increased security measures and emergency systems in the tourist sceneries, making them safe for tourists and other stakeholders' operationalization to give them the best experiences. Thus, these findings justify H4, which held that tourists are likely to visit Saudi Arabia because the country is safe, secure, and with effective regulations.

The investigation findings show that more respondents (48%) were extremely satisfied with their tourism experiences in Saudi Arabia. Engagement in environmental sustainability initiatives, proper infrastructures, safety measures, skilled workforce, and local community participation in festivities increased the clients' experiences. Arslan (2020) argued that there is a high likelihood for satisfied customers to become loyal and long-term customers. Since the tourism industry is highly competitive globally, satisfying the tourists' needs puts Saudi Arabia at the forefront when tourists think of a place to tour next time. Consequently, the country will have a large and loyal tourism database.

The study also focused on the impact of Vision 2030 on the tourist destinations' infrastructure and resources. 43% of the respondents highly rate the availability and quality of hotels and accommodations in tourist destinations. Al- Almathami and Mair' (2023) noted that after implementing the Vision 2030 strategic plan, several world-class hotels extended their operations into the Saudi market, offering five-star hospitality facilities and services that meet and exceed the expectations of global tourists seeking high-quality accommodation and hotel services. As these potential clients know that there are hotel and accommodation facilities that will effectively cater to their needs, their likelihood of visiting Saudi tourism destinations increases, justifying the



study's hypothesis (H5). Further, 48% of the respondents were satisfied with the transportation networks in various tourist destinations, whereas another 38% were dissatisfied. Most respondents noted that the country had developed its transport and communication networks to facilitate easy and effective movement of tourists in, around, and out of their destinations. Kozak and Buhalis (2019) established that better transportation networks improve connectivity, accessibility, time efficiency, and tour packages and support local economies, bolstering tourism. Robust transport networks, including roads, railways, and airports, allow tourists to connect from one place to another and visit multiple destinations during their Saudi trip. It also enables them to discover new and lesser-known tourist destinations, enabling the country to spread tourism benefits beyond the well-known sites and cities. Therefore, Vision 2030's rapid development of infrastructure and other resources is bound to increase the number of tourists visiting Saudi Arabia because of the increased availability of high-quality infrastructure.

### **Conclusion**

The study aimed to investigate the effects of Vision 2030 on the Saudi Arabian tourism sector. The findings suggest that the strategic plan has promoted environmental sustainability in the tourism sector. Saudi Arabians and tourists have encountered various operations to protect and preserve the country's natural resources, manage wastes, and reduce water and energy utilized for various tourism activities. They showed that Vision 2030 had enhanced the country's economic sustainability by contributing significantly to its GDP, increasing foreign exchange earnings, and increasing the available employment opportunities. Vision 2030 has also increased the number of local tourism businesses owned and operated by Saudi locals, their involvement in formulating tourism-related decisions, and their participation in cultural festivities. The research also confirmed that the Vision 2030 strategic plan developed the country's tourism infrastructure with high availability and quality hotels, transportation networks, and skilled personnel.

The study findings showed that Vision 2030 has transformed the Saudi Arabian tourism industry, making it more attractive for current and potential tourists. As more tourists become environmentally conscious, they will visit locations that protect and conserve the environment. As Saudi protects its natural resources, reduces its water and energy consumption, and implements waste management activities under the Vision 2030 framework, it becomes more attractive for tourists to tour it for being environmentally friendly. With more tourists visiting Saudi Arabia, the country will generate more foreign currencies, stabilize its currency, create more employment opportunities in the tourism sector and interconnected sectors, propel infrastructure and resource development, and increase the cultural authenticity of the Saudi Arabians. Consequently, Vision 2030 will make the Saudi tourism industry attractive to new tourists while retaining the current ones.

The findings of this study were important for policy-making in academia and the tourism sector. The study insights will help guide the current and future initiatives implemented by different Saudi Arabian tourism sector stakeholders. It will guide them in improving facets, such as safety measures, transport networks, waste management, and water and energy reduction. Further, the study adds insightful findings to the academic world. It adds to the pool of scholarly publications on the Saudi Arabian tourism industry, and the works can act as the

basis for future research works. The study's findings are crucial in guiding Saudi Arabian policymakers in enforcing appropriate tourism policies. The findings show how Vision 2030 has transformed the sector, exposing its strengths and opportunities that the stakeholders can exploit with the right amending of the strategic plan. Therefore, the current study adds valuable information to revolutionizing the Saudi Arabian tourism sector by adhering to and modifying the Vision 2030 framework.

### **Recommendations**

Tourism is a viable alternative as Saudi Arabia seeks to diversify its economy away from the oil industry. With the right tuning of the Vision 2030 tourism initiatives, the industry can soar and help the country attain this socioeconomic step. Based on the research findings, the study proposes the following recommendations:

Advancing natural resource preservation and protection initiatives in the country's tourist destinations. These efforts will include engaging all the stakeholders, including the community members, to ensure that the natural resources remain safe and secure to attract tourists.

Implementation and execution of water and energy reduction measures for tourism businesses and destinations. Water is scarce, making it a significant environmental challenge in the country, mandating tourism businesses to use it efficiently to minimize its negative environmental impact. Since the tourism industry is energy-intensive and the Saudi Arabian one relies on non-renewable energy sources, cutting its usage will minimize its carbon footprint and increase its environmental stewardship in the region.

Adopting effective waste management practices in various Saudi Arabian tourist destinations. These practices include source segregation, installing recyclable and non-recyclable waste bins, recycling initiatives, minimizing single-use plastics, waste audits, and public awareness campaigns. The measures guarantee environmental protection and sustainability, making its sites more appealing to tourists.

Implementing effective safety measures will guarantee the tourists' safety in various destinations. It will entail measures such as robust security and policing in hotels, accommodations, and public spaces, assuring them of security and deterring potential criminal activities, installing effective response systems; establishing tourist information centers and safe transportation options.

Encouraging the local people to participate in tourism-related festivities through local artisans, cultural workshops and demonstrations, community-backed event planning, and holding cultural festivals in rural areas.

Maintaining and promoting authentic Saudi Arabian cultures through preserving the country's historic sites, promoting cultural events and festivities, emphasizing traditional arts and cuisines, developing cultural heritage museums and interpretation centers, and using traditional performers in modern tourist destinations. The endeavors will ensure that Saudi Arabia offers its tourists genuine and immersive experiences while

safeguarding its culture for future generations.

### Future Work

This study investigates the impact of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 pillars on the tourism industry. Future research should explore the reason for inconclusive results on the impact of increased stakeholder engagement on tourism policies and the role of skilled personnel in boosting tourism activities in the Saudi Arabian market. The studies should focus on the significance of implementing education and career development initiatives to increase the availability of skilled tourism personnel and its impact on tourism productivity within the Vision 2030 strategic plan. It is significant to focus on education and career as education is another critical aspect in the strategic plan and its effect on other economic sectors, in this context, tourism. Additionally, future research should focus on the impact of stakeholder engagement levels and their influence on tourist experiences and policies governing the industry. The research initiative will establish the impact of the local community's involvement in tourism activities and tourists' overall experiences. These works will provide the insights and fundamentals for additional research to boost and develop the Saudi Arabian tourism industry globally.

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## The Impact of Falsely Detecting AI-Generated Text on Academic Assessment

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**Abstract:** Large Language Model (LLM) Functionalities, such as Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT), are a form of artificial intelligence (AI) that have the ability to produce human-like writing in response to a wide array of input. As this technology has become a staple of everyday life, many educators find themselves rapidly redefining best assessment practices regarding this new area of potential plagiarism. As it becomes increasingly difficult to discern between well-written assignments produced by students and those that have been generated by AI, educators may turn to AI-detection programs to determine whether work submitted by students is in fact their own. However, these programs notoriously return a high rate of false detection of AI-generated text. This phenomenon leads to the increased likelihood that students will be unfairly academically penalized. In this study, hand-written examinations for a university-level introductory academic writing class were submitted to different AI-detection programs. Results indicate an association between higher exam grades and greater false detection of AI-generated writing. These results suggest that educators must carefully consider the benefits of such programs when assessing students' work.

**Keywords:** Education, Assessment, ChatGPT, Artificial intelligence, writing, AI writing detection

**Citation:** Waked, AN., Abdelsalam, H., Ashraf, M.W., Pilotti, M., & El Alaoui, K. (2024). The impact of falsely detecting AI-generated text on academic assessment. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 573-586), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In November of 2022, Microsoft's OpenAI released a program that would forever change the way that individuals are able to produce a wide range of AI-generated outputs. This program was a Large Language Model (LLM) known as a Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) (Lo, 2023). In addition to the production of other forms of AI-generated output, this program is well known for its ability to deliver text that strongly replicates that of human-generated text. Large Language Models, such as ChatGPT, are trained on an incredibly vast array of text data. As a result, they are currently able to respond to queries, provide translations, generate computer coding, and generate human-like writing (Kasneci, 2023). Currently, ChatGPT is able to produce responses to human-initiated prompts that are accurate, informative, and both lexically and semantically coherent in a wide variety of languages and genres (Lo, 2023). Generative AI has become extremely easy to access and use due to free programs online. ChatGPT and others like it develop the ability to produce human-like output by learning from both written content available online and AI-generated output of both their own and other programs. Using advanced natural language processing techniques, these programs analyze existing text to generate original output that is similar in style and content to what is present in its training dataset. As such, these programs must be trained on a large dataset of text to have the ability to produce more diverse outputs. They often use machine learning to refine production through the analysis of their own output. That is, the more users interact with a text-generative AI program, the more opportunities the program has to refine its output as it continually develops and learns (Sadasivan et al., 2023). In essence, the more a user engages with an AI-text generative program, the better the program becomes at predicting the type of output the user requires.

When used ethically, these programs can prove to be an excellent educational tool for learning academic writing skills. They may be used as a prompt to assist students in writing assignments when facing writer's block or to provide automatic, instantaneous feedback regarding both factual and grammatical accuracy. Such features may be of particular use to students learning English as a foreign language. These programs can also be used to create study guides via prompts to summarize chapters of books or slides (Alafnan et al., 2023; Athanassopoulos et al., 2023; Baskara, 2023; Barrot, 2023; Beck & Levine, 2023; Cotton et al., 2023; Hong, 2023; Huang & Fryer, 2022; Imran & Almusharraf, 2023; Yan, 2023). However, with the recent proliferation of free AI-text generative programs, many instructors are now faced with questions regarding appropriate assessment methods. Tools such as SafeAssign and Turnitin have long existed to detect plagiarism as applied to the submission of work taken directly from online or previously submitted sources (e.g., Chandere et al., 2021). Yet, fewer options exist for the detection of AI-generated written submissions (e.g., Sadasivan et al., 2024). When applied to the level of higher education, this situation is of particular concern to instructors of written composition courses. Instructors of such courses are responsible for ensuring that students are able to produce written work that not only consists of correct orthography and grammatical structure but also is lexically and structurally cohesive in a variety of genera. It is essential that students in academic writing courses develop the skills needed to succeed when writing in their subsequent university courses. As such, introductory-level academic writing instructors are entrusted with the task of guiding students through the process of developing



the essential components of all academic essays (e.g., introduction, body, and conclusion sections), lexical flow, reducing syntactic ambiguity, and the use of appropriate transitions between paragraphs and sections of written compositions (Al-Jarf, 2022). These skills must be concurrently taught in a manner that applies to a variety of genres to better facilitate students' abilities to transfer the skills learned in one writing assignment to subsequent tasks.

Instructors of academic writing courses for English as a foreign language (EFL) students in English-medium universities may also be tasked with similarly advanced responsibilities regarding the instruction of this form of writing. However, there are unique challenges faced by EFL writing instructors. Chief among these is that of negative language transfer, also known as language interference. Diab (1996) described the phenomenon of language interference as the detrimental role that the innate knowledge of one's native language has on the ability to learn a second or foreign language. Differences between the morphosyntactic, orthographic, and phonological structures of English and a student's native language may lead to unique errors not found in the writing of native English speakers (Alkhudiry & Al-Ahad, 2020; Daqar, 2018; Daumiller & Janke, 2020; Diab, 1996; Elhadary, 2023; Khatter et al., 2019; Scott & Tucker, 1974). Word choice can also be problematic for EFL writers due to both direct translations from the native language as well as potentially limited vocabulary size (Zahiroh, 2021). Students may also vary vastly in their English-language writing competence. These differences may be dependent upon factors such as the age of first exposure to English and the age at which students were first taught to write paragraphs in English (Waked et al., 2023). Instructors may be unaware of which students have had greater opportunities to develop their English-language writing skills relative to their classmates. In such a situation, it may become difficult to differentiate the work of students from high-experience English-language backgrounds from that of lower-experience backgrounds who may have submitted AI-generated work rather than their own written compositions.

There are numerous reasons why students may elect to submit AI-generated output rather than their own writing. One of the most likely reasons may be the accessibility of these programs. Such easy access to AI-text generative programs may increase the temptation for EFL university students to engage in this form of plagiarism. In addition to the pressure of perceived time constraints felt by many university students (Wolters et al., 2021), the use of these programs may in part be due to the unique forms of writing anxiety experienced by different EFL populations. Anxiety regarding the fear of poor assessment and poor self-perception of one's own proficiency may be of particular concern to EFL university students, such as those who are native speakers of Arabic studied by Waked et al. (2023). Participants in this study showed both assessment and proficiency anxiety, meaning that they experienced acute concerns about their English-language writing ability as well as apprehension regarding assessment. When students elect to engage in plagiarism via the submission of AI-generated text, they are likely able to avoid these forms of writing anxiety.

An additional incentive to using AI-generated text rather than one's own work is the fact that writing itself is an extremely difficult task. Even in one's native language, writing is in many ways one of the most difficult of the four language competencies (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) due to its comparatively heavy demand

on cognitive skills (Johnson, 2017). As such, writing assignments become particularly vulnerable to avoidant behavior, such as plagiarism (Cheng, 2024). Writing is heavily dependent on working memory, the aspect of memory responsible for retrieving items from long-term memory or the immediate environment and allowing conscious accessibility long enough for these items to be manipulated and used (e.g., Vasylets & Martin, 2021). As such, writing is an incredibly demanding task. Writing is best learned through the process of producing an initial composition, receiving corrections, revising the work, and repeating this cycle. Given the amount of time and effort needed to develop this skill, the option to submit AI-generated output may be especially appealing to EFL students who have had fewer opportunities to work with the English language prior to beginning their university career. These students face considerable challenges in producing English-language written work relative to classmates with greater English-language experience. Large-classroom environments and classes that are restricted in the number of weekly meetings may lend themselves to creating an environment in which students may be able to successfully submit compositions that are in fact AI-generated output. In such classes, it may not be possible for instructors to review students' work from the beginning of the composition process, thus avoiding the revision cycle required for developing the complex skills involved in writing. This instructional limitation makes instructors less likely to successfully identify whether final submissions reflect earlier drafts of said work (Berrett, 2012; Rudolph et al., 2023).

Undoubtedly, text-generative AI programs offer students the opportunity to complete writing assignments using output that is nearly indistinguishable from human-generated text. To counteract this phenomenon, programs have been developed to detect such text. AI-detection programs often employ a method of machine learning that is similar to the training methods of AI-text-generating programs to detect plagiarized work. AI detection training data vary between programs, but typically datasets contain both human- and AI-generated text. Programs are trained to detect specific differences between these two types of data sets. Two primary characteristics that AI detectors are trained to detect are "perplexity" and "burstiness." Perplexity refers to how complex and unpredictable text is. Vocabulary selection in AI-generated text tends to have high predictability and is relatively limited in the number of items used. In comparison, human-generated text tends to offer more variability in the number and type of words used. The second main characteristic of AI-generated writing that detection programs are trained to perceive is "burstiness." This refers to how varied sentences are in both length and structure. Human-generated writing tends to show greater variability in both of these areas whereas AI-generated text often shows a steady pattern of similar sentence length and structure (Leechuy, 2024).

While AI-detection programs serve an important purpose, there is no guarantee of accuracy in their actual ability to discern between human- and AI-generated text. AI-detection programs test the probability that an item is generated by AI based on specific features. However, different programs often return different results when presented with the same text. One reason for this lack of reliability is that no two AI-detection programs are trained using the same dataset. Although the size of these datasets is often comparable, their content is selected by the individuals who develop these programs. Additionally, some programs are trained primarily on either human-generated writing or AI-generated output while others are trained on a relatively equal combination of the two (Sadasivan, 2023). As such, the predicted likelihood of AI generation of any submitted text may vary

from 10% when using one program to over 70% when using another. Given the fact that perplexity and burstiness are the primary features these programs are trained to detect, students who complete concise and well-structured academic writing may be particularly vulnerable to false detection of AI-generated writing, and hence, become more likely to face undeserved negative consequences.

Because academic writing is often required to be concise and only include content that is directly relevant to the task at hand, the likelihood of predictability in the vocabulary used increases. Additionally, sentences remain relatively homogenous in both structure and length due to the format required by many academic courses. Since AI-detection programs are trained to detect these features as non-human writing, students who have worked the hardest and produced work that is most in line with the requirements of an assignment may be the most at risk for falling victim to false detection. Essentially, students face a higher risk of punishment when completing an academic writing task successfully.

Due to the high likelihood of inaccuracy in the detection of AI-generated writing, this study examined the false detection rate of AI-generated output on the handwritten final exams of 90 EFL students in four sections of an introductory-level academic writing class. Participants were all female EFL learners taught by the same instructor to ensure the comparability of the results earned in the handwritten final examination. Students attended a university in Saudi Arabia that follows an American curriculum with student-centered pedagogy. In the extant literature, the most often studied population is introductory/beginning-level EFL learners. The population of the present study is rather unique in that all members had been judged to be moderate to proficient English-language users, as assessed by the International English Language System (IELTS) exam.

Handwritten writing samples were separated into three categories, each consisting of thirty exams. Categories included high-scoring, median-scoring, and low-scoring examinations. Exams were digitized and entered into seven free online AI-detection programs. These programs were selected as they are both readily accessible to instructors and/or have been reviewed in empirical studies (Akram, 2023; Weber-Wulff et al., 2023). A repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if differences exist between the false positive rates of these three categories of exams when entered into the selected AI-detection programs.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) Is the handwritten writing of EFL university-level students subject to false detection of AI generation by the selected AI-detection programs?
- 2) Is there a difference in the false detection rate of AI generation in the handwritten work of EFL students based on the instructor-generated grades of the writing samples?

The following hypotheses are tested:

- 1) Most, if not all, of the handwritten work submitted to the selected AI-generation detection programs will be judged to be AI-generated output by the selected AI-detection programs.
- 2) The writing samples of students who earned the highest grades on the handwritten final exams will be judged to have a higher percentage likelihood of consisting of AI-generated output than those whose

work falls into the median- and low-scoring categories.

## Method

### Sample and Sampling

Participants included 90 freshmen EFL students who were native speakers of Arabic. These students were enrolled in one of four sections of an academic writing course. Participants ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. To enroll in the course, students were required to have obtained a total IELTS exam score of at least 6.0 and a 5.5 writing score (range: 0-9). As such, the selected participants included EFL learners who were classified as ranging from modest to competent users of the English language. The course aimed to offer freshmen practice with academic English writing by offering training leading to compositions in four genera that are clear, concise, and semantically, syntactically, and structurally accurate. The sample included only students who provided informed consent.

Our study took place in the Fall semester of 2023. As ChatGPT had only recently been released in the preceding November, this was the first semester in which plagiarism via the submission of AI-generated output became a concern for instructors (Lo, 2023). Participants in this study were enrolled in one of four sections taught by the same instructor with 17 years of university-level teaching experience. The instructor was bilingual in English and Arabic and had been exposed to both languages since birth. Institutional records suggest that the student samples in these four semesters were demographically similar, including the number of hours in which they were enrolled and their academic level (first-semester freshmen).

Writing samples were taken from the final exams of the introductory academic writing course in which students were enrolled. As noted above, this course was dedicated to teaching essay writing in four academic genres. The course began by focusing students' attention on the form and structure of the three primary sections of a standard English-language five-paragraph essay (the introduction paragraph, body paragraphs, and the conclusion paragraph) as well as explicit instruction on morphosyntactic rules that differ between writing in English and writing in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). MSA is the primary language of instruction used in most schools attended by participants in this study and differs in many ways from the written structure of academic English (Alkhudiry & Al-Ahad, 2020; Daqar, 2018; Daumiller & Janke, 2020; Diab, 1996; Elhadary, 2023; Khatter et al., 2019; Scott & Tucker, 1974). The course assessment focused on the production of four essays in the genres of descriptive, compare and contrast, argumentative, and informative. A midterm exam was given following the completion of the second essay and a final exam was given at the end of the semester following the completion of all four essays. Both the midterm and final exams were handwritten and consisted of an essay writing portion that was worth 2/3 of the total grade and a section testing students' general knowledge of essential aspects of academic writing worth 1/3 of the total exam grade. The essay writing portion of the final exam was included in the present study. Samples were selected based on the grade earned on this section alone rather than the overall final exam grade.

### *Materials and Procedure*

The handwritten final exam consisted of two portions that were completed over a period of two hours. The first of these consisted of writing three paragraphs of an argumentative essay: an introduction, an appropriate final body paragraph, and a conclusion. All students were given similar writing prompts, “Should children under the age of 13 years be allowed to use [Social Media Platform]?” The platforms selected for the different examinations were Snapchat, X (formerly known as Twitter), Twitch, and TikTok. This portion of the exam was scored out of 10 points and was used to judge both eligibility for and categorization within this study. The second portion of the exam consisted of multiple choice and true/false questions related to APA 7 style citations and various categories of academic sources. This section was not included in the current study. Exams were completed with all personal items removed from students and placed in an isolated area of the examination room. Two proctors ensured that students did not use any hidden electronic devices to complete their work.

Of the 132 completed exams across the four sections, 90 were selected for inclusion in this study. Exams were selected based on the grade earned on the writing portion of this exam. Exams were separated into three categories consisting of the highest 30 grades (90%-100%), the lowest 30 grades (5%-50%), and 30 exams of median-scoring grades (60%-82.5%). These handwritten exams were then manually digitized with all spelling and grammatical errors unedited. Seven free, online AI-detection programs were selected to examine these originally handwritten writing samples due to their ease of accessibility and/or their having been reviewed in empirical research (Akram, 2023; Weber-Wulff et al., 2023). As such, these programs would be likely available to and known by instructors. The programs included in this study can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: AI-Detection programs included in this study

<b>Program</b>	<b>Training Material</b>	<b>Scoring Method</b>	<b>Interprets Score</b>	<b>Highlights AI-Generation</b>
ZeroGPT	Both human and AI-generated	Percentage likelihood of AI generation	Yes	Yes
Content at Scale	Both human and AI-generated	Percentage likelihood of AI generation	No	No
ChatGPT	Both human and AI-generated	Yes/No Binary Response	No	No
Scribbr	Both human and AI-generated	Percentage likelihood of AI generation	Yes	Yes
DetectBard	Both human and AI-generated	Percentage likelihood of AI generation	Yes	Yes
Contentdetector.ai	Both human and AI-generated	Percentage likelihood of AI generation	Yes	Yes
Detecting-AI.com	Both human and AI-generated	Percentage likelihood of AI generation	Yes	Yes

Although ChatGPT once served as a popular means of detection via the simple prompt, “Did you write this?”, it can no longer be used as a source of detection. Whereas output to this query previously included any segments that resembled previous output by the program, ChatGPT now only provides an affirmative response if the submitted text exactly matches an output that it has previously generated. Thus, even if a student has used ChatGPT-generated text to complete an assignment, ChatGPT will provide a negative response if his/her work has been slightly modified. As such, ChatGPT returned null findings for all submitted text and was not included in the calculations detailed in the following section.

## Data Analysis and Results

Digitized versions of the 90 handwritten writing samples were entered into the six AI-detection programs selected for this study. All but one program reported the likelihood that the text was AI-generated in the form of a percentage. The program, Content at Scale, rated text by how “robotic” text appeared. The extent to which this program judged a given text to be robotic in nature was converted into a numerical scale with ‘human sounding’ as 1, ‘robotic sounding’ as 2, and ‘very robotic sounding’ as 3. Prior to conducting any analyses, all percentage detection scores were converted to rationalized arcsine units (RAU) to reduce the risk of violating the assumption of normalcy required for inferential statistics. Following this transformation, a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with ‘group’ as the between-subjects factor.

As shown in Table 2, pairwise comparisons in a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a significant difference between the mean percentage false detection of the high-scoring group and that of both the mid-range- and low-scoring groups. No significant difference was found between the mid-range- and low-scoring groups. This indicates that EFL students who are more proficient in the skills required for academic writing are more likely to be unfairly penalized when instructors use AI detection software as a measure of potential plagiarism.

Table 2: Pairwise comparisons of the average AI-detection of the high- median- and low-scoring groups

Group	Comparison Group	Mean Difference	Significance
1	2	<b>0.045*</b>	0.035
	3	<b>0.057*</b>	0.006
2	1	<b>-0.045*</b>	-0.035
	3	0.012	0.544
3	1	<b>-0.057*</b>	0.006
	2	-0.012	0.544

## Discussion

This study examined the effectiveness of programs designed to detect the likelihood of AI-generated text. To do so, we submitted 90 handwritten final exams completed by EFL learners to six AI-detection programs. Results can be summarized into two points: First, all programs report detection of AI-generated text for some or all of the originally handwritten inputs. Second, samples belonging to the high-scoring group were rated as significantly higher in the probability of AI-generation than both the median- and low-scoring groups. The latter finding leads to the high possibility that students may be penalized for higher performance through false accusations of plagiarism when instructors use the currently available AI-detection programs.

Originally, we hypothesized that most, if not all, of the handwritten work submitted to these programs would be falsely identified as AI-generated. This hypothesis was found to be true. Although not all samples were deemed



to have a high likelihood of having been AI-generated, almost all programs predicted to a certain degree that these handwritten samples could have been generated by AI. This outcome applied to even the lowest-scoring text sample, which earned a grade of just 5%. The fact that samples were identified as likely to be generated by a program rather than a person exemplifies the severe unreliability of these programs in differentiating between human and AI-generated writing.

In our study, we also hypothesized that samples belonging to the high-scoring group would be given a higher percentage likelihood of having been generated by AI than those belonging to the median- and low-scoring groups. Our hypothesis was supported as shown by pairwise comparisons in a repeated measures ANOVA. A significant difference was found between the high-scoring group and both the median- and low-scoring groups. However, no difference was found between the median- and low-scoring groups. This finding indicates that among the EFL students who participated in our study, those who excel in academic writing with final exam grades of 90% or higher are the most at risk for potentially falling prey to false accusations of plagiarism via the use of AI. As such, it is the students who are the most proficient academic writers who are most likely to face undeserved negative repercussions when instructors use the currently available programs to screen for AI-generated submissions.

Our findings are not surprising when the algorithms and training databases of AI-detection programs are critically examined. As AI-detection programs are trained to determine repetitive vocabulary and sentence structure, EFL learners with limited vocabulary are at a higher risk of false detection than their native English-speaking peers. In addition to having a larger vocabulary, native speakers of English may also have greater knowledge, familiarity, and comfort with varying sentence structures that can be used in academic writing. These differences in both perplexity and burstiness between the writing of EFL students and those of native English-speaking students are argued by Liang et al. (2023) as the primary causes of the disadvantages faced by EFL writers when their work is analyzed by AI-detection programs.

## Conclusion

The advent of AI-generated text as a potential form of plagiarism is a new phenomenon in the educational sphere. Students and educators alike are still learning how to best use LLM functionalities in the world of academia. Such programs have the potential to serve as tools to enhance education in a myriad of ways. However, they also have the potential to be used unethically by students to bypass the need to complete written assignments. While instructors are aware that this new tool of plagiarism exists, reliable technology is not yet available that can accurately detect and address such instances of plagiarism.

Researchers agree that AI-detection programs are in their infancy and cannot be used as a reliable plagiarism-detection tool (Sadasivan et al., 2023). However, there is a developing body of research aiming to inform educators that programs claiming to accurately detect AI-generated text are not reliably effective. Educators thus



have the opportunity to better understand the limitations of these programs. Understanding AI-detection programs may be particularly useful to instructors of EFL writing courses whose students may be unfairly penalized as their academic writing improves.

Ignoring technological developments is not an option. Members of the education community are better served by acknowledging that generative AI is now a part of regular life and will only continue to develop in ways that may impact nearly all aspects of academia. Individual educators as well as administrators of academic institutions must continuously educate themselves on the ever-evolving fields of generative AI as well as on how technological developments may be both ethically used and abused by students. It is only by understanding both the features of AI-generated text as well as the limitations of AI-detection programs that students and educators will be able to work together to use AI in ways that are both ethical and beneficial to students.

## Recommendations

This study raises several opportunities for future research. One topic that can be further explored is the role of the first language in EFL writing. For instance, MSA typically consists of long sentences written in a cyclical rather than linear pattern. Paragraphs in MSA are written in a format that native speakers of English may perceive to consist of only one sentence because the comma (,) in MSA serves in the role of the period (.) in English. As such, EFL classes for this population often explicitly stress the concise structure of sentences in the English language (Alkhubiry & Al-Ahad, 2020; Daqar, 2018; Daumiller & Janke, 2020; Diab, 1996; Elhadary, 2023; Khatter et al., 2019; Scott & Tucker, 1974). Instruction stressing brevity may impact the factor of burstiness of AI-detection programs in a way that is not found in the English-language writing of speakers with other first languages. The false alarm rates of AI-detection programs in native speakers of English also need further examination. Such studies are few in number, and even fewer explicitly examine the differences between the false error rates on passages written by native speakers of English and those written by EFL learners (e.g., Liang et al., 2023)

Future research may also analyze explicit metrics of written compositions that are both more and less likely to be subject to higher rates of false detection by AI-detection programs. Future studies may work to determine if factors such as the use of more abstract rather than concrete words and more complex rather than formulaic sentence structures are either more or less susceptible to false detection. Such analysis is possible through the TextEvaluator Tool made available through the Education Testing Service (Sheehan et al., 2014). In addition to these linguistic features, this tool allows for the analysis of numerous other factors associated with determining the complexity and quality of writing.

Another potential area of examination is the intrinsic nature of the students themselves. Factors such as self-efficacy and learning orientation may play a role in both their use of AI-text-generative programs as well as their motivation to learn to produce written products that include more perplexity and burstiness. Self-efficacy

refers to students' innate sense of control over their lives and life circumstances. Students with greater self-efficacy are more likely to be motivated to face difficult situations from the viewpoint that they are in control and can overcome them. Instead, students with lower self-efficacy are more likely to view such circumstances as out of their control. Thus, they are less likely to feel that they can work through difficult situations and succeed on their own merit (Pilotti, 2022). Additionally, learning orientation may play a great role in students' decision to succumb to the use of AI text-generation programs as an easier solution to completing written tasks. Students who approach education with a learning-orientation approach to education are more likely to work towards acquiring skills and knowledge. However, students with a grade-orientation approach to education may instead prefer to "take the easy way out" by using such programs (Meyer et al., 2019; Pilotti et al., 2022). With regards to EFL learners in particular, personal dispositions, such as higher self-efficacy and a learning-orientation approach to learning may be helpful. Such dispositions may lead EFL students to strive to produce work of increasing complexity and uniqueness. Whether the latter properties of their writing will make them more or less susceptible to false detection in future AI-detection programs will be a critical matter to be addressed by computer programmers and educators worldwide. Including more varied training samples from a variety of writers with differing languages and linguistic skills to the datasets on which AI-detection programs are trained may aid in curbing current and future false detection issues.

## Acknowledgment

We are grateful to the members of the Undergraduate Research Society and our colleagues in the Cognitive Science Research Center for their helpful feedback.

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## Examining the Transdisciplinarity and Complementarity of a Double Degree Program in Chemistry and Computer Engineering

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**Abstract:** This case study examined the transdisciplinarity and complementarity of a double degree program in undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering, based on the perspectives of its graduates. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen graduates to explore how well the program integrated both disciplines and prepared them for the job market. Thematic analysis of the interviews revealed that the double degree program fell short of seamlessly integrating the disciplines of chemistry and computer engineering despite its intention to unify them. Challenges, such as incoordination between the departments involved and the rigidity of the curriculum, contributed to a fragmented learning experience and hindered students from bridging the two disciplines. The limited job opportunities that required skills from both chemistry and computer engineering among graduates raised questions about the relevance of the double degree program in responding to industry needs. These findings can inform educators and administrators on how to develop curricula that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries by providing insights into how the two disciplines can be integrated and applied to understand complex phenomena and address real-world issues. This study lays the groundwork for future research aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of double degree programs.

**Keywords:** Double degree, Transdisciplinarity, Complementarity, Chemistry, Computer engineering

**Citation:** Opage, C.D.M., Guidote, A.M., & Adarlo, G.M. (2024). Examining the Transdisciplinarity and Complementarity of a Double Degree Program in Chemistry and Computer Engineering. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 587-599), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.



## Introduction

An increasing number of higher education institutions worldwide have offered double or dual degree programs to students (Pineda et al., 2022). This trend can be attributed to the massification of higher education, whereby educational institutions seek ways to differentiate themselves in order to attract and retain more students. With a diverse student population entering higher education, educational institutions are pressured to accommodate a growing number of students with transdisciplinary interests or career aspirations that cannot be fully met by conventional single degree programs (Pineda, 2024).

Double degree programs at the undergraduate level can offer students a unique and enriching educational experience by providing them with the opportunity to earn two equivalent degrees, either from the same higher education institution or from collaborating higher education institutions. The former model of a double degree program allows students to pursue two distinct majors or programs of study concurrently by integrating coursework from both programs in one higher education institution, while the latter model necessitates students to complete coursework and the requirements of two separate programs from different higher education institutions. Collaborating higher educational institutions in the latter model can be either local or international (Knight, 2011; Pineda, 2024; Russell et al., 2008).

Double degree programs inherently promote transdisciplinarity by integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines, thereby preparing students to address complex issues at work and in society (Agarwal et al., 2023). In contrast to multidisciplinary that involves engaging in multiple disciplines simultaneously and interdisciplinarity that focuses on transferring concepts or methods from one discipline to another, transdisciplinarity seeks to unify knowledge from multiple disciplines to achieve a holistic understanding of complex phenomena and address real-world issues (Nicolescu, 2016; Udovychenko et al., 2022). Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity are still anchored in a specific discipline, whereas transdisciplinarity transcends disciplinary boundaries (Nicolescu, 2016).

Studies show that the extent to which the two disciplines are complementary or closely related in double degrees has influenced students to pursue such academic programs (Banares & Gascón, 2013). Double degrees can be complementary, based on their conceptual understanding, methodological approaches, and practical applications. Ensuring complementarity involves aligning curricula and academic standards to provide seamless and enriching educational experiences for students (Russell et al., 2008).

Students find double degree programs appealing to pursue because of their practical considerations, personal aspirations, and intellectual curiosity. They seek to maximize their opportunities for career advancement and financial stability, alleviating their concerns about the uncertain landscape of the job market and the perceived diminishing value of university credentials. These students view double degrees as a means of preparing to serve others effectively, whether through innovative solutions to societal challenges or meaningful contributions to their communities. They value the opportunity to satisfy their intellectual curiosity in exploring diverse fields of



study, recognizing that each degree offers unique insights and perspectives that can enrich their learning (Banares & Gascón, 2013; Haupt et al., 2021; Pineda et al., 2022).

Offering double degree programs can significantly enhance a higher education institution's competitiveness and reputation (Chan, 2012). By offering these programs, a higher education institution not only demonstrates responsiveness to the evolving needs of students and employers, but also shows innovativeness and flexibility in providing students with holistic educational experiences that can meet the demands of a changing workforce and address pressing issues in society (Michael & Balraj, 2003; Russell et al., 2008). Additionally, double degree programs often involve collaboration with other renowned higher education institutions, both domestically and internationally, which can increase the educational institution's visibility and prestige on local and global scales (Lysak, 2017).

Research suggests that students enrolled in double degree programs demonstrate higher academic performance and personal satisfaction than those enrolled in single degree programs (Chumney & Ragucci, 2006). Contributing factors include heightened motivation and engagement in learning, strategic management of workload, deeper understanding of concepts requiring a cross-disciplinary approach to learning, and perspective-taking from collaboration with peers from other disciplines. Specifically, students in double degree programs are often driven to excel in their coursework. Despite the demands of taking combined degrees, they tend to manage their time and tasks effectively through careful planning and organization. By studying two complementary disciplines, they can explore the intersection between different fields of study and apply insights from one discipline to another (An, 2015; Chumney & Ragucci, 2006; Haupt et al., 2021).

Graduates of double degree programs are better prepared to succeed in a rapidly changing world. They often have a competitive edge in the job market. By acquiring expertise in two complementary disciplines, these graduates possess a broader skill set and a transdisciplinary perspective, which makes them attractive candidates for a wide range of career opportunities. This breadth of skills allows them to adapt to various professional environments and to excel in diverse roles and industries. These graduates can identify connections and synthesize ideas across different fields, enabling them to approach complex challenges from multiple perspectives and to develop innovative solutions. Their ability to think creatively and holistically sets them apart in an interconnected world in which cross-disciplinary collaboration is increasingly valued (Haupt et al., 2021; Holtzman & Sifontis, 2014).

However, the effectiveness of double degree programs relies on institutional support and the structure of the academic degree (Russell et al., 2008). Their perceived advantages may also vary, depending on the specific combination of degrees and individual student perspectives (Ou et al., 2019). Although the motivation to offer these programs is clear, their impact on graduates requires further investigation (Lysak, 2017).

Hence, this study examined the transdisciplinarity and complementarity of a double degree program in

undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering, based on the perspectives of its graduates. The findings of this study can inform educators and administrators on how to develop curricula that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, by providing a deeper understanding of how knowledge from different fields can be integrated and applied to complex phenomena and real-world issues. Understanding the transdisciplinarity and complementarity of such a double degree program can provide insights that can promote educational innovation, advance new transdisciplinary fields, and prepare graduates to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving job market and address complex issues in society.

## Method

Qualitative research was conducted in this study, as the nature of inquiry is historically situated, complex, multifaceted, relational, and subjective (Gaudet & Robert, 2018). Specifically, a case study design was chosen as a qualitative research approach to investigate “a phenomenon within its real-world context” based on a “retrospective analysis of a case” (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 143). In examining the transdisciplinarity and complementarity of a double degree program as a phenomenon, this case study aimed to gather insights from the meanings that graduates assigned to their experiences of undergoing such an academic program.

## Setting and Participants

This case study examined a double degree program in undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering at Ateneo de Manila University, a higher education institution in the capital of the Philippines. As a Catholic and Jesuit educational institution, Ateneo de Manila University aims to form individuals dedicated to service and social justice by fostering moral and intellectual virtues imbued with the Ignatian spirit. Through excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement, the university strives to cultivate an inclusive, diverse, and sustainable community that promotes the greater glory of God and greater service of mankind (Ateneo de Manila University, 2022).

After obtaining ethics approval to proceed with the research, this study recruited graduates of the double degree program in undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering at Ateneo de Manila University as study participants. Email messages were sent to the participants to request an interview. Twenty-four graduates indicated their willingness to participate in the study. One graduate (4%) belonged to the age group of 25 to 29 years old, five (21%) in the 30 to 34 years old, two (8%) in the 35 to 39 years old, three (13%) in the 40 to 44 years old, three (13%) in the 45 to 49 years old, four (17%) in the 50 to 54 years old, and one (4%) in the 55 to 59 years old. Fourteen (58%) of them were males, whereas ten (42%) were females. Bachelor’s degree was the highest educational attainment of the eighteen graduates (75%) included in this study, master’s degree for four graduates (17%), and doctoral degree for two graduates (8%).

### *Data Gathering*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine the impact of a double degree program in undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering, in terms of promoting transdisciplinarity and complementarity. Interviews are suitable for generating data through conversation (Leavy, 2023). This method of gathering data can extract rich data from the narrations of study participants regarding their lived experiences (Gaudet & Robert, 2018).

The interview guide contained the following questions:

- (1) Why did you pursue a double degree program?
- (2) What lifelong skills were you able to gain from your double degree?
- (3) How did your double degree affect your job opportunities?
- (4) How long should a double degree program be completed based on your experience? Why?
- (5) How would you re-imagine a double degree program in undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering?
- (6) Would you recommend a double degree to others? Why or why not?

When necessary, additional questions were asked to probe the responses of study participants. Transdisciplinarity and complementarity were not explicitly used as terms during the interviews so that unbiased responses could be elicited from the study participants. The interviews were conducted using videoconferencing and recorded with permission. Each recorded interview lasted approximately thirty minutes.

### *Data Analysis*

Transcripts from the recorded interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to understand the impact of a double degree program in undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering on graduates with respect to promoting transdisciplinarity and complementarity. Thematic analysis involved reading and re-reading transcripts to familiarize us with the data. Initial thoughts were written as memos. Meaningful units of information were identified and codes were assigned. Similar and related codes were grouped together as part of searching for patterns and identifying themes. The initial themes were thereafter reviewed against the transcripts to ensure coherence. When inconsistencies were encountered, discrepant themes were revisited and revised accordingly. Finally, recurring themes were reported as emerging themes that could provide insight into the interview responses. To ensure the trustworthiness of thematic analysis, the steps undertaken include engaging in reflexivity, seeking feedback and input from peers, and maintaining an audit trail of the decision-making processes (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Leavy, 2023).

## **Findings**

An undergraduate degree in chemistry focuses on theoretical concepts, standard laboratory procedures, and chemical instrumentation, which are relevant to analytical and synthetic chemistry. In contrast, an undergraduate degree in computer engineering covers foundational concepts in the basic sciences, mathematics, software, and

engineering. Currently, the undergraduate degree on chemistry can be completed within four years, while computer engineering takes four and a half years in the Philippines.

A double degree program in undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering was established in 1983 at the Ateneo de Manila University. Students earn their undergraduate degree in chemistry within four years of full-time study, and their undergraduate degree in computer engineering after an additional year. Based on official documents from the university, the program aims to train students to integrate computers into scientific instruments and support initiatives to develop low-cost homebuilt instruments. Initially, the program focused on microprocessors and digital logic, but has since evolved to include mathematics, engineering, and electronics with the introduction of more software courses. However, the double degree program was discontinued in 2017 as enrollment significantly decreased, along with other double degree programs offered by the university becoming more popular among enrollees.

### **Transdisciplinarity**

Many interviewed graduates found a mismatch between the intended transdisciplinary goals of the double degree program and their actual experiences of undergoing such a program. Despite the initial vision of coupling chemistry with computer engineering to reinforce each other, most graduates did not perceive a seamless integration between the two fields. For instance, they noted that the program's initial intention to amplify chemistry through computer engineering, particularly in the context of instrumentation, was not effectively realized in practice. There was a lack of cohesion between chemistry and computer engineering concepts, leading to a sense of learning each discipline in isolation. This mismatch suggests a disconnect between the program's design and implementation, raising questions about the effectiveness of unifying knowledge from different disciplines.

Most of the interviewed graduates felt that they were learning chemistry and computer engineering as separate entities rather than as integrated components of a transdisciplinary program. They expressed difficulties in bridging concepts between the two disciplines, particularly in the courses taught by different departments. The lack of alignment and coordination between departments offering chemistry and computer engineering courses hindered students from perceiving the interconnectedness between the two fields and gave them a fragmented learning experience. This disjointed approach could be attributed to factors, such as the lack of coherence in course design and the compartmentalization of courses taught by different departments.

The structure of the double degree program, including curricular constraints and limited elective options, also influenced the extent of transdisciplinarity experienced by students. Graduates pointed out that the pre-determined courses that were geared towards supporting their second degree in computer engineering restricted their flexibility in choosing electives that aligned with their interests in chemistry. This curricular rigidity contributed to a sense of compartmentalization between the two disciplines, further limiting transdisciplinary learning experiences.

Additionally, the interviews revealed the limited application of their double degree in the job market, particularly in the Philippines. Despite the program's emphasis on instrumentation and integration of chemistry with computer engineering, job opportunities that necessitated both skill sets were scarce. While some graduates felt that their double degree provided them with a competitive edge and broader skill set, others questioned the relevance and use of certain aspects of the program, particularly in relation to their professional roles and responsibilities. This limited demand for transdisciplinary expertise reinforced the perception among graduates that they could pursue careers in either chemistry or computer engineering independently, rather than leveraging both disciplines simultaneously.

Despite the challenges and limitations encountered, several graduates identified opportunities for skill development in the chemistry and computer engineering components of the program. While the chemistry program of study provided a strong foundation in analytical thinking and problem-solving, the computer engineering program of study offered practical skills in instrumentation and programming. These graduates recognized the value of both skill sets in their career paths, albeit often in separate domains.

Furthermore, some graduates brought up instances where their double degree program facilitated transdisciplinary learning, particularly in the realm of instrumentation. Those who pursued careers in areas, such as IT consulting and software development, realized the importance of computer engineering applications in chemistry. They found that their specialization in both chemistry and computer engineering provided them with an advantage and allowed them to bridge the gap between their learning and practical application.

### *Complementarity*

One aspect of complementarity lies in the alignment of curricula and academic standards in chemistry and computer engineering. Given this, most graduates expressed concerns about the lack of coherence in the curriculum, particularly in the connection between chemistry and computer engineering courses. This disconnect is evident in the emphasis placed on instrumentation within computer engineering, which some graduates felt was overshadowed by the broader scope of chemistry.

Complementarity involves the application of knowledge and skills from one discipline to enhance the understanding and practice of another. The focus of the double degree program was predominantly on instrumentation as part of strengthening the discipline of chemistry through computer engineering and leveraging the disciplinary rigor of chemistry to excel in computer engineering. While the program aimed to capitalize on the disciplinary strengths of chemistry and computer engineering, the extent to which complementarity was achieved in terms of skill acquisition and expertise appears to be limited. Only a few graduates perceived this emphasis on instrumentation as enhancing their understanding or application of both disciplines.

The ultimate test of complementarity is the extent to which the double degree program prepares students for successful career and professional development. While some graduates attributed their career opportunities to the complementary nature of the program, others questioned the relevance of their double degree in the job market. The perceived value of the program varied among graduates, with some highlighting the benefits of having expertise in both chemistry and computer engineering, while others questioned the practical use of their double degree in their chosen career paths. These mixed perspectives emphasize the complexity of achieving complementarity in terms of career readiness and professional outcomes.

While some graduates attributed their job opportunities to the complementarity of chemistry and computer engineering, others found that their career paths were influenced by the broader education and prestige of the university. They credited their career prospects and achievements to the critical thinking and problem-solving skills fostered by their university, rather than the degrees they earned. Although the double degree program may not have fully achieved its aim of complementarity, the broader educational environment at the university played a role in shaping the graduates' professional development and versatility in the job market.

## Discussion

Graduates from the double degree program commented on the discrepancy between the intended transdisciplinary and complementary goals of their academic program and their actual experiences. They reported limited integration between undergraduate chemistry and computer engineering, which made it challenging for them to bridge concepts between the two disciplines when they were students. This lack of cohesion is attributed to insufficient coordination and alignment between departments offering courses in chemistry and computer engineering. Without effective coordination and support, students may find it difficult to integrate knowledge from combined degrees and navigate the complexities of transdisciplinary and complementary learning (Pineda, 2024; Russell et al., 2008). Such difficulties can lead to disillusionment among double degree students (Ou et al., 2019). Noticeably, the recurrence of this problem across various academic settings suggests that the challenges encountered are more knowledge-based than administrative (Pineda, 2024). These challenges often fall outside the traditional disciplinary organization of higher education (Russell et al., 2008).

This study showed that the structure of the double degree program led to a fragmented learning experience, with students perceiving chemistry and computer engineering as separate entities rather than integrated components. Curricular constraints also limited students' flexibility in choosing electives aligned with their interests, further exacerbating compartmentalization between the two disciplines. Curricular rigidity can lead to disengagement among students and hinder effective learning and integration between disciplines (Ou et al., 2019).

Research has shown that double degree students typically exhibit high levels of understanding and satisfaction when they successfully make meaningful connections between their combined degrees (Newswander &

Borrego, 2009). Thus, cohesive program design, effective teaching practices, and supportive learning environments are crucial for fostering transdisciplinary and complementary learning experiences (Ou et al., 2019). To address these challenges, strategies to improve course coordination, streamline timetabling processes, and ensure consistency in academic expectations across faculties are needed (Russell et al., 2008). Incorporating a foundational course or organized activities that promote integration across the various components of a double degree program can be useful (Wimshurst & Manning, 2017). A holistic approach to these challenges considers not only the academic content and structure of the double degree program, but also the broader educational ecosystem (Ou et al., 2019). Periodic monitoring and assessment of the double degree program should focus on supporting students to form epistemic and professional connections between the two disciplines (Wimshurst & Manning, 2017).

Several graduates of the double degree program experienced limited job opportunities, despite their expertise in both chemistry and computer engineering. As a result, they failed to appreciate the relevance of their program in the job market. While students may perceive value in expanding the scope of their knowledge through double degrees, the lack of direct benefits in terms of employment may diminish the apparent transdisciplinarity and complementarity of their programs (Ou et al., 2019). Students may lose the motivation to pursue their double degree if they do not receive the expected intellectual or economic returns (Pineda, 2024).

This perceived lack of job opportunities suggests a need to better align double degree programs with industry demands to ensure that graduates possess the skills and expertise valued by employers. Higher education institutions offering double degree programs should collaborate closely with industry partners to identify emerging trends, skill gaps, and evolving job roles (Ou et al., 2019). Furthermore, the gap between promised returns and the actual outcomes of combined degrees warrants meaningful integration and synergy between the two degrees. Simply combining degrees for the sake of prestige or academic novelty may not result in tangible benefits for graduates if the acquired knowledge and skills are not complementary or relevant to contemporary industry needs (Pineda, 2024).

Studies have shown that employers are unsure about their understanding of double degree programs, but they generally view graduates of these programs as highly driven and dedicated. Despite recognizing these advantages, employers expressed reservations about hiring double degree graduates because of concerns about retention, job fit, and salary expectations. They perceived double degree holders as seeking more challenging roles and being inclined to leave for better opportunities sooner (Culver et al., 2012).

These reservations underscore the importance of effectively communicating the value of double degree programs to employers and addressing any misconceptions or uncertainties. Stronger partnerships with the industry should be established by going beyond occasional interactions, such as casual meetings and site visits. It entails engaging industry partners in curriculum development and implementation to ensure that double degree programs align closely with industry demands and emerging trends. By actively involving employers in discussions about program design, content, and learning outcomes, higher education institutions can enhance the



practical relevance and employability of their double degree graduates (Culver et al., 2012).

## Limitations and Further Research

This study offers significant insights into the challenges of fostering the transdisciplinarity and complementarity of a double degree program in chemistry and computer engineering. However, this study has several limitations that may affect the applicability of the findings to other settings. Despite these limitations, this study lays the groundwork for future research aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of double degree programs in promoting transdisciplinarity and complementarity.

First, the sample of graduates from a specific double degree program at Ateneo de Manila University may not be representative of the broader population of double degree students or higher education institutions offering similar programs. This lack of diversity could skew perspectives and limit the generalizability of the findings to other student populations and academic settings. Future studies should aim for a larger and more diverse sample to capture a broader range of experiences and perspectives.

Second, the findings of this study are based on a specific institutional and cultural context. The challenges and experiences identified in this context may not fully capture the nuances of other academic settings with different institutional structures, pedagogical approaches, and cultural norms. By conducting comparative studies across multiple institutions in various cultural contexts, researchers can identify common challenges and best practices. They can also gain insights into how cultural norms, educational policies, and socio-economic factors influence the implementation and outcomes of double degree programs.

Third, this study recruited participants based on their willingness to be interviewed, which could have introduced selection bias. Those who chose to participate may have had positive or negative experiences, thus influencing the study's findings. Future research could benefit from employing random sampling from a list of eligible participants.

Fourth, this research mainly focused on the perspectives of graduates of a double degree program in chemistry and computer engineering without comparing their experiences to those of graduates from single degree programs or other transdisciplinary programs. A comparison can elucidate the unique contributions and challenges of double degree programs relative to other academic programs. Insights from comparative analyses can inform the design and implementation of these academic programs.

Fifth, study participants may struggle to accurately recall past events or selectively remember aspects of their experiences of undergoing a double degree program. This recall bias could lead to incomplete or inaccurate narration of their experiences. Although the long-term impacts of double degree programs on the participants' careers and professional development were gathered in this study, interviewing them after the passage of time

since graduation could influence perceptions of their experiences in a double degree program. Future studies can undertake longitudinal research that periodically tracks the experiences and outcomes of double degree students over an extended period. Longitudinal research can provide insights into how students' perceptions and experiences evolve over time.

Sixth, study participants may have felt inclined to present themselves in a favorable light or conform to societal expectations during the interviews. As a result, they may recall their experiences in a way that aligns with perceived norms or expectations, rather than providing an accurate portrayal of their actual experiences. Future studies should ensure a supportive and non-judgmental environment in which participants feel comfortable sharing genuine experiences and perspectives.

Finally, qualitative studies may lack the statistical power and generalizability of quantitative approaches despite offering rich insights into participants' perspectives and experiences. Consequently, the findings of this study may be more indicative of individual experiences and perceptions rather than broader trends or patterns. By combining in-depth interviews with surveys or other quantitative assessments, researchers can triangulate the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing transdisciplinarity and complementarity in double degree programs.

## Conclusion

Several challenges were identified in examining the transdisciplinarity and complementarity of a double-degree program in chemistry and computer engineering, based on the perspectives of its graduates. Despite the initial intention to integrate knowledge and methods from both disciplines, the program fell short of fostering meaningful connections and applications between chemistry and computer engineering. The fragmented learning experience resulting from incoordination among the departments concerned, lack of coherence in the curriculum, and limited flexibility in electives exacerbates compartmentalization between disciplines. Limited career integration among graduates was also observed, as there seems to be a mismatch between their skill sets and industry needs.

While these programs offer opportunities to develop transferable skills and foster integration across disciplinary boundaries, the significant challenges outlined underscore the need for greater attention and investment in improving double degree programs, particularly in chemistry and computer engineering. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to align program design with pedagogical best practices, industry needs, and evolving educational paradigms. Attending to structural barriers, enhancing coordination between departments, and fostering a culture of transdisciplinary collaboration are ways that higher education institutions can engage in to better prepare students for the complexities of the modern workforce and equip them with the skills needed to tackle global challenges.

## Acknowledgements

The conference presentation of this study was funded by Ateneo de Manila through its University Research Council, the School of Science and Engineering, and the Sanggunian ng mga Mag-aaral. It also received financial support from the local government units of Muntinlupa and Marikina and the American Chemical Society.

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## The Unknown Indigenous Tribe in Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines

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**Abstract:** The Calamba Ayta Community is an adopted community of NU Laguna since 2018. They are recognized by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. Their tribe is located Barangay Milagrosa and Barangay Makiling Calamba City with a total of 89 households. By conducting a comprehensive profiling through an ethnographic approach, the researchers were able to find out that the community is composed of 306 individuals as of September 6, 2023. They have 1 chieftain and 6 councilors which was elected through the guidance of the NCIP and tribal leaders from other Ayta tribes in CALABARZON. They have been residents of Calamba City, Laguna since the 1960's but are yet to be formally recognized by the local government of Calamba City as an IP/ICC. Furthermore, according to them, their parents and grandparents came from the Quezon province which makes them formerly a part of the Agta Lopez indigenous peoples. Lastly, most of them do not have a stable income and some are minimum wage earners with only a few of them included in the Philippine government's subsidy program for the poorest of the poor (4 P's).

**Keywords:** ethnography, indigenous peoples, social inclusion, marginalized

**Citation:** Luna, A.M., Evangelio, C.T., Isla, L.B. (2024). The Unknown Indigenous Tribe in Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 600-612), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Calamba City, Laguna, is formerly a part of Cabuyao until 1742, is usually known for its hot springs, sometimes it is also referred to as the team building capital of the Philippines. It is also well-known as the hometown of the recognized national hero of the Philippines, Jose P. Rizal. It became a city in 2001 by virtue of Republic Act 9024, making it the second component city of Laguna (first is San Pablo City). As of August 2023, it has a total population of 567,603 (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/calamba-population>), with a total land area of 14,480 has(<https://www.calambacity.gov.ph/index.php/ct-menu-item-3/city-profile>). It has a total of 54

barangays 37 of which are classified as urban and 17 as rural. It also houses quite a number of industrial parks and educational institutions.

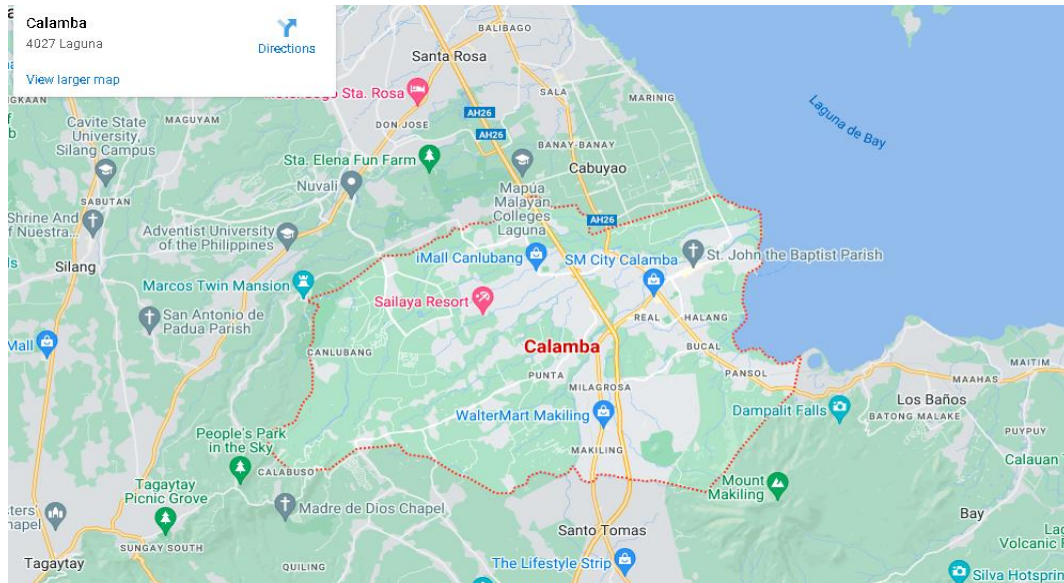


Image 1. Map of Calamba City (from <https://www.calambacity.gov.ph/index.php/visit-calamba/map-guide>)

On the north it is bounded by Cabuyao, Laguna, east by Laguna de Bay, South by Mount Makiling (Los Banos, Laguna), and in the west by Sto.tomas and Tanauan, Batangas (Image 1). What people don't know about Calamba is that it is also home to an indigenous cultural community/ indigenous people, the Ayta Community. There are around 110 major indigenous tribes around the Philippines (Waddington, 2002 & De Vera, 2007). They composed about 10-15% of the total population of the Philippines (UNDP, 2010). The Negritos are arguably the first inhabitants of the Philippine Archipelago. The first Filipinos are the indigenous people as they are the descendants of the inhabitants of a country or a region (Balilla, 2013). When the colonizers came, they were displaced and now, most of the indigenous communities can be found in the mountain ranges, rural areas, and other far-flung communities. At least, that is what the general population think. However, there are a few cases that indigenous communities can be found in urbanized cities. This is the case of an Ayta community in Calamba City, Laguna. The presumption of people who do know that there is an Ayta Community in Calamba City is that they came from Central Luzon and that they were displaced during the Mt. Pinatubo eruption during the early 90's.

**Objectives**

The objective of this study is to learn about the history and composition of the Ayta community of Calamba City, Laguna, specifically, this research aims to:

- 1.) trace the origin and history of Calamba Ayta Community;
- 2.) come up with a comprehensive demographic profile of the Calamba Ayta Community; and
- 3.) identify and describe the way of life of the Ayta Community living in Calamba City.



### *Related Literature*

Aetas or Negritos as often referred to by the Spaniards during the Spanish colonization period are considered the first inhabitants of the Philippines. They are often nomadic, living in the hunting and gathering society. Males often go to the mountains where they hunt wild animals while females gathered wild fruits, root crops, and vegetables for their food (Grey, 2016). They are rich in their indigenous knowledge and practices that sustained their communities (Panes and Aguiador, 2008).

Most contemporary Negrito research and map research focused on Luzon, specifically the northeastern coast of the Sierra Madre according (Padilla, 2013) It was also concluded that the distribution and locations of the Negritos remained unchanged and are still within their natural territories and with this distribution they have more than 30 different languages. These natural territories are: Western Cagayan, Northern Sierra Madre, Southern Sierra Madre, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon, The Island Group and Mindanao. But Majority are usually from the eastern rural community of Luzon (Padilla, 2013). They are called in different names: Agta, Ita, Ayta, Aeta, or Ati. Traditionally due to their nomadic nature, they live in houses built out of grass and tree branches to easily vacate upon scarcity of surrounding food (Grey, 2016). Furthermore, traditionally, they do not have social rules and live according to their ancient customs. This practice is evident in the way they dress. According to Waddington (2002), they are commonly referred to as Negritos and they differ from other Filipino groups in their racial phenotype, characterized by curly hair, dark complexion, and small stature, and by their lifestyle strongly focused on foraging strategies. As part of the ethnic cultural minority, they have always been disadvantaged socially, politically, and economically. This was further highlighted during the Mt. Pinatubo explosion during the early 1990's. They were displaced to add to their already disadvantaged status (Grey, 2016). The Aeta are naturally skilled weavers and planters. Their most known products are winnowing baskets, rattan hammocks, and other household containers. Their traditional clothing are wraparound skirts for the young women and wear bark cloth for the elder women. For them men: loincloths for the elder men. The old women of the Agta group wear their bark cloth strip which passes between legs and is attached to a string around the waist. Decorative disfigurement is a traditional art most Aeta groups practice to decorate their bodies (Watcher, n.d.).

### **Method**

An ethnographic approach was utilized in doing this research. We used key informant interviews, village walks, participant observation, focus group discussions, as well as secondary sources to gather information about their profile and history. The study lasted for seven months which started from January 2023 until July 2023.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The first step done by the researchers was to seek the approval of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples CALABARZON before doing this study. This was done by having a memorandum of understanding,



between the NCIP IVA and NU Laguna, part of the MOU allows NU Laguna to conduct a study about indigenous communities in the region. After that, a memorandum of understanding was also signed between the indigenous community involved and NU Laguna, and part of the MOU covers conducting a study. Once the MOUs and approval were given, the researchers performed a series of approaches in order to achieve the objectives of this study.

The village walk, in depth interviews and participant observation was done in February 2023 by one of the researchers as he was with the tribal chieftain and tribal councilors in the Barangay Milagrosa Calamba City. The second village walk, and key informant interviews was conducted this in May 2023 in Barangay Makiling, Calamba City by the other researchers. The focus group discussion was conducted in June 2023.

*Locale of the study*

The Ayta Community the study focused on resides in Calamba City of Laguna in the Philippines. The community is in two barangays of Calamba City, Laguna. These are Barangay Milagrosa and Makiling.

*Barangay Milagrosa*

Milagrosa was formerly known as Barangay Tulo is classified as a rural barangay, with a population of 9,687(PhilAtlas, 2020). With a total land area of 209.4 hectares, as shown in image 2. Milagrosa is bounded in the west by Punta and Kay Anlog, in the east by La Mesa, Maunog, and Saimsim, in the south by Makiling, and in the north by Turbina.

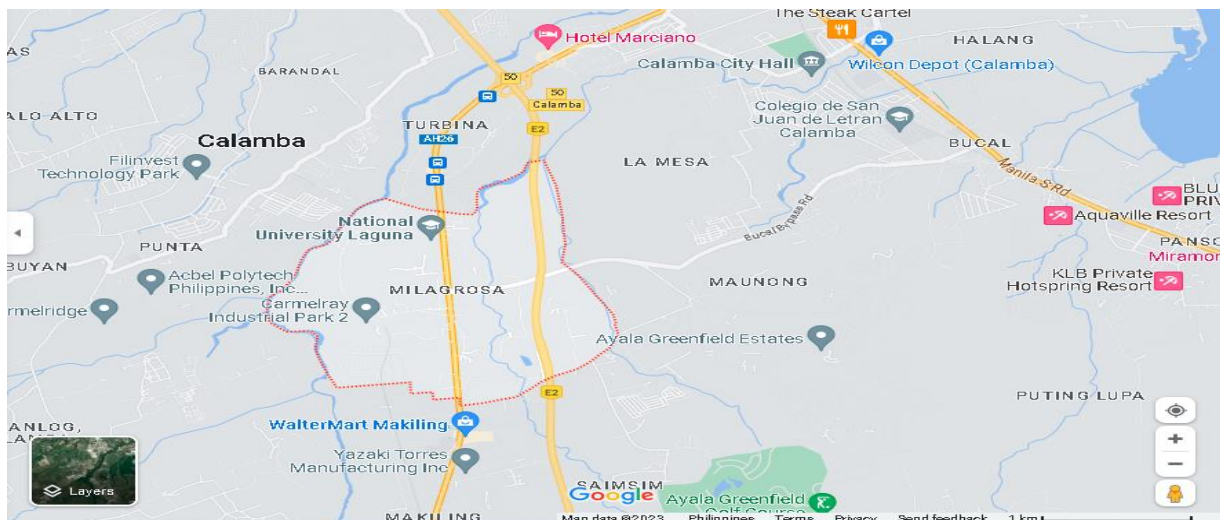
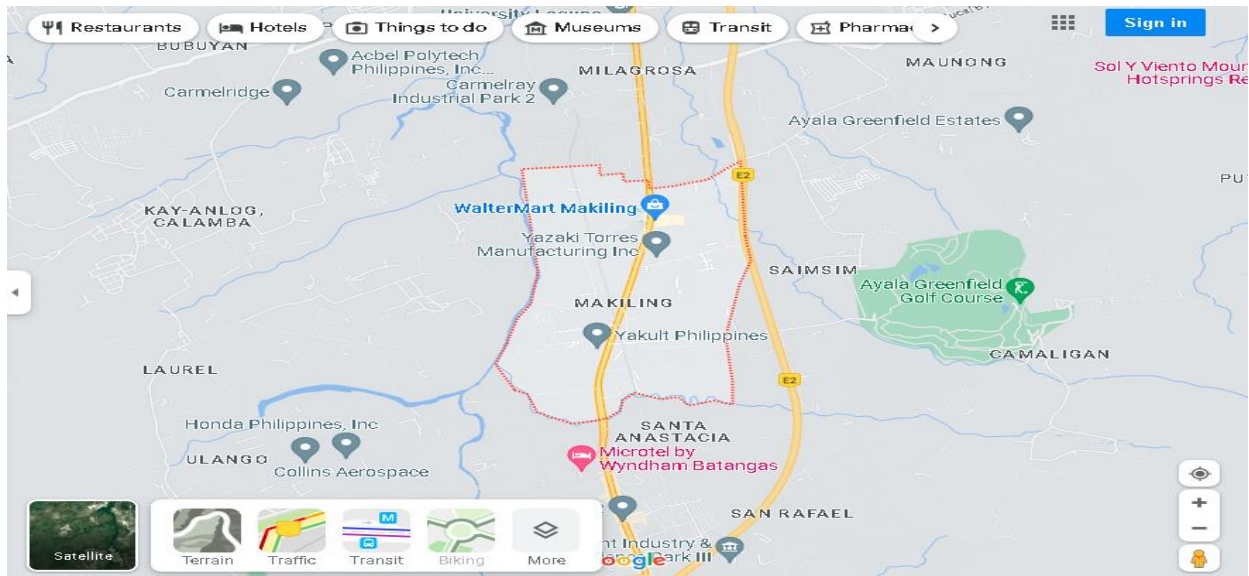


Image 2. Map taken from <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Milagrosa,+Calamba,+4027+Laguna/@14.1793313,121.1269294,14z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x33bd647859a5006f0x6ad09cc8b77f4cb1:8m2!3d14.1739117!4d121.1373348!16s%2Fm%2F010976fr?entry=ttu>

Image 2. Barangay Milagrosa Map

*Barangay Makiling*

Makiling is classified as a rural barangay and has a population of 12,508 (PhilAtlas, 2020). It has a total lot area of 465.7 hectares. It is bounded in the west by Ulango, in the east by Saimsim, Camaligan, and Puting Lupa, in the south by Sto, Tomas, Batangas, and in the north by Tulo (Image 3).



map taken from <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Makiling,+Calamba,+Laguna/@14.1538601,121.1158131,14z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x33bd6468f14ddcf3:0xde9669b2581fdd1f!8m2!3d14.152788114d121.1364733116s%2Fm%2F01082ykx?entry=ttu>

Image 3. Map of Barangay Makiling

*Data Analysis*

Since this is an ethnographic research, the data analysis is iterative and unstructured. First, data was described by recounting and describing of data, inevitably treating the data as fact. It was then analyzed and interpreted which builds an understanding or explanation of the data beyond the data points and analysis.

**Results**

**Origin of the Calamba Ayta Community**

By virtue of Resolution no.1 series of 2023, they prefer to be collectively called as Ayta. Part of the reason why they prefer to be referred to as Ayta is to have distinction from the Aeta ICC/IP from central Luzon. Majority, of them trace their origin from Quezon province (Figure 1). This is contrary to what most people who knows of their existence presume, that they migrated here from Central Luzon specifically during the time of the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the early 90's. Their ancestors used to move around from Quezon, their place of origin, to Laguna and Batangas as they are naturally nomadic. They crossed provincial borders to sell herbal medicine.

Before settling in Milagrosa and Makiling, most of them were initially located in Real, Calamba City, under the bridge, near the river (near School of Saint Benilde) and they were relocated to Milagrosa and Makiling sometime in the late 1960's to the early 1970's where they have been ever since being relocated there. They are headed by 1 chieftain who was elected in 2018.

The Calamba Ayta Community of Calamba is not reflected in the map of the Negrito Ethnic Groups in the Philippines published in 2021. They are not also indicated in those taken from the coffee table books officially published by NCIP in 2022 (Image 1 and 2). However, it is important to take note that they are recognized by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. It is also worth noting that they are one tribe even though they are in two separate barangays.

The Ayta community have been in Calamba even before 1960's and yet most people in Calamba are unaware of their existence in the city.



Image 4. Map of the Negrito Ethnic Groups in the Philippines (Larena et al., 2021)



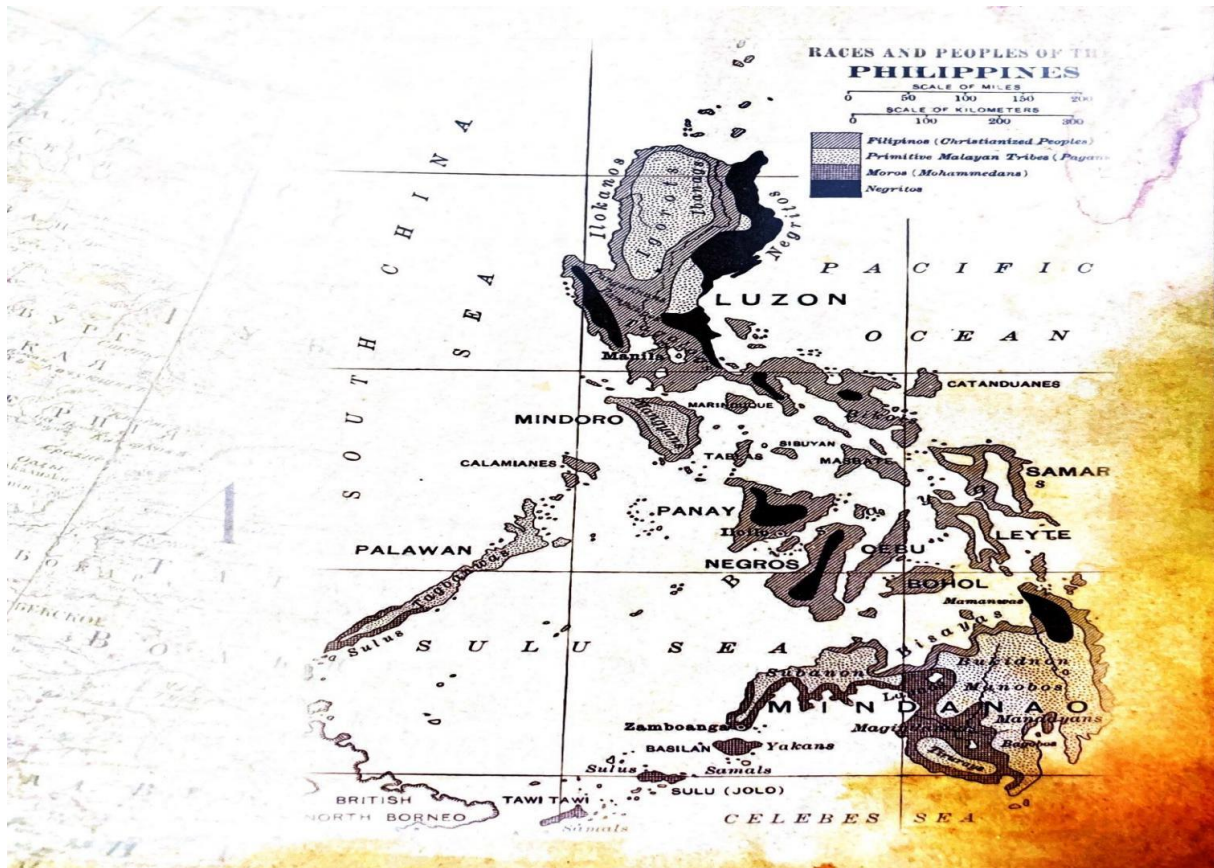


Image 5. Map of the Races and Peoples of the Philippines by Blumentritt in 1890

*Demographic Profile of the Calamba Ayta Community*

There are 89 households in the Ayta Community of Calamba. Among them, 53 are in Milagrosa, Calamba City, and 36 are in Makiling, Calamba City. There is a total of 168 males and 138 females in their tribe. The tribe is dominated by male as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Total Number of Households and Individuals

	Milagrosa	Makiling
Number of households	53	36
Number of Individuals	161	145
Male	84	61
Female	77	84
Total Number of Household	<b>89</b>	
Total Number of Individuals	<b>306</b>	
Total Male	<b>168</b>	
Total Female	<b>138</b>	

*By age group*

Majority of the Calamba Ayta Community belong to the age of 0-12 with a total of 123, followed by the age group 20-39 with 103, for the ages 13-19 there are 43, for the ages 40-59 there are 34 (Table 2). Lastly. For the age bracket 60 and above there are only 3. Meaning, there community is a relatively young community but balance in a way, albeit being dominated by the bracket 0-12 that composes the 40% of the entire population and bracket 13-19 with a total population of 166 out of the total population of 306. However, the distribution of percentages for the ages 20-39, 40-59, and 60 and above is 46% of the entire population.

Table 2. Age Distribution of the Calamba Ayta Community

Age Distribution	Milagrosa	Makiling	Total	Percentage
<b>0-12</b>	68	55	123	40%
<b>13-19</b>	27	15	43	14%
<b>20-39</b>	44	59	103	34%
<b>40-59</b>	19	15	34	11%
<b>60 and above</b>	3	0	3	1%
<b>Total Number of Individuals</b>		<b>306</b>		<b>100%</b>

*Educational Status of the tribe*

Only two tribe members are pursuing a college degree. While 4 have attained ALS and 12 are in the in the senior high school level. 13 are in the junior high school and 91 are in the elementary level (Table 3).

Table 3. Educational Attainment of the Calamba Ayta Community

	Milagrosa	Makiling
Elementary	65	26
JHS		13
Senior high school	2	10
Vocational		0
ALS		4
College		2

*Employment Status and Skills*

Most of them are employed as construction workers Twenty six are vendors of their own made herbal medicine. Some are employed as factory workers, domestic helpers and others (Table 4). In terms of skills (Table 5), the members of the community have skills are farming, construction and, deriving topical herbal medicines.

Table 4. Employment Status of the Calamba Ayta Community

	Milagrosa	Makiling
Farming	0	0
Construction	32	9
Selling herbal medicine in the public market	11	15
factory	0	8
Others	1	7

Table 5. Skills of the Ayta Community

	Milagrosa	Makiling
Farming	x	x
Construction	x	x
Deriving topical herbal medicine from plants	x	x
Others		

*Other information*

Out of the 89 household, only four are recipients of the Pangtawid Pamilyang Pinoy Program, a conditinal cah transfer scheme for the poorest of the poor in the Philippines. Their widely use Filipino/Tagalog as their primary language. In addition, majority of the tribe members who are of legal age are registered voters.

**Indigenous Way of Life in the City**

**Social Structure**

They are under one tribal chieftain who was elected under the guidance of other Ayta Tribes in CALABARZON and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. They also have six tribal councilors. The role of the chieftain is just like any other traditional chieftain from other tribes, they speak on behalf of the tribe, represents the tribe in meetings with other institutions and government agencies. However, when it comes to decision making, the decision of the tribe comes from the decision of the majority of the members of the tribe. It is also worth noting that even though they have this structure, they are very cooperative with their respective barangay officials. They strictly follow the policies and laws being implemented by the local government as well. Furthermore, according to the tribe leaders and the NCIP, they have not yet been formally recognized by the local government of Calamba City as an Indigenous Cultural Community.

### *Indigenous Livelihood*

Majority of the women make and sell their herbal medicine. They get their ingredients from the mountains of Laguna, Batangas, and Quezon. This is used as a topical solution for simple tummy aches, headaches, and body pain. Women in the tribe sell these products in the market. The process of making the herbal medicine is sacred to them and they refused to show the actual process of making the medicine.

Some of the men hunt monitor lizards, turtles, and birds using traditional traps as well as using airsoft guns. They also catch fish in the nearby rivers using traditional means of fishing. All of which will be eaten or for consumption of their immediate families.

### *Family Composition*

Most of them are pure Aytas in terms of family composition. However, there are members of the tribe who intermarried non-tribe members, particularly from the Tagalog ethnic group. Here, one member head of the family is an Ayta and the other is a Tagalog. The tagalogs are normally welcomed to the tribe as if they are also an Ayta and in doing so, they are also given the rights and privileges of indigenous peoples as mandated by law.

## **Discussion**

The Calamba Ayta Community has been in Calamba since the 1960's. According to them, their origin from the Agta Lopez of Quezon, similar to what was described by Larena et al (2021). The Calamba Ayta Community is composed of 89 households located in Barangay Makiling and Barangay Milagrosa. Although located in two barangays, they are considered one tribe unlike the conventional Agta, Ita, Aeta, or Ati, as discussed by Grey in 2016 who are nomadic in nature, the Aytas of Calamba City live in permanent homes as evidenced that they have been in their residences dating back to the late 1960's to early 1970's. There are 306 individuals and majority are male. By virtue of a resolution, they would like to be collectively referred to as Ayta and not Aeta.

The Ayta Community of Calamba is a young community as 54% is 19 years old and below. However, out of those considered as young adults and that is why it is very alarming that only two are college degree holders. In terms of employment, only 16 can be considered to have a regular income due to their nature of employment and most of them are seasonal workers and the others rely on selling their own made (indigenous) oil. This implies that some of them are living on minimum wage and most are living on seasonal jobs and heavily relying on selling their topical herbal medicine. It is also worth noting that only 41 of them are considered employed albeit most are seasonal. This confirms the findings of Grey in 2016 that Aetas, in general, have always been disadvantaged socially, politically, and economically and it is also quite surprising that very few of them are recipients of poverty alleviation programs of the national government with some included only recently.



In term of skills, most of them are knowledgeable in planting or basic agriculture but do not know how to weave which partly goes against the conclusion of Catseye (2004). Furthermore, majority of the men are also laborers in construction. This means they have acquired skills not particularly associated with their group because they are living in an urban community. The women of the tribe are involved in tmaking their indigenous topical herbal medicine which is a practice that has been handed down from generation to generation in their tribe.

It is also worth noting that none of the tribe members speak their native language as they are now using *Tagalog* as their means of communication within the tribe. However, as found by the researchers, they have infused it with some of the terms from their native language. This is a result of their intermingling with the Tagalogs. This is a source of concern because they seem to be losing their own language. despite of it being over 30 years.

While they have a chieftain, tribal councilors, and the traditional social structure, it is also worth noting that the tribe is very cooperative with the local barangay leaders that has jurisdiction over them, this goes against the findings of Grey in 2016 that they do not have social rules and live according to their ancient customs. In fact, majority of the men and women who are in the legal age are registered voters and actually practice their right to suffrage. They also abide by the established rules and laws within the community they are living in.

In terms of livelihood, it is a fusion of traditional and urbanized means as they are still making indigenous topical herbal medicine, some of the men hunt monitor lizards, catch fish in nearby rivers. However, there are many tribe members who are now skilled laborers and factory workers which somehow partially goes against the findings of Panes and Aguibiador in 2008. That the Aetas have sustained some their practices in their communities while they engaged in low/minimum wage-earning jobs.

## **Conclusion**

The origin/roots of the Ayta Community of Calamba can be traced from the Agta Lopez from Quezon. They have been here in Calamba since the Late 1960's and they have been living in permanent houses ever since they can remember.

The Ayta Community of Calamba are composed of 89 households divided into two barangays: Makiling and Milagrosa, Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines. They are relatively a young tribe with no tribe member yet to earn a college degree. They are now using *Tagalog* as their language. Only a few are recipients of the national government's poverty alleviation programs.

They have embraced a new means of livelihood. However, they were able to maintain some of their indigenous traditions. Even though they have somewhat adjusted in their environment, they remain disadvantaged and marginalized.

## Recommendations

In relation to the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

### For Future Researchers

Further studies should be done to confirm their place of origin, follow-up research in the Agta Lopez area should be done for confirmation. A quantitative study to further confirm the findings of this research is strongly recommended.

It is also recommended that a needs assessment be done with the community so that it may become a basis for the local government and community development workers for future projects for the Ayta Community.

### *For the Local Government Officials*

It is also recommended that the local government of the city of Calamba formally recognize them as an Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC) as this is mandated by law. This would allow inclusion of the Ayta community, formal recognition, and formal acknowledgement of their rights and privileges as members of the indigenous peoples.

### *For Community Development/Extension Workers*

Finally, it is also recommended that livelihood projects and programs be formulated for them be based on the findings of this study. and aligned to the additional needs assessment of the Ayta community. This will ensure that these projects will be sustainable.

## Acknowledgements

We extend our thanks to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples Region IV for the technical support they provided. We also cite the Department of Science and Technology Laguna's response to the results of the study through the livelihood project they implemented in the community. We also give our thanks to the Ayta Community of Calamba City, headed by their chieftain, Ronnie Remo, for accommodating us and for actively participating in this research.

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## Exploring the Relationship of Safety Mindset and Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) on Safety in Chemistry Laboratories

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**Abstract:** Despite standardized engineering and administrative controls, accidents persist in chemistry laboratories owing to the inherent complexity of the experiments. As a result, there is an increasing need to strengthen safety culture, which is built on a safety mindset and refers to an institution's knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) of laboratory safety. However, a safety mindset has yet to be defined in relation to the safety KAP in a chemistry laboratory. Hence, this cross-sectional study investigated the relationship between safety mindset and KAP on laboratory safety. A pre-tested survey questionnaire was administered to chemistry students ( $n = 104$ ), teachers ( $n = 8$ ), laboratory technicians ( $n = 3$ ), and analysts ( $n = 8$ ) to measure their KAP and mindset regarding laboratory safety and collect information on confounding variables, such as age, affiliation, and safety training. After controlling for confounders, ordinal logistic regression ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) revealed that knowledge was not a significant predictor of safety mindset ( $p = 0.56$ ), whereas attitude ( $p < 0.001$ ) and practice ( $p = 0.004$ ) were significant predictors of safety mindset. Such results indicate that demonstrating safety knowledge in a chemistry laboratory may not necessarily translate into a safety-oriented mindset. These insights offer a better understanding of how a safety mindset builds a safety culture through the components of KAP.

**Keywords:** Safety mindset, Knowledge, attitude, and practice, Safety culture, Laboratory safety, Chemistry

**Citation:** Garcia, C. C., Adarlo, G. M., San Esteban, A. C. C., & Guidote, A. M. (2024). Exploring the relationship of safety mindset and knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) on safety in chemistry laboratories. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024 -- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 613-625), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Several serious incidents have occurred in academic settings worldwide. One notable case involved a postgraduate student who suffered severe consequences from accidental exposure to acryloyl chloride ( $C_3H_3ClO$ ) during acrylation. The student experienced severe nose bleeding and stomach ulcers, which were not listed on the safety data sheet (Pathan et al., 2022). Despite the supervisor's reminder of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), the laboratory accident occurred because the student did not comply with the safety protocols. These types of laboratory accidents occur despite laboratories' adherence to safety policies, the knowledge and experience of those conducting the experiment, and constant reminders from supervisors. Therefore, more data on laboratory safety attitudes, behaviors, and safety culture are urgently needed (Ménard & Trant, 2020).

According to the American Chemical Society ([ACS], 2012), safety culture refers to the actions, attitudes, and behaviors concerning the safety of an institution. This concept of safety culture aligns well with the framework of Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP), which is a recognized behavioral change model. The KAP model posits that beliefs and attitudes are drivers of behavioral change, whereas knowledge serves as the foundation for behavioral changes (Fan et al., 2018). Rav-Marathe et al. (2016) argue that practical application of knowledge should go beyond just acquiring it and should involve a shift in attitude toward safety practices. These interconnections within the KAP constructs effectively encapsulated the essential parameters of a safety culture.

Safety culture is built on a safety mindset, as agreed upon by ACS (2012) and Hill (2021), among others. Although there is no clear parameter for a safety mindset in the context of chemistry laboratory safety, Hill (2021) suggested that safety knowledge combined with continuous safety education can foster a strong safety mindset within each student. Furthermore, Botha et al. (2020) found in their study that there is a strong correlation between a safety mindset and safety performance or practice. These articles imply that a relationship exists between safety knowledge, practices, and mindsets.

Studies on the relationship between safety culture and safety mindset in chemistry laboratories are lacking. While Hussein and Shifera (2022) used the KAP model to study safety culture, there is limited empirical evidence linking safety mindset to the KAP model. Hill (2021) proposed that a safety mindset is based on the amount of safety knowledge; however, this relationship has not yet been investigated. Botha et al. (2020) measured the correlation between safety mindset and practice but not in the context of chemistry laboratory safety. Examining the relationship between the safety mindset and the KAP model is crucial because it can reveal common factors between the safety mindset and safety culture. In doing so, the safety culture can be better understood and improved within the context of chemistry laboratories.

Hence, this study explored the relationship between laboratory safety KAP and mindset by addressing the

following research questions:

- What are the mean scores of the study participants on safety KAP and mindset?
- Are there significant differences in safety KAP and mindset scores by age group, affiliation, and safety training experience?
- Can the components of the KAP predict safety mindset after controlling for age, affiliation, and safety training?

## Method

This study adopted a cross-sectional, correlational research design, as it involved collecting data at a single point in time and analyzing the gathered data using regression. The cross-sectional design allowed for the examination of the relationships between variables, providing a snapshot of the associations present at the time of data collection. Additionally, the use of correlational research design offered a valuable tool for understanding the natural relationships between variables, as it does not require the administration of interventions or manipulation of variables.

## Setting and Participants

This research was conducted at Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), an institution of Jesuit higher education in the capital of the Philippines. The ADMU aims to contribute to Philippine and global society through excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement. The university's commitment to these three areas is reflected in its programs and initiatives, which are designed to produce graduates who are not only competent but also socially responsible citizens. Several of its programs and initiatives have catered to improve the practice of science in the country. One of its affiliated institutions is the Philippine Institute of Pure and Applied Chemistry (PIPAC), which offers capacity building in chemical and microbiological analysis, aside from responding to the needs of the industry for research and development in the field of chemistry.

To investigate the relationship between safety KAP and mindset in a chemistry laboratory setting, eligible participants in this study included individuals using the chemistry laboratories from ADMU and PIPAC as students, teachers, technicians, or analysts. Peduzzi et al. (1996) recommended a minimum event per variable (EPV) value of 10 for logistic regression. Considering that three independent variables (knowledge, attitude, and practice) and three confounding variables (age, affiliation, and safety training) were included in the regression model, a sample size of at least 60 participants was needed for this study.

In this study, a cluster sampling method was employed, which involved dividing the population into smaller groups or clusters and randomly selecting clusters as samples. This approach was chosen to ensure that the sample was representative of the entire population and increase the efficiency of the sampling process. The randomly selected clusters were undergraduate chemistry students enrolled in the Principles of Chemistry

Laboratory (CHEM 121.02), Organic Chemistry 1 Laboratory (CHEM 141.02), and Physical Chemistry 1 Laboratory (CHEM 171.42), chemistry department teachers, and chemistry laboratory technicians at ADMU as well as chemistry analysts at PIPAC. The sampling took place in the first semester of the academic year 2023–2024 after obtaining ethics clearance (reference number SOSEREC23009).

### *Research Instrument*

The initial survey questionnaire contained 40 items (10 for each construct), which were pre-tested by administering it to 71 undergraduate students attending the General Chemistry 1 Laboratory (CHEM 21.12) in the first semester of the academic year 2023–2024. The item analysis of the ten multiple-choice questions on safety knowledge showed that eight of them had good discrimination ability and were, therefore, retained. The scale items measuring safety attitude, practice, and mindset were then subjected to an exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis and varimax rotation. After eliminating problematic items, the three-factor solution derived from this analysis accounted for 56.36% of the variation in data, with three safety attitude, four practice, and five mindset items loading together on their expected components. These 12 items were retained and assessed for their reliability. Based on the recommendations of Raharjanti et al. (2022), the reliability of the 12 items was satisfactory, as their Cronbach's alpha was between 0.60 and 0.80 and the corrected item-total correlation was greater than 0.30.

### *Data Gathering*

The research information or survey preface (the study's nature, purpose, potential risks, benefits, data collection methods, and level of participation) was made available to eligible study participants several days before the survey administration to provide them ample time for review. The pre-tested survey questionnaire was then administered to the study participants after coordination with the necessary offices. A survey of undergraduate chemistry students was conducted onsite during their laboratory period for ease of access. The survey questionnaire was distributed online to chemistry department teachers, chemistry laboratory technicians, and chemistry analysts so that they could complete it at their convenience given their busy schedules.

### *Data Analysis*

Various statistics were carried out at a significance level of 0.05, to analyze the survey responses in view of the research questions. First, descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation (SD), were used to summarize the central tendency and dispersion of the dataset. To qualitatively understand the mean scores on the safety KAP and mindset, they were categorized according to the adjusted version of Bloom's cutoff points. Second, a bivariate analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores of each construct based on age, affiliation, and safety training experience. Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U test were performed to investigate whether the mean scores differed among multicategory groups (age and affiliation) and between dichotomous groups (safety training experience), respectively. Finally,



Multivariate analysis was carried out using ordinal logistic regression to explore whether safety KAP can predict safety mindset after controlling for the confounding effects of age, affiliation, and safety training experience. To meet the assumption of ordinal data as the level of measurement, the mean scores of KAP and mindset were presented as interquartile ranges. Given the variance inflation factor (VIF) was 1.05 for knowledge, 1.12 for attitude, and 1.16 for practice, the regression model demonstrated insignificant to low multicollinearity. Finally, the assumption of proportional odds was not violated as the odds ratio for each predictor was greater than one. Jamovi software was used in this series of statistical analysis, with a p value of less than 0.05 indicating statistical significance.

## Results

There were 189 individuals who were eligible to participate in this study. A total of 123 participants voluntarily completed the pre-tested survey questionnaire, representing a response rate of 65.08%. The study participants included 104 undergraduate chemistry students, eight chemistry department teachers, three laboratory technicians, and eight chemistry analysts.

Prior to the data analysis, composite scores were determined by tallying the number of correct responses for each safety knowledge item. A correct answer received a score of one, while an incorrect answer earned a score of zero. The maximum mean composite score attainable was eight. On the other hand, the mean scores for the scale items (attitude, practice, and mindset) were calculated by averaging the responses across the items. The highest possible mean scores were five for attitude (strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5), three for practice (never = 1 and always = 3), and six for mindset (strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 6).

### Mean Scores in Safety KAP and Mindset

The study participants garnered a mean score of 5.32 (SD = 1.43) for safety knowledge, 4.36 (SD = 0.67) for safety attitude, 2.56 (SD = 0.33) for safety practice, and 5.60 (SD = 0.40) for safety mindset. By categorizing the mean scores based on the adjusted version of Bloom's cutoff points, the study participants demonstrated a fair amount of safety knowledge and good levels of safety attitude, practice, and mindset. Table 1 shows the categorization of the mean scores.

Table 1. Categorization of Mean Scores using the Adjusted Version of Bloom's Cutoff Points

Variable	Cutoff Points		
	Poor (0–59.4%)	Fair (59.5–79.4%)	Good (79.5–100.0%)
Knowledge	0 – 4.75	4.76 – 6.35	6.36 – 8.00
Attitude	0 – 2.97	2.98 – 3.97	3.98 – 5.00
Practice	0 – 1.78	1.79 – 2.38	2.39 – 3.00
Mindset	0 – 3.56	3.57 – 4.76	4.77 – 6.00

*Differences in Mean Scores by Age, Affiliation, and Safety Training*

The study participants were categorized into four groups based on their age (in years). This age categorization was adapted from the questionnaire used by Al-Zyoud et al. (2019) and was based on the concepts of psychographics and age, as discussed by Ungureanu (2020). There were 98 participants in the 20 and below age group, nine in the 21 to 25 age group, 12 in the 26 to 30 age group, and four in the 31 and above age group.

Table 2. Mean Scores in Safety KAP and Mindset by Age

Age Group	Knowledge	Attitude	Practice	Safety Mindset
20 and below	5.24 (SD = 1.43)	4.30 (SD = 0.71)	2.50 (SD = 0.32)	5.56 (SD = 0.38)
21 to 25	5.67 (SD = 1.66)	4.41 (SD = 0.36)	2.56 (SD = 0.30)	5.60 (SD = 0.51)
26 to 30	5.58 (SD = 1.51)	4.69 (SD = 0.46)	2.90 (SD = 0.13)	5.87 (SD = 0.30)
31 and above	5.50 (SD = 0.58)	4.92 (SD = 0.17)	2.94 (SD = 0.13)	6.00 (SD = 0.00)
p value	0.89	0.02	< 0.001	0.002
$\epsilon^2$	0.01	0.08	0.19	0.13

No steady increase in safety knowledge scores by age was observed in this study (Table 2). The Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant difference in the safety knowledge scores among the age groups ( $p = 0.89$ ). Notably, effect size was also small ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.01$ ).

However, the safety attitude, practice, and mindset scores of the study participants increased with age (Table 2). The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed significant differences in safety attitude scores ( $p = 0.08$ ), safety practice scores ( $p < 0.001$ ), and safety mindset scores ( $p = 0.002$ ) among the four age groups. The estimated effect sizes for safety attitude ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.08$ ) and safety mindset ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.13$ ) were medium, while the effect size for safety practice was large ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.19$ ).

The study participants were classified into four groups based on their affiliations. There were 104 participants in the student group, eight in the teacher group, three in the laboratory technician group, and eight in the analyst group. Table 3 shows the mean scores for the safety KAP and mindset according to affiliation.

In terms of safety knowledge, the chemistry department teachers had the highest mean scores. However, the Kruskal-Wallis test reported no significant difference in safety knowledge scores by affiliation ( $p = 0.82$ ). The calculated effect size was likewise small ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.01$ ).

In contrast, chemistry laboratory technicians achieved the highest mean scores for safety attitude, practice, and mindset (Table 3). The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the observed differences in mean scores across affiliations for safety attitude ( $p = 0.02$ ), practice ( $p < 0.001$ ), and mindset ( $p = 0.003$ ) were statistically significant. A medium effect size was seen for safety attitude ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.08$ ) and mindset ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.11$ ), whereas a

large effect size was demonstrated for safety practice ( $\epsilon^2 = 0.16$ ). Noticeably, pairwise comparison revealed that there were significant differences in the mean scores by affiliation between undergraduate chemistry students and chemistry analysts for safety attitude ( $p = 0.04$ ), practice ( $p = 0.01$ ), and mindset ( $p = 0.03$ ).

Table 3. Mean Scores in Safety KAP and Mindset by Affiliation

Affiliation	Knowledge	Attitude	Practice	Safety Mindset
Student	5.29 (SD = 1.46)	4.30 (SD = 0.70)	2.50 (SD = 0.32)	5.56 (SD = 0.40)
Teacher	5.75 (SD = 1.67)	4.46 (SD = 0.47)	2.78 (SD = 0.28)	5.75 (SD = 0.35)
Technician	5.33 (SD = 0.58)	4.89 (SD = 0.19)	2.92 (SD = 0.14)	6.00 (SD = 0.00)
Analyst	5.25 (SD = 1.04)	4.83 (SD = 0.36)	2.88 (SD = 0.13)	5.92 (SD = 0.15)
p value	0.82	0.02	< 0.001	0.003
$\epsilon^2$	0.01	0.08	0.16	0.11

Only 28 of the study participants attended safety training and intervention, in addition to the requirements at the undergraduate level. The remaining 95 participants had no experience with safety training. Among the participants with safety training, ten were students, seven were teachers, three were laboratory technicians, and eight were analysts. Table 4 shows the mean scores in the safety KAP and mindset for those with and without safety training.

Table 4. Mean Scores in Safety KAP and Mindset by Safety Training

Safety Training	Knowledge	Attitude	Practice	Safety Mindset
With	5.32 (SD = 1.49)	4.67 (SD = 0.40)	2.75 (SD = 0.29)	5.84 (SD = 0.26)
Without	5.32 (SD = 1.42)	4.27 (SD = 0.71)	2.50 (SD = 0.32)	5.53 (SD = 0.40)
p value	0.98	0.004	< 0.001	< 0.001
$r_{rb}$	0.003	0.35	0.44	0.48

The mean scores for safety knowledge were similar for those with and without safety training experience. The Mann-Whitney U test further supported this observation ( $p = 0.98$ ). In addition, the effect size was negligible (rank-biserial correlation [ $r_{rb}$ ] = 0.003).

However, mean scores for safety attitude, practice, and mindset were higher among those with safety training than among those without such training. The Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the differences in mean scores between the study participants with and without safety training experience were statistically significant (Table 4). Moderate effect sizes were observed ( $r_{rb} = 0.35$  to 0.48).

#### Safety KAP as Predictors of Safety Mindset

Ordinal logistic regression was performed to determine whether the components of the KAP were significant

predictors of the safety mindset in chemistry laboratories. The interquartile ranges shown in Table 5 were used in the multivariate analysis. Given that safety attitude, practice, and mindset scores varied significantly by age, affiliation, and safety training experience, these confounders were assigned dummy variables and included in the regression model. In doing so, the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable can be isolated while holding the confounding variables constant (Nair, 2023).

Table 5. Quartiles for Safety KAP and Mindset

Percentile	Knowledge	Attitude	Practice	Mindset
25th	5.00	4.00	2.25	5.30
50th	5.00	4.67	2.50	5.80
75th	6.00	5.00	2.75	6.00

Based on the model fit, the resulting regression model in this study was effective in significantly predicting safety mindset ( $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, an  $R^2$  of 0.18 approximated from McFadden's formula indicated an 18% improvement in the model fit when additional predictors were included. The omnibus likelihood ratio test revealed that safety attitude ( $\chi^2 = 21.94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and safety practice ( $\chi^2 = 8.28$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) were the only variables that significantly affected the fit of the model. Safety knowledge ( $\chi^2 = 0.33$ ,  $p = 0.56$ ) and confounding variables, such as age ( $\chi^2 = 0.44$ ,  $p = 0.51$ ), affiliation ( $\chi^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.91$ ), and safety training ( $\chi^2 = 2.61$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ), did not play a significant role.

Ordinal logistic regression showed that safety knowledge ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.56$ ) was not a significant predictor of safety mindset in a chemistry laboratory setting, after controlling for age ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p = 0.52$ ), affiliation ( $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $p = 0.91$ ), and safety training experience ( $\beta = 0.97$ ,  $p = 0.12$ ). However, safety attitude ( $\beta = 0.85$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and practice ( $\beta = 0.50$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) emerged as significant predictors of safety mindset when the effects of the confounding variables were considered. The odds of exhibiting a safety mindset would be at least twice as high if there was a unit increase in the safety attitude scores (odds ratio [OR] 2.34, 95% confidence interval [CI] 1.63 – 3.42). Additionally, the odds of manifesting safety mindset would be 1.65 times greater if there was an accompanying unit increase in safety practice scores (OR 1.65, 95% CI 1.17 – 2.35).

## Discussion

### Mean Scores in Safety KAP and Mindset

The results of the univariate analysis revealed that the study participants collectively demonstrated adequate safety knowledge, positive safety attitude, strong safety practice, and favorable safety mindset in a chemistry laboratory setting. Even if the study participants had only a fair understanding of safety protocols, the organizational culture of ADMU's chemistry department and PIPAC was likely responsible for these observations. Emphasis on laboratory safety culture in these institutions was evident through their well-established policies, protocols, procedures, and leadership support. The meticulous design and engineering of

their chemistry laboratories, which ensures a safe and conducive working environment, further contributed to an organizational culture of laboratory safety. Moreover, effective laboratory safety training programs and practical experience could have influenced the participants' levels of safety KAP and mindset.

#### *Differences in Mean Scores by Age, Affiliation, and Safety Training*

Bivariate analysis showed that the differences in safety knowledge scores according to age, affiliation, and safety training were statistically insignificant. These results could be due to safety knowledge being more reliant on standardized educational programs and training, which could be consistently delivered across age groups and affiliations (of the same discipline). Another reason could be that the study participants came from similar backgrounds in chemistry. On a more positive note, these results could also mean that the student participants were taught safety knowledge effectively at the level of teachers. No significant difference in the level of safety knowledge between those with and without safety training was observed, possibly because the safety training taught in educational institutions tends to be redundant.

Additionally, these results reflect the varying perspectives of O'Loughlin et al. (2017) and von Humboldt et al. (2023) regarding older individuals' flexibility and openness to change. Although older individuals are often perceived as less adaptable because of their reliance on existing knowledge and experience, their level of knowledge about laboratory safety may not necessarily differ from their younger counterparts. Differences in adaptability perceptions among age groups may be influenced by subjective biases rather than objective differences in abilities or knowledge. Therefore, the seemingly declining trend in the safety knowledge score as age progressed should not necessarily indicate a reliance on existing knowledge and experience among older participants.

The comprehensiveness of the survey instrument used to measure safety knowledge should not be overlooked. Although all survey items in the knowledge section exhibited a discrimination ability greater than 0.30 after a few revisions, increasing the number of items may have influenced the safety knowledge scores according to age, affiliation, and safety training. To obtain optimal results, a balance between the number of items in the knowledge section and their level of discrimination ability should be sought.

Bivariate analysis showed that the mean scores for safety attitude, practice, and mindset significantly differed by age. These results can be linked to principles of experience and exposure. Older individuals tend to possess extensive experience in scientific laboratories, leading to heightened awareness of safety protocols and a more mature perspective on safety. Moreover, various studies have indicated that adults exhibit increasingly cautious behavior as they age (Dohmen et al., 2018; Tymula et al., 2019). This behavior could be because older individuals have acquired cognitive skills that could affect their attitude and practice regarding safety in laboratory settings.

Significant differences in the level of safety attitude, practice, and mindset were likewise observed by affiliation,

particularly between student and analyst participants. Although a similar organizational safety culture could be found between ADMU's chemistry department and PIPAC, differences in safety attitude, practice, and mindset would be large if the mean scores of chemistry students were compared with chemistry analysts. Notably, most of the student participants in this study were first- and second-year chemistry students who were still adapting to the safety culture of the chemistry department. Therefore, these differences by affiliation may be related to discrepancies in age among the participants of this study. The number of working hours in the chemistry laboratory could also have contributed to the significant differences by affiliation. Students worked in the laboratory only two to three times a week for four hours a day, whereas analysts conducted laboratory work every day.

The mean scores for safety attitude, practice, and mindset of those with safety training experience differed significantly from those with no similar experience. Effective safety training interventions may have caused these study participants to internalize safety principles, significantly changing their mindset. Specifically, this group of study participants may have developed a heightened awareness of potential hazards and risks in laboratories, leading to a more proactive approach toward safety. Furthermore, safety training interventions could have provided them with more opportunities to apply safety knowledge in real-world settings.

#### *Safety KAP as Predictors of Safety Mindset*

Multivariate analysis showed that safety knowledge could not significantly predict safety mindset, whereas safety attitude and practice could do so, after controlling for confounders. Reason's (1998) Safety Culture Theory acknowledges the significance of knowledge in fostering safety, but also emphasizes that knowledge alone might not be sufficient. Therefore, knowledge of safety protocols may not automatically translate into a safety-oriented mindset in a chemistry laboratory setting. Nonetheless, safety knowledge, as not a significant predictor of safety mindset, does not mean that safety knowledge is not an important component of safety culture.

Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1975) supports the results that safety attitude and practice are significant predictors of a safety mindset. Specifically, this theory suggests that attitude toward a behavior reflects a safety mindset. In this study, a positive laboratory safety attitude was related to adopting a safety mindset.

The Theory of Planned Behavior also points out that perceived behavioral control is crucial for the consistent practice of safe laboratory behavior. Observance of safe behavior in laboratories contributes to a sense of control and self-efficacy, thereby reinforcing the intention to maintain a safety mindset. Specifically, following safe laboratory practices can motivate individuals to prioritize safety.

The regression model in this study revealed a significant improvement in predicting safety mindset when the components of KAP were added alongside the three confounding variables. However, the resulting McFadden's

$R^2$  exhibited only a moderate model fit, as the ideal value for a good model fit is 0.20 to 0.40 (Louviere et al., 2000). These results suggest that other variables affecting safety mindset were not accounted for.

## Limitations and Further Research

The use of a cross-sectional, correlational research design can provide a snapshot of the relationships between variables at a single point in time. However, this research design is limited in establishing causality and the direction of the relationships between safety KAP and mindset. Future studies may adopt a longitudinal research design, which can offer more insight into how these variables change over time and how they likely influence each other.

While cluster sampling was employed in this study to ensure representativeness, the sample may not fully capture the diversity of individuals using chemistry laboratories. Biases in the selection of clusters or participants within clusters could affect the generalizability of this study. Future research can expand the sampling strategy to include a more diverse range of participants from different educational institutions or laboratory settings to enhance the generalizability of the results.

Although the sample size in this study met the minimum requirement for logistic regression, a larger sample size could enhance the statistical power and generalizability of the results. Given that other variables are unaccounted for in the regression model, future studies with larger sample sizes are needed to allow for the inclusion of additional variables in the regression model. To better understand the relationship between dependent and independent variables, future research should incorporate more diverse sample populations and control for potential confounding variables.

While efforts were made to ensure the reliability and validity of the survey instrument, self-reported measures may be subject to response biases, such as social desirability or recall bias. Additionally, the survey instrument primarily focused on quantitative measures, limiting the depth of understanding of the participants' perspectives. Future studies can benefit from triangulation by supplementing quantitative data with qualitative findings from interviews or focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between safety KAP and mindset.

Although onsite administration of the survey to undergraduate students may have ensured higher response rates, administering the survey online to other participants may have introduced selection bias or response inconsistencies due to differing completion environments. To address this issue, future studies should carefully consider the target population and the most appropriate method of survey administration by taking into account the potential biases and inconsistencies that may arise from different completion environments.

Finally, this study relied on ordinal logistic regression to explore the relationship between safety KAP and mindset. Although larger sample sizes will provide more data to work with and potentially lead to more accurate results, future research should also consider employing more advanced regression techniques to better account



for the complex relationships between variables. The use of machine-learning algorithms can be explored to further improve the accuracy of regression models and provide more nuanced insights into the relationships between variables.

## Conclusion

This study provides a better understanding of the relationship between safety KAP and mindset in a chemistry laboratory setting. Evidently, a strong organizational culture for laboratory safety can influence one's level of safety KAP and mindset. A safety culture in an organization includes well-established policies, protocols, procedures, and leadership support that can shape one's KAP and mindset regarding laboratory safety. Differences in the mean scores by age, affiliation, and safety training further demonstrate the importance of experience, exposure, and training on safety attitude, practice, and mindset. Additionally, safety attitude and practice can predict one's safety mindset, whereas safety knowledge cannot do so alone. These results highlight the importance of fostering positive safety attitude and practice while acknowledging the complexity of the factors contributing to the safety mindset in a laboratory setting. Opportunities for the practical application of safety knowledge are essential, as mere acquisition of knowledge is not enough to influence one's safety mindset. Hence, this study confirms that the laboratory safety mindset builds a safety culture through the components of KAP.

## Acknowledgements

The researchers acknowledge the support of Ateneo de Manila University and the Philippine Institute of Pure and Applied Chemistry in the conduct of this study. We also appreciate the funding received from the Capacity Building Program in Science and Mathematics Education of the Philippine government's Department of Science and Technology.

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## Gender-Affirming Care in Nursing Education: Students' Perceptions, Knowledge, and Attitudes

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**Abstract:** Discrimination and social determinants of health significantly affect patient care among transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people. The challenges that TGD people face within the healthcare setting are partially attributed to a lack of gender-affirming care education and training for health professionals. Although research is limited on gender-affirming care within nursing curricula, a study from McDowell et al. (2016) found that "of more than 1,000 baccalaureate nursing faculty in the United States indicated that nursing lags behind other health care professions in prioritizing transgender health education" (p. 476). Baccalaureate nursing programs dedicate an average of 2 hours to LGBT-related curricular content compared with schools of medicine, which dedicate an average of 5 hours (Lim et al., 2015). With nurses representing the largest segment of health professionals in the U.S., exploration of training and education of gender-affirming care within undergraduate nursing curricula may improve discrimination experienced by TGD people in the healthcare setting.

**Keywords:** Gender-affirming Care, Nursing Education, Transgender, Gender-diverse

**Citation:** Patti, M. & Watson, M. (2024). Gender-affirming care in nursing education: Students' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 626-637), Antalya, Turkey. ISTES.

### Introduction

"Gender-affirming care is a supportive form of healthcare that consists of an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people" (OASH, 2023, para. 1). There has been a growing acknowledgment of the importance of providing gender-affirming care within the healthcare setting, especially in nursing practice. James et al. (2016) reported that approximately 25% of transgender and gender diverse (TGD) individuals reported delaying seeking healthcare due to fear of mistreatment, and 33% of TGD individuals reported having at least one negative experience within the healthcare setting. In a recent 2019 report, the Center for American Progress (CAP) found that TGD adults experience higher rates of adverse mental, behavioral, and physical health outcomes (Medina, 2024).

Unfortunately, there is "limited consideration for transgender health care in both educational nursing textbooks and nursing-based academic journals, perpetuating existing health disparities and invisibility faced by transgender people" (Guerin, 2021, p. 185). As a result, a lack of gender-affirming care education can leave students ill-prepared with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to deliver competent and compassionate care to TGD individuals. This study explored nursing students' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward gender-affirming care before and after implementing TGD simulation training.

Recent studies have shown reduced empathetic and compassionate care in professional relationships among TGD patients (Mondatsou et al., 2020). Although compassionate and empathetic care is considered essential to building a therapeutic relationship between patients and healthcare professionals, Moudatsou et al. (2020) noted that healthcare professionals are challenged with adequate expression and utilization of empathy. Some contributing factors to a reduction of empathetic care included that patients believe healthcare providers do not understand their specific situations or that they come from different worlds.

Compassionate and empathetic care are closely related terms and are often used interchangeably. "Empathetic care is caregiving that supports clients' socioemotional capabilities and addresses their emotional needs. It is distinct from instrumental care, which involves assisting with physical needs such as activities of daily living" (Lamberton et al., 2013 para. 1). "Compassionate care is a process in which nurses interactively communicate with patients, try to explore patients' concerns by putting themselves in their positions and understanding their situations and do their utmost to eliminate these concerns" (Babaei et al., 2022, p. 239). Compassion and empathy are needed to provide and promote person-centered care in the clinical setting. "Person-centered care is holistic, individualized, just, respectful, compassionate, coordinated, evidence-based, and developmentally appropriate" (AACN, 2023, para. 1).

A reduction in compassion and empathy can lead nurses and nursing students to compassion fatigue. "According to a survey from the American Nurses Foundation, 81% of nurses reported feeling exhausted, and 71% reported feeling overwhelmed in 2021. Over time, these feelings can lead to compassion fatigue: a condition in which the cumulative burden and stress of nursing practice cause individuals to lose their ability to nurture and empathize with their patients" (Norwich University, 2023, para. 1). Yi et al. (2022) conducted a study that explored the prevalence of compassion fatigue among nursing students. The study results revealed that nearly one in five nursing students is at high risk for experiencing compassion fatigue. Other literature revealed that further research is needed to improve and foster compassionate and empathetic care among nurses and nursing students.

### **TGD Simulation Training**

Empathy and compassion among nursing students are critical characteristics of promoting gender-affirming care. Novice nursing students can lack these key characteristics and need help developing therapeutic relationships and communicating confidently with TGD patients. Incorporating TGD simulation training among nursing students can elicit subjective understanding and learning, increasing empathy and compassion to foster

therapeutic relationships among TGD patients.

Developing TGD simulation training that immerses nursing students in realistic scenarios involving TGD patients can enhance their ability to provide compassionate and empathetic care. Simulation has been utilized as a transformative training tool in healthcare and nursing education, offering many advantages for the nursing curriculum. Simulation training can expose students to realistic clinical scenarios and provide tailored learning that is both repeatable and scalable. Simulation training can provide nursing students with an environment that ensures safe practice and ethical considerations. Embracing simulation training can enhance empathy, compassion, and understanding of transgender health content and can improve patient outcomes and the overall quality of gender-affirming care.

The development of the TGD training simulation proposed the following specific aims: Aim 1. Develop TGD simulation training for nursing students that simulates realistic scenarios with TGD patients. Aim 2. Assess the effectiveness of the TGD training in increasing gender-affirming care among nursing students. Aim 3. Examine the impact of compassionate and empathic care on the quality of gender-affirming care provided by nursing students.

## **Method**

### **Study Design**

The study included a descriptive quantitative design. All nursing students participate in a transgender standardized patient simulation as an assignment embedded in the nursing curriculum. To simulate realistic scenarios, standardized patients (SP) were recruited and trained to portray the role of a TGD patient. S.P.s were used in simulation training. Students who participated in the study answered demographic questions and pre-simulation and post-simulation questionnaires. Demographic questions were limited to only age and gender to protect the identity of the participants.

The questionnaire included questions measuring knowledge and attitudes towards providing health for TGD, questions exploring students' experiences with diversity, and knowledge of cultural competence. Students also answered open-ended questions regarding caring for transgender patients, experiences with diversity and knowledge of cultural competencies, and experiences with the simulation. The target population for this study included nursing students enrolled in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at a University in Southern Mississippi.

Participants were 18 years of age or older. The researchers aimed to have at least 50 participants complete the online survey. The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board IRB-23-1042 reviewed and approved this study.

*Study Tool*

The survey tool measuring knowledge and attitudes toward providing health for TGD was developed in the Sherman et al. (2021) study specific to TGD health and the nursing student experience. The pre-simulation questionnaire is an 8-item, 5-point Likert scale with answers ranging from strongly disagree= 1 to strongly agree= 5. The questionnaire also included questions exploring students' experiences with diversity and knowledge of cultural competence and mental health resources for TGD patients with various 5-point Likert scale answers. Students also answered open-ended questions regarding caring for transgender patients, experiences with diversity and knowledge of cultural competencies, experiences with TGD education and training, and experiences with the simulation. See Table 1. Pre-simulation Survey Questions and Table 2. Post-simulation Survey Questions.

Table 1. Pre-Simulation Survey Questions

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1.	As a nurse, I feel it is important for me to know about my patient's gender identity.
2.	I would feel comfortable interacting with a transgender or gender non-conforming <sup>+</sup> patient during clinical.
3.	*I would prefer not to care for patients who are transgender.
4.	*Knowing someone is transgender would negatively alter the way I perceive that person.
5.	I feel comfortable around people whose gender presentation is ambiguous
6.	*When I first meet a patient or colleague, I assume they are cisgender
7.	I have the skills to provide respectful care to meet the needs of a transgender or gender non-conforming <sup>+</sup> patient during clinical rotations.
8.	I am aware of resources where I can get more information or places, I can refer a transgender or gender non-conforming <sup>+</sup> patient who has needs I am not able to meet.
9.	How would you rate your level of awareness and understanding of different cultures, beliefs, diversity, equity, inclusion, and implicit bias?
10.	Have you received any training or education on cultural competence, diversity, equity, inclusion, and implicit bias in nursing?
11.	How comfortable do you feel providing care to patients from diverse backgrounds and/or with beliefs that may differ from your own?
12.	Do you believe that competence in diversity, equity, and inclusion is important in providing quality healthcare? If yes, please describe?
13.	Have you experienced any challenges or difficulties in providing care to patients from different backgrounds or with different beliefs? If yes, please describe.
14.	How often do you encounter situations where your own background, beliefs, and/or biases may influence your interactions with patients?
15.	What specific strategies or techniques can help nurses overcome biases and provide sensitive and equitable care to all patients?
16.	Have you ever witnessed or experienced any instances of implicit bias or lack of diversity, equity, or inclusion within the nursing profession? If yes, please provide examples.
17.	How comfortable do you feel addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion, and challenging implicit biases within the nursing profession?
18.	Have you received any training or education on learning to care for transgender patients in nursing school?

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Table 2. Post-Simulation Survey Questions

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1. As a nurse, I feel it is important for me to know about my patient's gender identity.
  2. I would feel comfortable interacting with a transgender or gender non-conforming<sup>+</sup> patient during clinical.
  3. \*I would prefer not to care for patients who are transgender.
  4. \*Knowing someone is transgender would negatively alter the way I perceive that person.
  5. I feel comfortable around people whose gender presentation is ambiguous
  6. \*When I first meet a patient or colleague, I assume they are cisgender
  7. I have the skills to provide respectful care to meet the needs of a transgender or gender non-conforming<sup>+</sup> patient during clinical rotations.
  8. I am aware of resources where I can get more information or places, I can refer a transgender or gender non-conforming<sup>+</sup> patient who has needs I am not able to meet.
  9. I believe that transgender and gender-diverse people have adequate mental health resources.
  10. I have the skills to provide respectful care to meet the mental health needs of a transgender or gender conforming patient during clinical rotations.
  11. I don't feel adequately prepared to care for transgender or gender non-conforming patients because of lack of education or knowledge.
  12. Training and education prior to caring for transgender or gender non-conforming patients would have improved the patient care I provided during the simulation.
  13. The simulation was beneficial and will improve my nursing skills to provide quality gender affirming care to my patients.

### *Study Population*

The study participants ( $n=40$ ) included students enrolled in a baccalaureate nursing program at a University in Southern Mississippi who participated in the TGD simulation training regarding gender-affirming care. Students were recruited via email. The researchers contacted the nursing faculty at the College of Nursing and Health Professions in the School of Professional Nursing Practice at a University in Southern Mississippi, responsible for conducting the simulation training. They requested that they forward a research announcement email to the students.

The announcement was sent before the simulation training was conducted. With the links provided in the announcement, participants were given access to two online questionnaires via the Qualtrics platform and were invited to participate in the research study, composed of a pre-simulation survey and a post-simulation survey. Participants were asked to complete a pre-simulation survey to gauge their baseline perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward gender-affirming care. Students then engaged in their simulation training. After the simulation training, students completed a post-simulation survey to assess changes in their perspectives and understanding of gender-affirming care. Both links were found in the same research announcement. Participants indicated informed consent to continue the questionnaire and completed each online survey in approximately 15 minutes. Qualtrics collected no identifying information. Students entered to win a \$50 gift card by completing both the pre-and post-simulation survey and providing an email in the email link in the post-simulation survey. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all responses were confidential.



## Results

### Pre-Simulation Survey Results

Analysis of the pre-simulation survey data revealed nuanced insights into nursing students' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes towards gender-affirming care for transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) individuals. Responses to questions 1-2, 5, and 7-8 indicated a moderate level of gender sensitivity among students, with scores of 3 or higher. Conversely, analysis of responses to questions 3 and 4 revealed a higher degree of gender sensitivity, with scores of 3 or less. Notably, responses to question 6 reflected a lack of gender sensitivity, as students tended to assume patients' cisgender identities upon initial encounters.

Furthermore, when asked about their level of awareness and understanding of different cultures, beliefs, diversity, equity, inclusion, and implicit bias, approximately 78% of students reported being aware. Similarly, around 82% of students agreed that they had received training or education on cultural competence, diversity, equity, inclusion, and implicit bias in nursing. Additionally, a significant majority (88%) of students expressed feeling comfortable providing care to patients from diverse backgrounds or with beliefs that may differ from their own.

### *Post-Simulation Survey Results*

After completing the simulation training, the post-simulation survey revealed notable changes in students' perceptions and attitudes towards TGD healthcare. Overall, there was a significant increase in gender sensitivity among students, as indicated by an average increase of 0.78 in scores for questions 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8. Conversely, a decrease of 0.38 in scores for questions 3 and 4, suggesting heightened gender sensitivity. Specifically, responses to question 6 demonstrated a slight decrease of 0.11, indicating an improvement in gender sensitivity as students became less likely to assume patients' gender identities.

Furthermore, students expressed varying opinions regarding their preparedness to care for TGD patients. While 65% of students disagreed that transgender and gender-diverse people have adequate mental health resources, 83% agreed that they possessed the skills to provide respectful care to meet the mental health needs of these patients. Additionally, 87% of students disagreed with the statement that they felt inadequately prepared to care for TGD patients due to a lack of education or knowledge. Moreover, 72% of students agreed that training and education before caring for TGD patients would have improved the patient care they provided during the simulation. Similarly, 85% of students agreed that the simulation was beneficial and would improve their nursing skills to provide quality gender-affirming care to their patients.

### *Qualitative Pre-Simulation Survey Findings*

Open-ended responses from the pre-simulation survey highlighted students' perspectives and concerns regarding

TGD patient care. Themes such as the need for more Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training regarding gender identity and expression in nursing school, discomfort in providing care to TGD patients, and the importance of advocating for patients' rights emerged from the qualitative data. Additionally, students emphasized the significance of incorporating transgender patient care into the nursing curriculum and promoting respect for all individuals.

In summary, the pre-simulation and post-simulation survey results and qualitative findings provide valuable insights into the impact of TGD simulation training on nursing students' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward gender-affirming care. Table 3 illuminates the overarching themes noted within the qualitative survey findings.

Table 3. Open-Ended Questions and Overarching Themes

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**Question:** Do you believe that competence in diversity, equity, and inclusion is important in providing quality healthcare? If yes, please describe?

**Overarching Theme:** It is important in order to provide patient-centered care

**Question:** Have you experienced any challenges or difficulties in providing care to patients from different backgrounds or with different beliefs? If yes, please describe.

**Overarching Theme:** There have been challenges with language barriers

**Question:** How often do you encounter situations where your own background, beliefs, and/or biases may influence your interactions with patients?

**Overarching Theme:** Biases should not interfere with patient care, but personal religious practices and holiday celebrations may be different.

**Question:** What specific strategies or techniques can help nurses overcome biases and provide sensitive and equitable care to all patients?

**Overarching Theme:** Cultural sensitivity training, real-world experience and self-reflection or understanding.

**Question:** Have you ever witnessed or experienced any instances of implicit bias or lack of diversity, equity, or inclusion within the nursing profession? If yes, please provide examples.

**Overarching Theme:** A nurse would not check in on a patient as frequently as others because they felt uncomfortable.

**Overarching Theme:** Classmates say negative things about having to care for our transgender SIM patient

**Question:** Have you received any training any or education on learning to care for transgender patients in nursing school?

**Overarching Theme:** TGD has been introduces but it is not enough

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## Discussion

The simulation exercise emerged as a pivotal component in addressing the challenges surrounding transgender and gender-diverse patient care within nursing education. Our study's results underscore the transformative impact of TGD simulation training on nursing students' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes towards gender-affirming care.

The quantitative analysis revealed a significant improvement in students' understanding of TGD issues and their confidence in providing gender-affirming care post-simulation. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the efficacy of simulation-based training in enhancing healthcare professionals' competencies and attitudes toward marginalized patient populations (Gillan et al., 2018). By immersing students in realistic scenarios involving TGD patients, the simulation exercise facilitated a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and healthcare needs of TGD individuals.

Moreover, the qualitative analysis unearthed a notable increase in empathy, awareness of TGD challenges, and enhanced communication skills among students following the simulation exercise. These qualitative findings resonate with the broader literature, highlighting the role of hands-on experiences, such as simulation exercises, in fostering empathy and cultural competence among healthcare professionals (Levett-Jones et al., 2011). By engaging students in experiential learning opportunities, such as TGD simulation exercises, nursing education can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, cultivating a more empathetic and culturally competent nursing workforce.

Importantly, our findings underscore the broader implications of TGD simulation exercises in promoting inclusivity and equity in healthcare. By increasing gender sensitivity among students, TGD simulation exercises contribute to the creation of more inclusive healthcare environments where TGD individuals feel respected, understood, and valued. These findings align with the principles of person-centered care, emphasizing the importance of tailoring healthcare delivery to meet each patient's unique needs and preferences (AACN, 2023).

In conclusion, our study highlights the pivotal role of TGD simulation exercises in nursing education in promoting better understanding, empathy, and inclusivity towards TGD individuals within healthcare settings. Continued integration of simulation-based training programs focusing on TGD healthcare issues is essential for preparing nursing students to deliver gender-affirming care competently and compassionately.

## Limitations

While our study yielded valuable insights into the efficacy of TGD simulation training in enhancing nursing students' understanding and confidence in providing gender-affirming care, several limitations warrant consideration.

Firstly, the timing of the pre-simulation survey completion merits attention. While efforts were made to

administer the pre-simulation survey before the simulation exercise, it is essential to acknowledge that students may have engaged in preparatory activities, such as reading TGD articles and watching sensitive videos, before the survey. This exposure to TGD content outside of the simulation context could potentially influence students' baseline levels of gender sensitivity, thereby impacting the interpretation of pre-simulation survey results.

Additionally, the sample size of 40 students and the relatively short data collection period of one semester pose limitations to the generalizability and robustness of our findings. A larger sample size and longitudinal data collection spanning multiple semesters would enhance the reliability and validity of our results, allowing for more comprehensive insights into the long-term effects of TGD simulation training on nursing students' attitudes and behaviors toward TGD patient care.

Furthermore, high-fidelity mannequins for the simulation exercise may have introduced some artificiality to the experience. While high-fidelity simulation offers valuable opportunities for immersive learning, it may only partially replicate the complexity and nuances of real-life interactions with TGD patients. Future studies could explore alternative simulation modalities, such as standardized patients or virtual simulations, to provide a more authentic representation of TGD healthcare encounters.

Despite these limitations, our study contributes to the growing literature on TGD healthcare education. It underscores the importance of integrating simulation-based training into nursing curricula to promote gender sensitivity and inclusivity in healthcare practice. Addressing these limitations through larger-scale studies with more extended follow-up periods and diverse simulation modalities will be essential for advancing our understanding of effective strategies for preparing nursing students to deliver gender-affirming care competently and compassionately.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, our study illuminates the transformative potential of TGD simulation training in nursing education, offering valuable insights into enhancing students' understanding, empathy, and confidence in providing gender-affirming care. By immersing students in realistic scenarios involving TGD patients, the simulation exercise effectively bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, fostering a deeper appreciation of the unique challenges and healthcare needs of TGD individuals.

Nursing programs promote equity and respect in healthcare by preparing nurses to provide competent care for TGD individuals. Our findings underscore the importance of investing in TGD education within nursing curricula to ensure that nurses are equipped to meet the diverse needs of their patients. By promoting diversity and empathy, nursing students can advocate for TGD individuals and other marginalized populations in healthcare, contributing to more inclusive and compassionate care delivery.

Furthermore, this study highlights the potential of TGD simulation exercises as a valuable educational tool in nursing education. By providing students with hands-on experiences that simulate real-world healthcare encounters, TGD simulation exercises enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to deliver gender-affirming care competently and compassionately.

Our study emphasizes the importance of promoting gender-affirming care in healthcare settings. It underscores the critical role of nursing education in fostering inclusivity and respect for all patients, regardless of their gender identity or expression. By embracing TGD education and simulation training, nursing schools can play a pivotal role in shaping a healthcare workforce that is sensitive, competent, and responsive to the needs of TGD individuals and other marginalized populations.

## Recommendations

Based on our study's findings and limitations, several recommendations emerge for future research and practice in the fields of nursing education and TGD healthcare. First, Nursing faculty should prioritize integrating TGD care education within nursing curricula. This could involve developing dedicated modules or courses that comprehensively cover TGD healthcare issues, including gender-affirming care practices and cultural competence.

Given the potential influence of exposure to TGD content on students' baseline levels of gender sensitivity, future studies should explore the impact of repeated exposure to TGD content within nursing education. Providing multiple opportunities for students to engage with TGD healthcare topics may lead to more sustained improvements in attitudes and behaviors towards TGD patient care.

To mitigate potential biases in pre-simulation survey responses, future studies should consider administering the survey immediately before the simulation exercise, ensuring that students have not been exposed to TGD content before completing the survey. This approach will provide a more accurate baseline assessment of students' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions towards TGD healthcare issues.

While high-fidelity manikins were utilized in our study, future research could explore alternative simulation modalities, such as standardized patients or virtual simulations, to provide a more authentic representation of TGD healthcare encounters. Comparative studies investigating the effectiveness of different simulation approaches in promoting gender sensitivity and competence among nursing students would be valuable.

Future research should employ longitudinal study designs with larger sample sizes to enhance the generalizability and robustness of findings. Longitudinal studies allow for examining the long-term effects of TGD simulation training on nursing students' attitudes, behaviors, and clinical practice. Additionally, recruiting larger samples would facilitate subgroup analyses, enabling researchers to explore potential outcome variations

based on factors such as students' prior exposure to TGD content or their demographic characteristics.

Beyond examining the effects of TGD education and simulation training on nursing students, future research should also investigate the impact of such interventions on patient outcomes. Evaluating whether increased gender sensitivity and competence among nursing students translate into improved healthcare experiences and outcomes for TGD patients would provide valuable insights into the broader implications of TGD education in nursing.

In summary, by addressing these recommendations, future researchers can further advance our understanding of effective strategies for preparing nursing students to deliver gender-affirming care and promote inclusivity in healthcare settings.

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to The University of Southern Mississippi for supporting our students and project.

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## English for the Workplace: Experiences and the Way Forward

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**Abstract:** English is widely spoken in Cyprus especially in the areas of tourism and culture and most people in the country are familiar with using English with varying degrees of fluency. Often, even after years of exposure in the target language, people at the workplace may still lack the skills and/or the fluency to communicate effectively in English. The consecutive lockdowns imposed by COVID-19 required employees to communicate remotely to perform their day-to-day duties, which revealed the vulnerability of specific groups of workers. These could range from clerical assistants to senior managers. Consequently, the participants' expectations for the outcomes of any business English course would range from responding to phone calls and handling requests to negotiating agreements and reaching executive decisions. In this paper, I discuss the experience gained from custom-made, targeted Business courses for the Cypriot Market as well as how these needs required the development of particular courses for face-to-face meetings for adult learners. With 20 years long experience in teaching adults, I came to the conclusion that instructors who wish to develop and offer such courses need to have the flexibility to gear highly specialized professional niches to specific groups of people to produce highly successful courses. In this paper, I outline the needs of the particular market, describe the course and material development to address current needs and present data from professionals who participated in the courses described above.

**Keywords:** English for the Workplace, Practical Language Skills, Teaching and Learning

**Citation:** Kalogerou, V. (2024). English for the Workplace: Experiences and the Way Forward. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 638-650), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Employees in Cyprus who use English at the workplace for communication, are not customarily expected to receive and produce language as native speakers but rather to be competent in the use of specific specialized work-related aspects or task types of English. Often though, even after years of studying English formally, during their high school or university education, when employees reach the workplace, experience difficulties in using the target language effectively. Another barrier is that language and language use change over time, leaving employees struggling with skills acquired sometimes over a decade earlier, unable to deal with communicative tasks relating to current needs. Other affective factors, such as the EU enlargement which in turn led to inward migration throughout the area (Nicolaou; 2016; Theophanous and Karyolemou, 2022) or the unprecedented situation caused by the lockdowns imposed to prevent the spread of Covid-19 (Kalogerou, 2022)

have exposed employees weaknesses when using English for work-related purposes.

Research carried out elsewhere suggests that while English has been consistently solidifying its importance as a tool in international business encounters, relatively little attention has been given “to the interface between actual workplace communication and language programs in terms of identifying and meeting learners’ needs” (Kim, 2021:1). With English becoming the European *lingua franca*, the need for improving English was also identified elsewhere. Judge (2012) in a study conducted in Spain, mentions that the use of English in Europe impacts not only the workplace but also international relations, education and research. He maintains that many business tasks including phone calls, e-mails, meetings, and presentations have been conducted in English throughout Europe. Tarnapolsky (2016) in his discussion of the Ukrainian workplace, he identifies that the ever-increasing spread of the English language as the tool of global communication, has led to an ever-increasing necessity for learning it, among those who had not acquired it properly during their formal education but urgently need it to improve their work performance and in turn their life prospects.

Cyprus, on the other hand, has a different history than the aforementioned countries, as it was a former British Colony. Its strong dependence on the service sector which comprise over 80% of the country’s GDP (Kalogerou, 2019) require people in most sectors of the economy to have a good command in the language. Therefore, due to historical and economic reasons, English has gradually assumed the status of the most popular and important second/foreign language (The status of English language on the island is arguable. For more on this see Buschfeld (2013), Fotiou (2015) and Tsiplakou (2009).) on the island, while people at the workplace use it with varying degrees of competence (Andreou and Kalogerou, 2016).

### **Development of the specific courses**

Prior to presenting the Business courses developed and delivered, I provide in this section, some background to explain how the idea emerged. In addition to my academic duties at the University of Nicosia (UNic), I have worked as a consultant for many locally funded projects and provided translation services through my agency “English for the Workplace”. Through these collaborations I have had with the industry, I have often met individuals who had studied English for years, or even obtained degrees from English-speaking universities, but did not have the skills nor the confidence to engage in communicative activities in the target language. When I enquired why they did not attempt to enroll in classes to improve their skills, they came up with a number of excuses ranging from lack of time or poor finances to the limitations of available options. I realized that adults being busy with work and personal engagements may need an option that is targeted towards their needs, easily accessible, certified, affordable and effective.

Therefore, while examining various options to meet the needs identified, I liaised with our Training and Development Unit (TDU) at UNiC, to investigate the possibility of becoming a certified trainer. Such opportunities are available in Cyprus through the Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA) whose mission is “to create the conditions for planned and systematic training and development of the human resources

of Cyprus, at all levels and in all sectors, to meet the needs of the economy within the framework of the social and economic policy of the state". (<https://www.anad.org.cy>). To this end, once participants register to a training seminar series through their organization, they are entitled to having 80% of the associated cost covered and they only have to deposit the remaining 20%, which is often covered by the companies they work for. Unemployed participants, may join any seminar with no cost.

As the mission of the agency seemed to be covering the needs of the target groups I had in mind, I undertook the relevant training and took the exams, in order to gain certification and enable myself to offer business English courses to the industry. This process took about a year and once everything was in place, I started offering the course "English for Assistants" in collaboration with the TDU upon receiving approval through the HRDA. Since March 2022, I have offered the course twice a year. In what follows, I present the participants' evaluation of the course, comparing the results of the first attempt with the last attempt, to describe how the experience gained, has led to making the course more effective.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Online surveys have become extremely popular as a data collection method, since researchers prefer this type because they yield quick responses (Saleh and Krishna, 2017). A total of 11 individuals (one(1) male and ten (10) female), all native speakers of Greek with one exception who spoke Bulgarian as a mother tongue and moved to Cyprus during her high school years, participated in these two (2) course evaluation surveys, that I include in this paper.

## **Results**

### **Data collection and procedure**

The main research instrument used for this study was a survey compiled using Google forms, which I divided into four sections. The first section was developed for participants to express their views on the course and its contents. The second aimed at collecting data pertaining to the instructor's knowledge of the subject and associated skills; the third was developed for participants to evaluate the premises and the place where the course was delivered while the fourth section aimed at examining the participants' views on the overall organization. Items were followed by a 5-point Likert scale of agreement consisting of the following points: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree. Evaluation forms were sent out using a shortened link to the google forms to the participants via e-mail as it is the fastest, lowest cost method to deliver surveys (Saleh and Krishna, 2017). In what follows, I present indicative data collected from the first time the course was offered (March, 2022) and from the latest round of meetings (March, 2024).

### *Survey Results*

The first question in the first section of the online questionnaire requires participants to indicate their level of agreement in relation to the item “The content of the seminar was useful” to which the first group unanimously agreed that the seminar was not at all useful.

1. Η ενότητα εκπαίδευσης ήταν χρήσιμη.  
3 responses

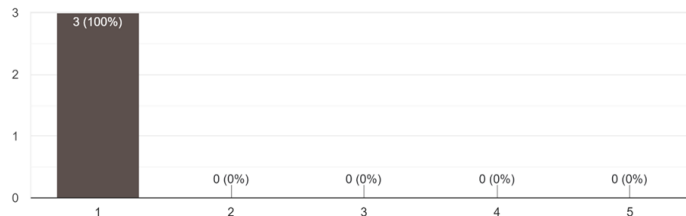


Figure 1. Responses to the question “The content of the seminar was useful” (2022).

Participants asked in May 2024 to respond to the same item, unanimously indicated to strongly agree with the statement:

1. Η ενότητα εκπαίδευσης ήταν χρήσιμη.  
8 responses

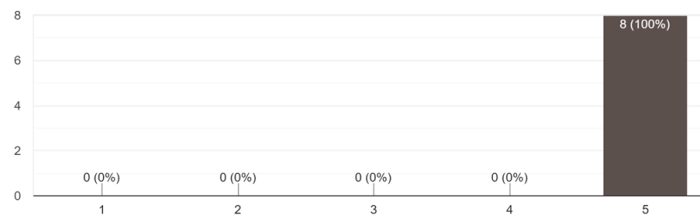


Figure 2. Responses to the question “The content of the seminar was useful” (2024).

In the same section, item three (3) of the online questionnaire, asks participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “the content and the structure were clear”. Two (2) participants strongly disagreed with the statement while one participant disagreed:

3. Η δομή και το περιεχόμενο ήταν σαφής  
3 responses

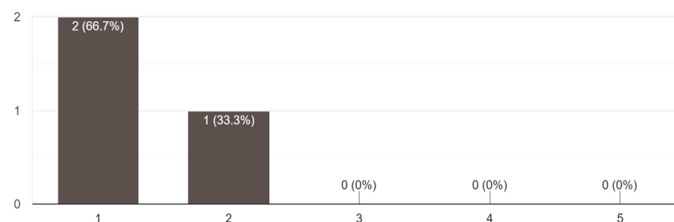


Figure 3. Responses to the question “The content and the structure were clear” (2022).

Participants asked in May 2024 to respond to the same item as above, unanimously indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement:

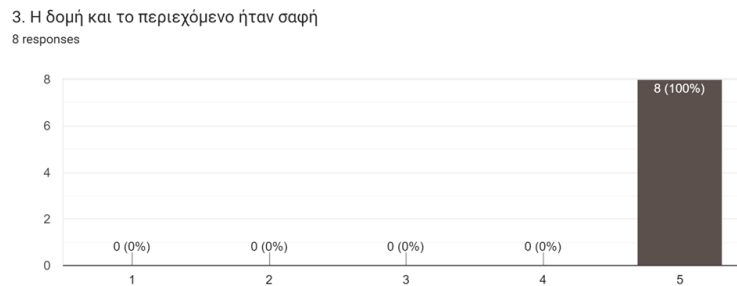


Figure 4. Responses to the question “The content and the structure were clear” (2024)

In the same section, item five (5), asks participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “The way the content was delivered was effective”. Two (2) participants strongly disagreed with the statement while one participant disagreed:

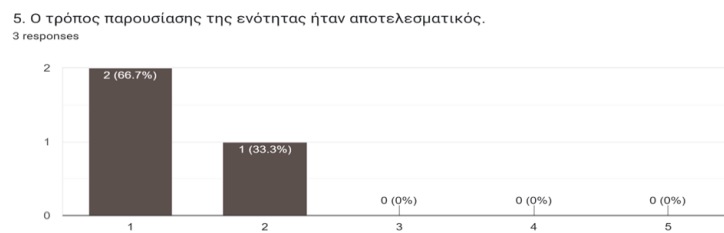


Figure 5. Responses to the question “The way the content was delivered was effective” (2022)

Participants asked in May 2024, unanimously indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement:

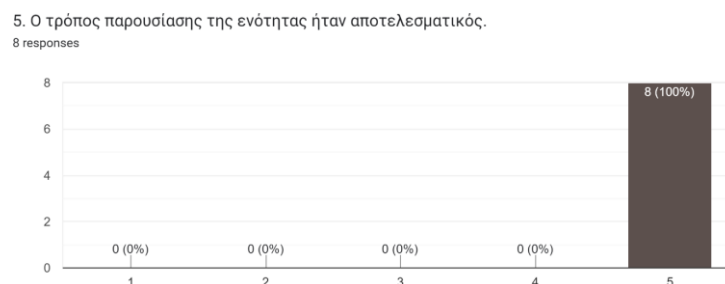


Figure 6. Responses to the question “The way the content was delivered was effective” (2024)

Moving on to the second section aimed at collecting participants’ views with regard to the instructor, item one (1) asked participants to indicate the level of agreement with the statement “The instructor knew the subject

well”. Responses here were spread, as one (1) participant indicated to strongly disagree, one (1) participant indicated to disagree and one (1) participant indicated neither to agree nor to disagree with the statement:

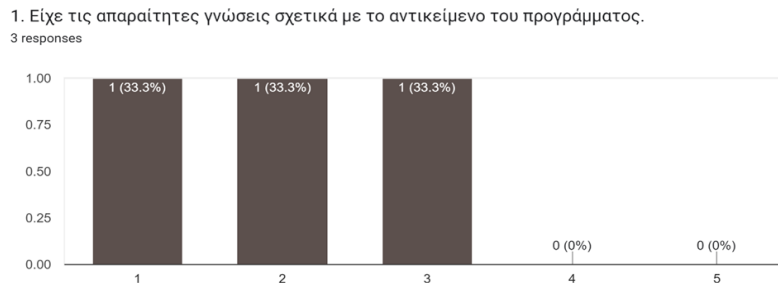


Figure 7. Responses to the question “The instructor knew the subject well” (2022)

Participants in May 2024, asked to respond to the same item, unanimously indicated to strongly agree with the statement:

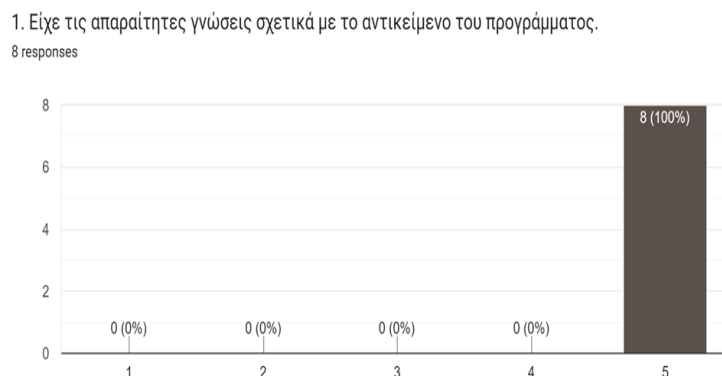


Figure 8. Responses to the question “The instructor knew the subject well” (2024)

Item two (2) in the second section of the questionnaire, asks participants to indicate their level of agreement for the statement “She was clear and able to transfer knowledge”. Two (2) participants indicated neither to agree nor to disagree with the statement, while one (1) participant indicated to strongly disagree with the statement:

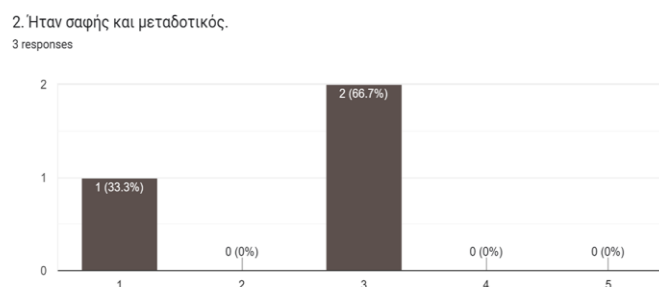


Figure 9. Responses to the question “She was clear and able to transfer knowledge” (2022)

Participants asked in May 2024 to respond to the same item, unanimously indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement:

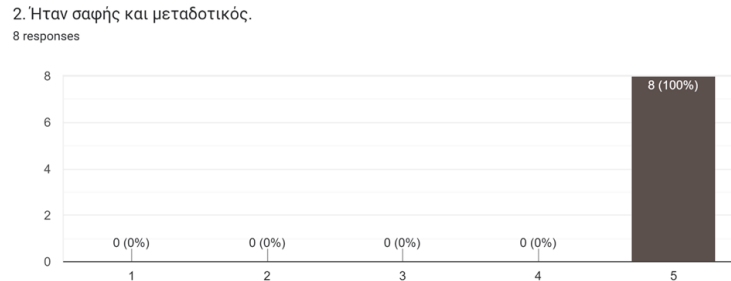


Figure 10. Responses to the question “She was clear and able to transfer knowledge” (2024)

Item four (4) in the same section, asked participants to indicate their level of agreement in relation to the statement “She encouraged participants to participate”. Two (2) participants indicated neither to agree nor to disagree with the statement, while one (1) participant indicated to strongly disagree with the statement:

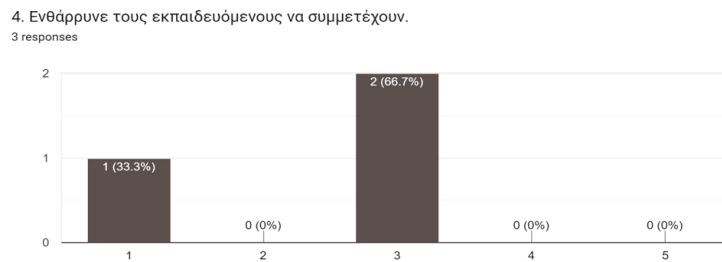


Figure 11. Responses to the question “She encouraged participants to participate” (2022)

Participants asked in May 2024, unanimously indicated to strongly agree with the statement:

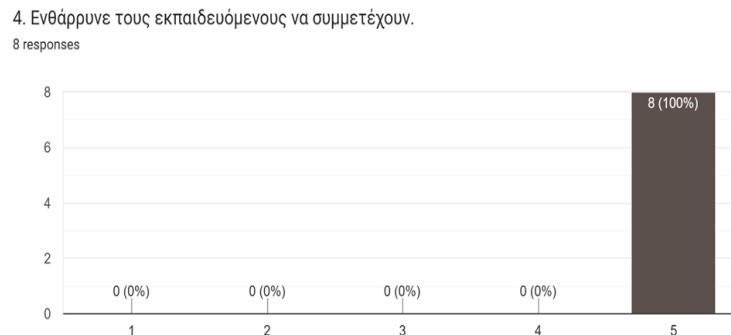


Figure 12. Responses to the question “She encouraged participants to participate” (2024)



Item six (6) asked participants to state whether “She created a pleasant learning environment”. Two (2) participants indicated neither to agree nor to disagree with the statement, while one (1) participant indicated to strongly disagree with the statement:

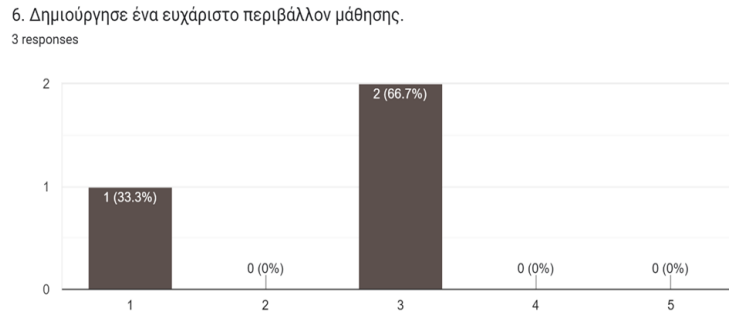


Figure 13. Responses to the question “She created a pleasant learning environment” (2022)

Participants asked in May 2024, unanimously indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement:

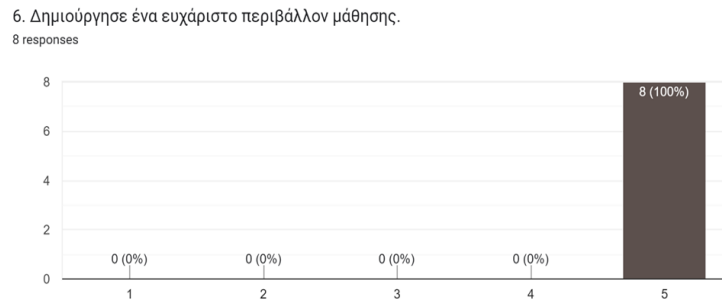


Figure 14. Responses to the question “She created a pleasant learning environment” (2024)

Item eight (8) required participants to indicate the level of agreement with the statement “She helped me express myself better when using English”. Responses here spread, as one (1) participant indicated to strongly disagree, one (1) participant indicated to disagree and one (1) participant indicated neither to agree nor to disagree with the statement:

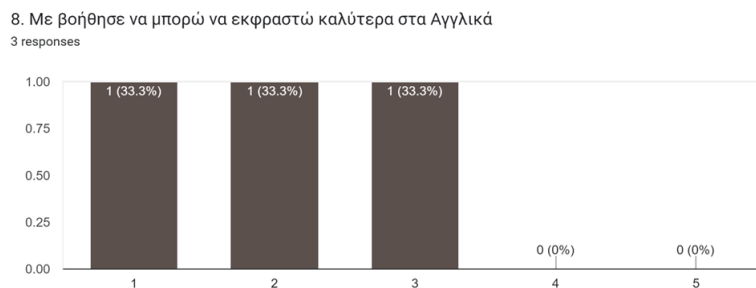


Figure 15. Responses to the question “She helped me express myself better when using English” (2022)

Participants asked in May 2024 to respond to the same item, unanimously indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement:



Figure 16. Responses to the question “She helped me express myself better when using English” (2024)

Moving on to section three (3) of the questionnaire which aimed at collecting participants’ views on the premises where the course was conducted, responses were completely dispersed in May 2022 as one (1) participant indicated to strongly disagree, one (1) participant indicated to strongly agree and one (1) participant indicated neither to agree nor to disagree with the statement:

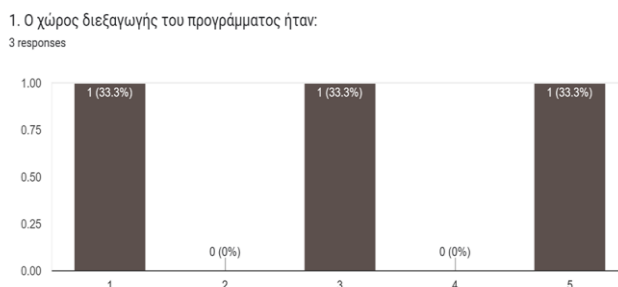


Figure 17. Responses to the question “The premises where the course was carried out were” (2022)

Seven (7) of the participants asked in May 2024 to respond to the same item as above, indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement, while one (1) opted for the “agree” option:

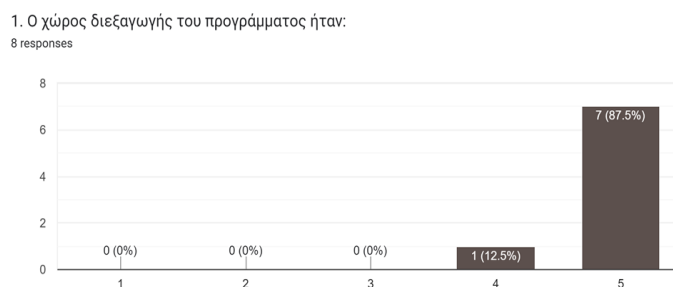


Figure 18. Responses to the question “The premises where the course was carried out were” (2024)

Moving on to the fourth (4) section of the questionnaire which aimed at collecting responses with regard to the overall organization and administration of the course, item two (2) seeks the level of agreement of the participants in relation to the statement “I am satisfied with the way the seminar was organized”. For this item, one (1) participant indicated to strongly disagree, while one (1) participant indicated to agree and one (1) participant to strongly agree with the statement:

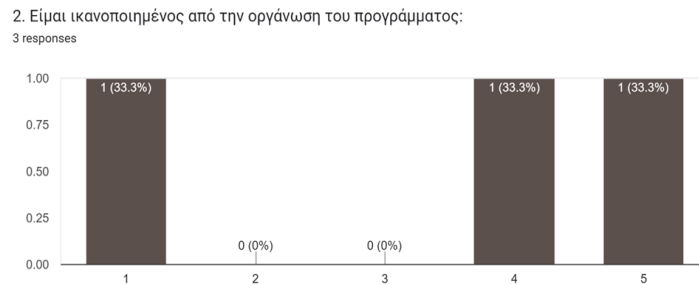


Figure 19. Responses to the question “I am satisfied with the way the seminar was organized” (2022)

Participants asked in May 2024 to respond to the same, unanimously indicated to strongly agree with the statement:

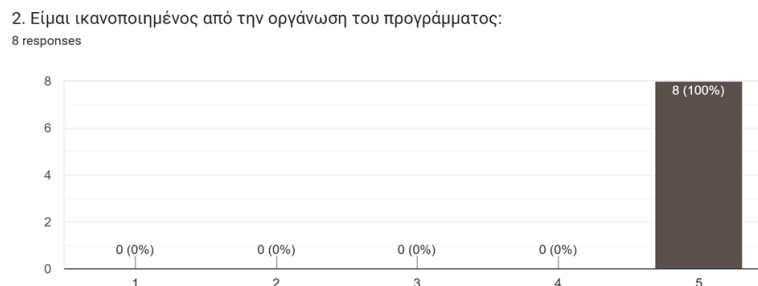


Figure 20. Responses to the question “I am satisfied with the way the seminar was organized” (2024)

## Discussion

In the previous section, I present the results of the evaluation carried out in May 2022 and in May 2024, and in this section, I discuss the improvement observed between the first course offered and the latest I have data for.

Starting from the results relating to the content and delivery of the course (figures 1-6), perceptions have significantly improved. One justification can be found in the adjustments gradually made. One of the requirements of the HRDA to approve the course and subsidize participants is to submit a detailed programme prior to the commencement of the course, where all areas taught are described in thorough detail. To abide by the regulations, I included the areas of Business English I intended to cover, namely *intercultural communication skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, *good-news messages*, *negative messages*, *persuasive messages*, etc. and

stuck to the letter of the submitted document. To this day, I have had mixed ability groups, in spite of what companies require. This meant that some of the participants could not fully follow the materials presented, which included many technical terms, as they presented weaknesses in the areas of grammar and vocabulary. Gradually, I realized that in addition to what participants sign up for, that is technical knowledge, they also need to refresh basic structures in grammar, i.e.: the use of the Present Perfect, so I do some exercises on grammar when the opportunity arises. Hence, while the structure and the contents essentially remained the same, the difference in opinions regarding these areas have significantly improved (see for example figures 3 and 4).

Moving on to the way I am perceived as an instructor, perceptions have significantly improved as well. From the indifferent or negative perceptions in May 2022, my performance, as well as my knowledge in the subject matter, appear to have significantly improved over a period of two years (see figures 7-16). Justification for this may be found in the improvement of confidence in teaching. Following Sadler (2013), as teachers alter their teaching practices, including strategies such as speaking at a slower pace, improving the clarity and organization of the materials and the lessons, their self-confidence appears to improve. Another factor that may potentially impacted in a positive way was that I became less afraid to introduce new ideas or deal with situations that the participants themselves brought to the meetings. Following Shaghaei and Turgay (2014) “Innovation is critical to the continuous improvement of education and the delivery of increased learning outcomes, equity, cost-efficiency and student satisfaction” (p.143). I would take it a step further to say that student satisfaction leads to improved perceptions on teaching practices.

Another factor that presumably may have added to participant satisfaction was that gradually I became better at managing more interactive methods such as role-playing and group discussions. In a study examining students’ perceptions at university level, authors found out that “students appreciated interactive teaching methods such as group discussions, role-playing, and case studies, which helped to keep them engaged and motivated” (Kamran, Afzal and Rafiq, 2023: 13) Further to this, .students acknowledged effective communication as a vital instrument for positive learning experiences and that teachers who they felt to be more approachable and open to feedback were more likely to create a positive learning environment (Kamran et al, 2023). Besides, the teacher is one of “the main actors in the teaching process [and] has an assignment to work continuously on the improvement of [their] personal characteristics and professional competencies in order to improve the quality of teaching” (Maksimović and Zajić, 2018: 172 ).

Finally, questions in sections three (3) and four (4) of the questionnaire aiming at collecting data on participants’ views in relation to the premises and organization of the seminar. Responses for these items were rather encouraging even for the first seminar organized. One (1) favourable response was collected in relation to the premises in May 2022 (see figure 18). The reality is that UNiC has invested over €100 million in campus infrastructure over the last few years creating a modern, up-to-date campus. Courses subsidized and approved by the HRDA need to be offered in preapproved classrooms, which abide by the regulations and restrictions they set. The TDU administers the allocation of these classrooms to internal or external staff who are HRDA certified trainers and offer courses approved by the agency. The expansive layout of UNiC’s campus allows instructors to

select specialized facilities to support their specific needs. The conference room I have selected for the delivery of these classes is on the first floor of the Research and Development Unit at UNiC, which is situated amid the urban landscape in the bustling suburb of Engomi in the capital of the island, Nicosia and is easily accessible.

## Conclusion

This study provides for a comparison and contrast examination of courses developed and offered by the author in March 2022 and in March 2024, through the TDU for English at the Workplace, funded by the HRDA, carried out in May 2022 and May 2024 respectively. The results add to our understanding of the needs of adults who are struggling to improve their skills in English required for the competitive, global marketplace.

As it appears from the overall improvement in the perceptions of participants over the past two years,, continuous course evaluation helps, not only to refine teaching practices and increase participants' satisfaction, but help teachers, the author is a case in point, to polish their skills, reflect on their work, on their advantages and drawbacks and on what needs to be fixed.

One limitation of the survey is that it is limited to the Cypriot audience, including primarily individuals who have Greek as their mother tongue and learnt English through formal education. It appears that there are quite a few similarities with other countries, where English has become the main tool for business communication. Future research can shed light on additional similarities and differences.

## Recommendations

This study offers insights on participants' perceptions in relation to Business English courses, offered under the umbrella of TDU by the author. Other HRDA trainers are recommended to follow-up on their participants' views in order to have more statistically significant results and enhance participants' overall experience.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nicolas Kythreotis, George Siekkeris, Angelos Iacovides for their ongoing support in offering these courses. Special thanks to Aigli Mourouzidou for her dedication and support with the administration of these courses.


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## The Significance Contribution of Lecturer Competence in Delivering Project Base Learning on The Student Religious Moderation through Religion Education


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**Abstract:** The urgency of instilling a spirit of religious moderation among students has been echoed by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia since 2019. With reference to research results related to the high level of intolerance and radicalism among the young generation, even among elementary school students, through Decree of the Minister of Religion number 93 of 2022, the Government has declared the importance of instilling a spirit of religious moderation among the young generation. Bina Nusantara University as a higher education institution that is committed to contributing to build the good character of Indonesia is called upon to encourage the students in Bina Nusantara University to have a spirit of religious moderation. For this, of course, competency of lecturers are needed, because the Ministry of Education and Culture has announced the need for project-based learning for mandatory curriculum subjects where religion education is included. With this background, this research aims to show that lecturers' competence in delivering project-based learning in religion education has a significant influence in triggering students to uphold the spirit of religious moderation. And from the results of the research data processing, it was found that the influence of lecturer competence in delivering project-based learning was very significant on efforts to trigger students to have a spirit of religious moderation. And the conclusion is that in triggering the spirit of religious moderation among students, the adequate lecturer competence is needed in delivering religious education using a project based learning system.

**Keywords:** religious moderation, lecturer competence, project based learning, religion education

**Citation:** Benawa, A. & Wardhani, R. (2024). The Significance Contribution of Lecturer Competence in Delivering Project Base Learning on The Student Religious Moderation through Religion Education. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 651-662), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.



## Introduction

The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religion, is concerned regarding the results of research conducted by the Setara Institute (2020) which found facts about widespread attitudes of intolerance and radicalism among students.(Setara Institute, n.d.) Therefore, the government through the Ministry of Religion has declared the importance of religious moderation. Responding to the Government's determination to emphasize the importance of Religious Moderation, the Catholic Community Advisor of DKI Jakarta Regional Office at the end of April 2022 held training for Catholic religion education teachers on the importance of instilling a spirit of religious moderation among students. In the interactions and discussions of religion education teachers at the primary and secondary education levels, a number of questions emerged that were related to the doubts of religion education teachers about instilling the spirit of Religious Moderation for the students.(Yulianti et al., 2018, 2022) The reason is, they argue that for students whose religious beliefs are immature, shouldn't religious militancy be instilled? What will happen if their religious beliefs become gray when the religion education teacher reveals that other religions are also good and can bring salvation too?

Meanwhile, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, has also announced the importance of religion education in higher education through project-based learning. Of course, the two spirits and goals of the Indonesian Government through the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Education and Culture must be supported by higher education institutions, both public and private. In turn, universities must also provide lecturers who teach religion education who are competent in teaching religion education through project-based learning in order to participate in forming religious moderation among the students.(Kusumajati et al., 2017) For this reason, this research wants to show how significant the contribution of lecturers' competence in delivering religion education through project-based learning is to build the religious moderation among the students.

## Religious Moderation

According to Professor Azkal (2019) religious moderation is a perspective, attitude and behavior to always take a position in the middle, always act fairly, balanced and not extreme in religious practice.(Benawa, 2021) Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of Religion (2021), religious moderation is a joint commitment to maintain perfect balance, where every member of society, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, religion and political preferences, must be willing to listen to each other, and learn to train each other's abilities. managing and resolving differences between them. In more detail, the Ministry of Religion (2019) described it in 3 indicators, namely national commitment, tolerance and non-violence.

It is further explained that in relation to national commitment what is meant is the extent to which a person's worldview, attitudes and religious practices have an impact on loyalty to the basic national consensus, especially in relation to the acceptance of Pancasila as the state ideology, his attitude towards ideological challenges that

are contrary to Pancasila, and nationalism.(Benawa et al., 2022; Fios et al., 2021; Siregar et al., 2019) As for tolerance, it is explained as an attitude of giving space and not interfering with other people's rights to believe, express their beliefs and express opinions, even though these things differ from what we believe, including the willingness to accept religious practices that accommodate local culture and traditions local. What is meant by non-violence in the context of religious moderation is understood as no-radicalism, namely an ideology and understanding that wants to make changes to the social and political system by using violent/extreme methods in the name of religion, including verbal violence, physical and mental.(Fios et al., 2017)

### *Lecturer Competence*

Spencer and Spencer (1993) said that competence is an underlying characteristic of an individual that is casually related to criterion- referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation.(Barman & Das, 2020; Nurahaju & Widanti, 2020; Wong, 2020) Competence according to Spencer-Spencer (1993) has characteristics, such as: 1) Motive, which is something that is consistently thought or desired by people who cause actions. Motivate push, directing, and having behavior towards a particular action or goal. 2) Traits, namely physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations or information. A person's character can affect performance at work, such as the ability to control emotions, attention to details, and so on. 3) self-concept, namely attitudes, values, or one's self-image. Confidence is people's belief that they can be effective in various situations is part of people's self-concept. 4) Knowledge, namely information that is owned by someone in a specific field. Knowledge is a complex competency, because it predicts what a person is capable of doing, not what he will do. Scores on knowledge tests often fail to predict job performance because they fail to measure knowledge and skills in ways that are actually used on the job. 5) Skills, namely the ability to do certain physical or mental tasks. Competence or cognitive skills include analytical and conceptual thinking. (Spencer: 1993, p. 9)

Competence is an ability to carry out a job or task that is based on skills and knowledge and is supported by the work attitude demanded by the job. Thus, competence shows skills or knowledge characterized by professionalism in a particular field as something that is most important, as the superiority of that field.(Wibowo, 2016)

Michael Zwell defined competencies as the enduring traits and characteristics that determine performance. (Zwell, 2000) Example of competencies are initiative, influence, teamwork, innovation, and strategic thinking.(Susilo, 2018; Yoyo Sudarso A., 2018)

Competence is an individual's ability to carry out a job correctly and have advantages based on matters relating to knowledge, skills and attitudes (Emron Edison, 2017, p. 140). Susilo (2018) defined competence as a person's ability to achieve, consisting of nine competency elements: Imagination, Knowledge, Experience, Emotion, Passion, Character, Attitude, Skill and Health. When combined, the initial letters of each word become I KEEP CASH. (Susilo, 2018)

Competence according to Simamora (1997, p. 122) is the skills, knowledge and abilities needed to carry out work actively. Steven and Mary Ann (2008, p. 36) said that competence is skills, knowledge, talents, values, directors and other personal characteristics that encourage superior performance.

From the definition presented by Steven and Mary Ann (2008), it implies that competence consists of several characteristics, namely, (1) Skills, which refers to a person's expertise in carrying out activities, (2) knowledge, refers to information obtained based on experience and types of practical knowledge, other academics, and learning outcomes, (3) Talent is a natural innate talent, as explained by Steven and Mary Ann (2008), is a natural talent that helps employees learn specific tasks quickly and carry them out well. (4) Values that refer to self-attitude (people-pleasing attitude, caring attitude to others, responsible attitude) and one's image. (5) Director, refers to activities to provide guidance, good instructions for students and make improvements to results that have not been achieved, and (6) Personal characteristics, refer to physical characteristics and consistency of situations or information.

Competence is needed to carry out a job or profession in any field. For this reason, work competency standards are needed. Competence is an input in the world of work, and an output for the world of education. That is, for any job and profession requires competence. In the world of work, competency standards are limits on work ability requirements for a certain level of professional work, which must be owned by someone to be able to carry out a job in accordance with the goals and requirements set by the company or company association, by professional associations, institutions. appointed, or by the government. For example, a person is not permitted to hold the nursing profession before having a certificate of passing the nurse competency test. (Susilo, 2018, p. 59). (Susilo, 2018)

Based on the description above, it can be formulated in general that competence is a person's ability to carry out tasks or work based on knowledge, skills and supported by attitudes that are individual characteristics. While lecturer competence is a set of knowledge, skills and behaviors that must be possessed, internalized, mastered and realized by lecturers in carrying out their professional duties. These competencies include pedagogic competence, personal competence, social competence and professional competence.(Ruman et al., 2015) The dimensions of competency are motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills. While the indicators are mastery of teaching learning materials, implementation of evaluation, ability to empathize, sensitivity to the social environment, responsibility, honesty, discipline and objectivity.

### *Project Base Learning*

Project based learning according to Saefudin (2014) is a learning method that uses problems as the first step in collecting and integrating new knowledge based on experience with real activities in life. This is done to help, encourage and guide students to focus on cooperation by involving group work and helping students to focus on their development.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of Goodman and Stivers (2010), project based learning can be interpreted as a teaching approach that is built on learning activities and real tasks that are given challenges to students related to daily needs to be solved in groups.

Project based learning emphasizes student-centered learning when conducting an in-depth investigation of a topic. Constructively, students explore or deepen their learning by taking a research-based approach to problems and questions that are meaningful, real and relevant. This distancing is the definition of project based learning according to Grant (2002).

This learning model can be ap

plied when the facilitator wants to create an active learning environment and asks students to focus on their development. So, the benefits of project base learning are improving problem solving skills, can improve collaboration skills, enable students to engage in active learning, improve students' critical and reflective thinking skills, help students develop more complex problem solving skills, students are more involved and motivated in learning, allowing lecturers to act as facilitators or companions in learning, increasing the reputation of higher education in society, and providing direct benefits to society.(Ruman et al., 2015)

### *Religion Education*

Religion education is education that is expected to become a spirit, an inspiration in forming students' identity in developing their attitudes as stated in the provisions of Law Number 12 of 2012, article 1. The education system in Indonesia must encourage the formation of students' attitudes, faith and piety, so that they become more have noble character and integrity. The implication is that the education system at the basic education level in Indonesia must continue to develop the values of faith and religious morality in various aspects of its policies, so that religion education can be implemented seriously and responsibly, thereby producing students who (1) are devoted to the Almighty God and able to show his religious attitude, (2) upholding human values in carrying out duties based on religion, ethics and morals, (3) acting as a proud citizen, loving his homeland, having nationalism and a sense of responsibility to the state and nation, (4) respect the diversity of cultures, views, religions and beliefs, as well as the opinions of other people, (5) demonstrate a responsible attitude towards work in their field of expertise independently.

Meanwhile, in terms of understanding, students are expected to have knowledge and understanding of religious teachings, so that their faith and devotion to God will grow and develop. The more you know yourself as the Image of God, the more sensitivity and concern for others and your environment will grow and develop. Able to integrate religious values of faith and morals in daily life in the family, school and community. Increasingly aware of oneself as a member of a particular religious institution and actively involved in religious and community life. Increasingly purifying his motivation as a religious community and being able to dialogue and collaborate with friends from different religions.(Ruman et al., 2015) Able to internalize the values of faith and religious morals in building his life as a religious person patterned after the person of the founder of his religion, so that students will become individuals who are one hundred percent loyal as religious people and one hundred

percent loyal as good Indonesian citizens.

Referring to the Decree of the Director General of Higher Education Number 84/E/KPT/2020, the implementation of compulsory curriculum courses, especially in this case, Religion Education, is held to form students who have faith and are devoted to the Almighty God, have noble character and respect differences. It contains actual content and contextual and learning must be interactive, holistic, integrative, scientific, contextual, thematic, effective, collaborative and student-centered.

## Method

This research used a simple quantitative method with the aim of examining how significant the contribution of the lecturer competence in delivering project base learning is on the religion education to build religious moderation spirit of the students. The reachable population in this research were 150 students at Bina Nusantara University Jakarta who were research students as the sample frame.

The number of samples taken for this research were 150 students randomly. Furthermore, respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding variables about lecturer competence as independent variable and religion education to build religious moderation spirit of the students as the dependent variable. The questionnaire was prepared using a Likert scale with the choices (1) Strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) Slightly disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

The independent variable (X) is lecturer competence consisting of 45 questions which are mastery of teaching materials 5 questions, use of the project base learning method 6 questions, implementation of evaluation 4 questions, ability to empathize 5 questions, sensitivity to the social environment 5 questions, responsibility 5 questions, honesty 5 questions, discipline 5 questions, objective 5 questions; and as dependent variable is religion education consisting of 32 questions which are grouped into 2 large groups regarding learning methods and content. Concerning methods include online 4 questions and onsite learning 4 questions as well as learning methods that are conducive to sustainability of the environment 4 questions. Those related to content include relationships with God 6 questions, relationships with others 7 questions, and relationships with the environment 7 questions. After the data was collected, the data was analyzed using path analysis with the help of the SPSS 22 software program. Path analysis was intentionally used to determine the magnitude of the contribution of lecturer competence (X) on religion education to build religious moderation spirit of the students (Y).

## Results

From data processing with the SPSS 2022 program, the following results can be presented descriptive data as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
VAR00001	150	62,00	154,00	216,00	186,0267	14,16061	200,523
VAR00002	150	34,00	128,00	162,00	145,8533	8,19018	67,079
Valid N (listwise)	150						

To show the validity result of using the parametric statistics such as path analysis requires three things to be fulfilled, namely the data has a normal distribution, linear regression, and significant regression as described follow.

Table 2. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
VAR00001	0.053	150	0.200*	0.989	150	0.313
VAR00002	0.053	150	0.200*	0.986	150	0.133

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

From Table 2 the result test of normality, it is known that the two variables are normally distributed, because the significance value in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov column is greater (>) than 0.050, such as X (Lecturer Competence) is 0.200\* and Y (Religion Education) is 0.200\*.

To strengthen the results of the data distribution normality test, it can be also seen at the histogram below.

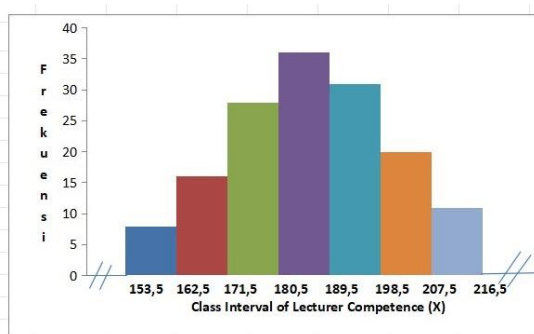


Figure 1. Histogram of Lecturer Competence

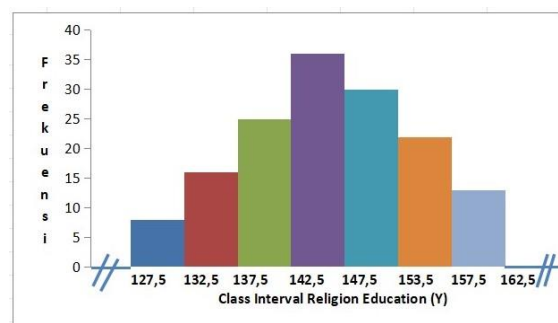


Figure 2. Histogram of Religion Education

To test linearity, there is information, that if the value of Deviation from Linearity Sig. > 0.05, there is a significance linear relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. On the other hand, if the value of Deviation from Linearity Sig < 0.05, there is no significant linear relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

The results of the linearity test can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. ANOVA Table

			Sum of		Mean		
			Squares	df	Square	F	Sig.
VAR00002 *	Between	(Combined)	3556.274	56	63.505	0.917	0.633
VAR00001	Groups	Linearity	8.617	1	8.617	0.124	0.725
		Deviation from					
		Linearity	3547.657	55	64.503	0.932	0.607
	Within Groups		6438.499	93	69.231		
	Total		9994.773	149			

From Table 3, the Deviation from Linearity Sig value is obtained. of 0.607 is greater than 0.05. So, it can be concluded that there is a significant linear relationship between independent variable (X) and dependent Variable (Y).

To test the significance, there is information, if the significance value (Sig) is smaller (<) than the 0.05 probability, it means that there is an influence of X (independent variable) on Y (dependent variable). On the other hand, if the significance value (Sig) is greater (>) than the probability of 0.05, it means that there is no effect of X (independent variable) on Y (dependent variable). The following are the results of the significance test which can be seen at the table 4 in the ANOVA<sup>a</sup> table and the significance table in Table 5.

Table 4. ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9911.524	1	9911.524	17620.616	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	83.249	148	0.562		
	Total	9994.773	149			

a. Dependent Variable: VAR00002

b. Predictors: (Constant), VAR00001

From Table 4, it is known that the significance value (Sig) of 0.000 is smaller than the probability of 0.05, so it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of X (independent variable) on Y (dependent variable).

Table 5. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	38.709	0.809		47.819	0.000
	VAR00001	0.576	0.004	0.996	132.743	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: VAR00002



Based on Table 5 above as the result of the data processing, a structural equation can be made as follow:

$$Y = 0.996 X + \epsilon_1$$

The equation showed the magnitude of the direct influence of Lecturer Competence in delivering Problem Base Learning (X) on Religion Education to build religious moderation spirit of the students (Y) with a coefficient of 0.996. It means that Lecturer Competence (independent variable) influenced 99.6% on the Religion Education and only 0.4% was influenced by other variables which were not discussed in this study.

## Discussion

From the data processing results, it was found that the contribution of Lecturer Competence in delivering Problem Base Learning on the religion education to build religious moderation spirit of the students is truly significant, as shown by the significant number of 99.6%. The significance contribution of lecturer competence on the religion education to build religious moderation spirit of the students, which reached 99.6%, is understandable because without the competence of lecturers in delivering project-based learning, religious education to build a spirit of religious moderation in students will not happen. (Akhmadi, 2019; Aziz et al., 2019; Ramadhan & Islam, 2022). The results of this research are in line with the findings of B Munthe who stated that there is a significant effect between the professional competency of Christian religious education teachers in strengthening students' affective values in class ix of SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra, Indonesia. (Munte, 2016).

Likewise, the results of research which conducted by Noh Ibrahim Boiliu et al showed that the personal competence of the teachers of Christian Religion Education affected the motivation to learn in students High school in South Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia. (Boiliu & Stepanus, n.d.) Likewise, the research results of Norma Fitria (2022) also showed that lecturer competence has a big influence on the Accountability of Management of Islamic Religious Higher Education (the pedagogic competence of Islamic religious college lecturers has a positive effect on the accountability of Islamic religious college management). (Fitria, 2023; Hilmy et al., 2022) Research conducted by Yudha Nata Saputra also showed the results that the competence of the PAK teacher has an influence in overcoming problematic student learning behavior by 64.9%, on student learning motivation. (Saputra, 2022). So, even though their research settings are different, the results showed that there are support for the results of this research that there are the significant contribution of lecturers' competence in applying project-based learning to religious education in order to build a spirit of religious moderation for students.

## Conclusion

With research results which showed the significance contribution of lecturer competence in delivering project based learning on the religion education to build religious moderation of the students (99.6%), it can be

concluded that the higher the level of lecturer competency in delivering project-based learning, the higher the contribution of lecturers who teach religion education to build the spirit of religious moderation for the students. And vice versa, the lower the level of competence of lecturers in delivering project-based learning, the lower the contribution of lecturers who teach religion education to build the spirit of religious moderation for the students.

## Recommendations

Therefore, it is recommended that training on project-based learning be important for lecturers who teach religion education. Apart from that, it is also necessary for lecturers to understand the urgency and relevance of religion education which must be directed to build the spirit of religious moderation for the students.

## Acknowledgement

Thank you very much for Bina Nusantara University that has given supporting us to finished this research. This research was made possible thanks to moral and material support through an internal grant from Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia.

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## The Power of Festivals: Five Festivals in CALABARZON, Philippines that Helped Shape Their Host Communities

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to identify and describe the impact of the five longest running/oldest festivals in CALABARZON that contributed to the development of the host communities. The researcher used the social capital theory in studying the festivals as defined by Putnam (1995, 2000) and quoted by Stevenson in 2016. Putnam (1995, 2000) emphasized on networks, norms and social trust, with co-operation and collaboration producing mutual benefits for individuals, including a sense of well-being. This study used a phenomenological approach based on the lived experiences of the participant with the festivals they have attended. A total of 32 participants were selected using the snowball sampling, starting from the tourism officer of each local government that has jurisdiction of the festivals. The researchers used thematic analysis in identifying significant statements into themes and clustering of data. Aside from the obvious economic impact of festivals, the results show that festivals have an impact on the development of the communities that hold them by developing and preserving the network, norms and trust in each community. All the festivals lead to: (1) community cohesion, (2) sense of belonging/social inclusion, (3) well-being of individuals/Community, (4) education (trainings/seminars), (5) community involvement, (6) civic pride, (7) cultural improvement and preservation, and (8) Self-reliant economic development. Since data gathering procedure was done during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns and no mass gatherings were allowed, it is recommended that a similar study must be done during the festival proper to fully grasp the essence of the festivals. In addition, the results of this study may be used by festival organizers to ensure the success of festivals and for the community development practitioners, that festivals may be used to develop communities.

**Keywords:** festivals, qualitative research, community development, snowball sampling, social capital

**Citation:** Luna, A., M., Dizon, J., T., Flordeliza, M., A., Miranda-Ablan, A., M. & Tutor, B., O., D. (2024). The Power of Festivals: Five Festivals in CALABARZON, Philippines that Helped Shape Their Host Communities. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 663-685), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

One may argue that different communities practice community development for a long time. However, there are various definitions of community development, one definition is that it may be a process: developing and enhancing the ability to act collectively, and an outcome: (1) taking collective action and (2) the result of that action for improvement in a community in any or all realms: physical, environmental, cultural, social, political, and economic (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). There are also studies that established how the idea of community development is related to Economic development as it incorporates creating jobs and aiding in accumulative efforts in sustaining a livelihood for people. Furthermore, community development takes on the idea of creating a more united group of individuals that shares respective social and psychological ties. This means that community development as an educational process enables citizens to address problems by group decision making or they may describe community development as involvement in a process to achieve improvement in some aspect of community life, where normally such action leads to the strengthening of the community's pattern of human and institutional relationships (Phillips & Pittman, 2009).

Festivals are commonly known to people as a day of celebration; throughout the whole world people celebrate various festivals. The idea came from different religious parties and ritual tributes and would usually include sharing of meals, hence the name; feasts, or festivals. But there is a distinction between the two; feasts are usually religious in origin, while most festivals are still in one way or another religious in origin, but they are politically motivated. It is one way of cementing a politician's name in the history of his locality. In present times, the festivities have become festivals that attract visitors from local and international origins.

The pre-colonial/native term for festival is Pandot, which is done in relation to ritual for good harvest, peaceful voyage, favorable outcome in times of war, and recovery from illnesses (de Placencia, 1589). There are a lot of festivals celebrated in the Philippines throughout the year (Zutshi, 2020). "Sinulog" is a dance ritual made to honor of the Santo Nino, a miraculous image in which transcend to religion. It is a Visayan term for the local dance that follows the rhythm of the river flow. The festival is celebrated for nine days which includes a grand parade on its culminating day. A water parade called fluvial procession is done before the parade was celebrated at dawn from Mandaue City to Cebu City. Another Festival is done in Kalibo, Aklan, people celebrate what is considered the wildest among Philippine fiestas; it is known as the "Ati-atihan" and it also honors the Sto. Niño.

There are many festivals in the CALABARZON area (Hephaestus, 2011). The Baños Festival of Los Baños is held as part of the foundation celebration of the municipality; Ala eh Festival of Batangas is part of the celebration of the foundation of the province; Pahimis Festival of Amadeo, Cavite features its coffee. Festivals can be manifestations of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) as festivals entertain and educate people who attend about the communities that hold them (Jepson & Clarke, 2015). Furthermore, the success of any festival is reliant on the local community that holds them (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Other studies (Getz, 1991; Getz, 1997) also imply that festivals can be used to build communities, promote ethnicity within society, and help preserve and celebrate traditions, history and culture. Festivals may also be used as a strategy to extend a destinations lifecycle (Chacko & Schaffer, 1993). Dugas and Schweitzer (1997) concluded that to develop a sense of community is hard work, long term, especially to build levels of connectedness, belonging and support.

Decco & Baloglu (2002) and Ritchie & Smith (1991) believed that festivals have huge impacts on tourism, and these impacts may now be linked with community development. Many studies have documented positive outcomes (Jeong & Faulkner, 1996; Lee, Lee & Lee, 2005). It is highlighted that an international exposure of the local communities can establish both short and long-term opportunity for visitor flow. With respect to the former, considerable attention has been paid to how events can re-shape a city's image, although Boo & Busser (2006) claim that few studies have empirically examined the role of festivals in destination image improvement and call for longitudinal research on this question.

### **Objectives of the Study**

In general, this study aimed to analyze the festivals in the development of the host communities using the social capital theory with a phenomenological approach. In plain sight, a festival may be seen as just short to long term celebrations. However, festivals are yearly events that takes a year-long of planning, creation of committees, and enactment of legislations. Ultimately, Festivals attract tourists to the community that hosts them. This brings additional income to the community during the duration of the celebration. Hence, since festivals are yearly events, the researchers believe that festivals help the development of a community in a year-long basis, not and not just on the days when the festivals are held. This study aimed to analyze the role of festivals in the development of the community using the social capital theory, on a consistent year-long basis which culminates every celebration of the festival itself using a phenomenological approach. In addition, most of the studies done about festivals are foreign and deal mostly on the economic impacts of these festivals and there is little known literature that study their 6 impacts and contribution to the holistic development of the communities using the social capital theory (Quinn & Wilks, 2013).

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Describe the longest running festivals in CALABARZON, Philippines;
2. Determine and describe the impact of these festivals on the communities that hold them in relation to social capital theory;
3. Identify the feature or characteristics of these festivals that contributed to the development of the host



community.

### *Scope and Limitation of the Study*

All the data were gathered from the months of July to September 2021. Data gathering was heavily affected by the differences in the quarantine restrictions of the provincial government units where the festivals were held. For the Anilag Festival done at municipality of Sta. Cruz, province of Laguna, data gathering was a combination of key informant interviews and focus group discussion via personal and online interviews. For the Coco Festival located in San Pablo City, Laguna, all the data were gathered through online interviews with a combination of key informant interviews and focus group discussions. For the Pahiyas Festival which is located in Municipality of Lucban, province of Quezon, data were gathered via key informant interviews through personal and online interviews using zoom meetings. For the Higantes Festival, which was in the municipality of Angono, province of Rizal, data were gathered via key informant interview both through personal and online interview using zoom meetings. For the Lechon Festival, located in the municipality of Balayan, province of Batangas, data were gathered using the key informant interview via personal and online interview through zoom meetings.

Due to differences in quarantine classifications in the provinces covered by this study, some of the interviews were done online when they were under strict quarantine classifications. The online interview was heavily hampered by internet connectivity, which was frustrating at times. Connections were choppy or dropped while the participants were in the middle of answering questions and you had to ask the participants to repeat what they said. Another limitation of online interviews is you cannot really see the participant's body language and their facial expressions which can help researchers probe into certain topics that the participants were enthusiastic about and which topics they were not comfortable in.

### *Theoretical Framework of the Study*

The researchers used the social capital theory in studying the festivals and its implications on the host community. Social capital can be inclusive for the benefit of everyone within a community. According to Tirmizi (2005), social capital can be considered as a 'tool' in enabling community activities. Social Capital is present in a community which is demonstrated in an planned and collaborative actions initiated by the people in the community, its organizers, and other institutions that worked together. In this study, researcher particularly used the themes: network, norms, and trust with co-operation and collaboration producing mutual benefits for individuals, including a sense of well-being emphasized by Putnam (1995, 2000). The researchers further deduced from the participants several characteristics of the festivals that are related to concepts that lead to the development of the host community such as: (1) community cohesion, (2) sense of belonging, (3) well-being of individuals, (4) education (trainings/seminars), (5) community involvement, (6) civic pride, (7) social inclusion, (8) cultural improvement and preservation.

## Method

### Research Design

To gain a wide understanding of the selected festivals in Region 4A (CALABARZON), Philippines, a phenomenological approach was used in this study. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologists is more focused on narrating what the participants commonly experienced in a given phenomenon. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to lessen experiences by each individual in a specific phenomenon to be able to describe and create an idea, or a "grasp of the very nature of the thing," (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). To this end, qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon (an "object" of human experience; van Manen, 1990, p. 163). This human experience may be phenomena such as insomnia, being left out, anger, grief, or undergoing coronary artery bypass surgery (Moustakas, 1994).

The inquirer then gather data from respondents who have experienced the same phenomenon and create a composite description of the essence of their experience. This description consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). 45 Furthermore, there are two approaches to phenomenology, namely: (1) hermeneutic phenomenology (van Marren, 1990) and (2) empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). In particular, this study used Moustakas's (1994) transcendental or phycological phenomenology, which give more emphasis on the experiences of each participant rather than what the researcher concluded. Furthermore, Moustakas also gives emphasis on epoch (also known as bracketing), another Husserl's idea, in which researcher try to put their own experiences aside in order to look at the phenomenon they are studying from a different perspective. Hence, "transcendental" means "in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Moustakas admits that this state is seldom perfectly achieved. However, according to Creswell (2007), he sees researchers who embrace this idea when they begin a project by describing their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others. Besides bracketing, empirical, transcendental phenomenology draws on the Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology (e.g., Giorgi, 1985) and the data analysis procedures of Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978). The procedures, illustrated by Moustakas (1994), consist of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon.

The researchers analyzed the data by clustering significant and relevant statements or direct quotation and incorporate those statements into codes and merged them into themes. The festivals under study are those that have been organized, supported, acknowledged, or started by the Provincial government of each province in the CALABARZON region for at least 10 years. The festivals covered in this study are: (1) Anilag Festival of Laguna, (2) Parada ng Lechon/Lechon Festival of Batangas, (3) Higanes Festival of Rizal, (4) Pahiyas Festival of Quezon, and (5) the Coco Festival of San Pablo City Laguna. The Oldest City in Laguna.

*Locale of Study*

The locale of the study is Region IV-A CALABARZON, which composed of five provinces: Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon. CALABARZON has 123 municipalities, and 19 cities. It has a total number of 4,018 barangays. Furthermore, CALABARZON is home to a lot of festivals that has been celebrated for a long time, most of the festivals in CALABARZON has been celebrated in the mid to late 1990's. Making CALABARZON an ideal locale to conduct the study.

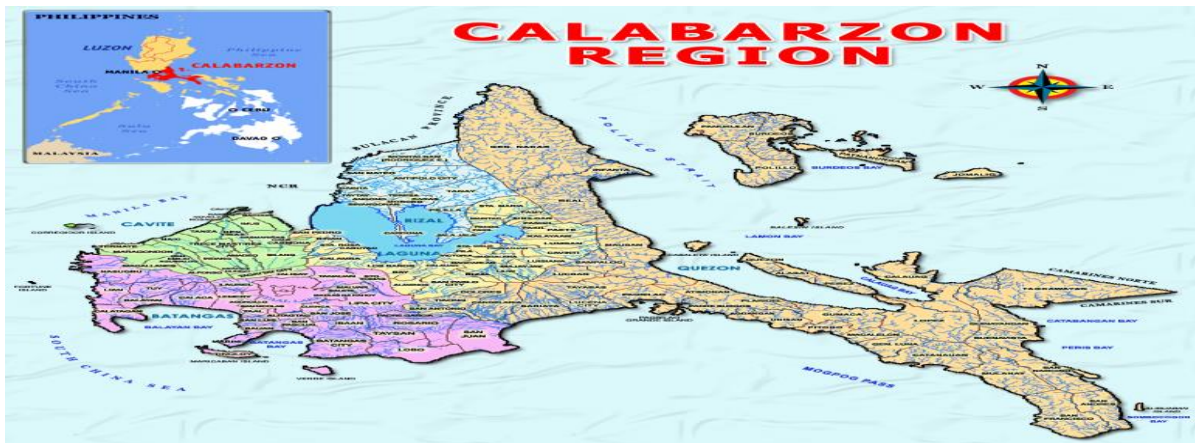


Figure 1. Map of CALABARZON

Source: <https://calabarzon.denr.gov.ph/index.php/about-us/regional-profile>

*Selection of Research Participants*

A total of 32 participants were interviewed using key informant interview or focus group discussions which includes 1 organizer and 2 participants. The organizers are the head of the tourism office or their personnel, or personnel part of the organizing committee/working committee for the festivals for as long as they were part of the committee that helped make the festival materialized/happen. The participants, came from the businessmen or local people who participated/attended the festival at least twice, in any of the following: (1) watched a part of the event, (2) people who are involved and who participate any part program of the festival. Furthermore, a snowball sampling technique identified the respondents which includes everyone from the head of the tourism offices or their staff until the data saturation was reached. The tourism head/staff were asked to provide two respondents that they make recommend to be interviewed that is knowledgeable with the festival. These two respondents were then asked to provide to more respondents who are also knowledgeable about the festival with the same qualification as them, this process was continued by the authors until data saturation was reached.

*Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis was done to determine and describe the impact of festivals in relation to social capital theory. the researcher used the application NVIVO to identify themes and clustering of significant statements, since this

is a qualitative social science study that dealt with a significant amount of data. direct quotations was used and clustered in the NVIVO application and was categorized into codes and eventually in themes such as: network, norms, and trust, then deduced them into several characteristics/codes that are related to community development such as: (1) community cohesion, (2) sense of belonging, (3) well-being of individuals, (4) education (trainings/seminars), (5) community involvement, (6) civic pride, (7) social inclusion, (8) cultural improvement and preservation.

## Results and Discussion

### Description of the Longest Running Festivals in CALABARZON, Philippines

#### *The Anilag Festival*

The *Anilag* festival is celebrated in the town of Sta. Cruz, being the provincial capital of Laguna since 2004. It is a celebration and promotion of products and delicacies like crops, livestock and poultry, bamboo, rattan, and soft hardwood. It is short for “*Ani ng Laguna*” which was originally conceptualized during the time of Governor Joey Lina (1995-2001). This primarily features the farmers and their agricultural products, but it has now evolved into a week-long annual event that also features the top products of each town (six component cities and 24 municipalities), natural wonders, culture, history, and religion. In addition, it promotes the heritage of each town and in relation to the promotion is the preservation of each town’s identity. It is claimed to be the “Mother of All Festivals” by its organizers and features all the 26 festivals of Laguna rolled into one.

For a time, it was renamed La Laguna during the time of the former governor George Estregan (ER) Ejercito. The reason as to why it was being celebrated was also changed, as well as the dates of the celebration. It is what makes the *Anilag* Festival unique. It is the only festival that went through this process as mentioned by the organizer of the festival:

*“The Anilag Festival means the harvest of Laguna. It was conceptualized to feature the different harvests of Laguna. Not only the products but also the services of the province.”-Male, 55 yo*

The festival was originally formed to showcase the agricultural products of Laguna. However, nowadays it also serves as a venue to introduce to the tourists the whole province of Laguna. Not just the products but also the history, the natural wonders, the culture, and the talents of the people of each town of Laguna. It is an event that promotes inclusivity, and, in the process, it unites the people of Laguna. According to the festival organizer:

*“Actually, it was conceptualized by Governor Joey Lina to promote the agricultural products of the province, then it was turned into a festival not only for agricultural products, but also to promote for example: heritage of a town in the province, to promote preservation as well.”-Male, 55 yo*

### *The Lechon Festival*

The *Parada ng Lechon/Lechon* Festival of Batangas, held by the town of Balayan has its roots all the way from the Spanish colonization period in the Philippines; and is dubbed as the ultimate fiesta experience in the Philippines which is done in celebration of the sainthood of Saint John the Baptist (Chongson, 2004). *Parada ng Lechon*, known as the “King of all Batangas Festivals,” is an annual event held on the 24th of June to honor St. John the Baptist, the town’s patron saint. In this festival, hundreds of roasted pigs are adorned in creative dresses and accessories and are showcased around town by a parade. Likewise, water dousing is incorporated in the feast as a centuries-old practice. This is a unique festival because it dates all the way back to the Spanish and American regimes where blessed and fortunate families would parade a lechon in town plaza during the Feast of St. John the Baptist and show it the poor people of Balayan. This is also done to give thanksgiving and adoration to their patron saint. In addition, the first recorded San Juan fiesta in Balayan that is associated with the lechon was in 1906. This festival is considered as unique since it has been celebrated for more than 100 years now.

The festival was also originally done by the working class from the western district of the población (Kanluran district) to share their blessings and give thanks for the blessings they received during the past year. They would parade lechons in the town plaza (Roman Catholic Church) for the lesser fortunate people from the other districts of the town during the towns feast (June 24), feast of Saint John the Baptist. The parade is accompanied by water dousing of everyone who is in the vicinity. However, the first ever recorded feast that features a parade of roasted pigs was in 1906. As the years passed by, more and more people from the west district started to join, as they receive more blessings of which they associate with the *Parada ng Lechon* as mentioned by the tourism officer:

*“Even before the 1900s, there was already a parade of roasted pigs, but the festival as we know it was only formed in 1959 when the brotherhood of Saint John the Baptist was formed.”-Female, 28 yo*

As it grew, the elders of the west district formed the group Hermanand for San Juan Bautista to properly organize the festival and ever since, it has been them who oversee the festival. That is the unique characteristic of this festival, it is one of the oldest. However, they have maintained the festival to be controlled by the private group, but in coordination and proper support of the local government of Balayan as the tourism officer stated:

*“I researched about other festivals, and I learned that the other festivals are controlled and spearheaded by the LGUs. I asked some of the town councilors if we have laws or ordinances regarding the festival, we do not have one. All we have is a verbal agreement with the hermandad. The total control and program implementation is with the hermandad. The LGU is just here to support them, and we are helping them in almost all of the activities and programs of the festival.”*  
- Female, 28 yo

### *The Higantes Festival*

The Higantes Festival is a non-religious celebration commenced and celebrated in the Municipality of Angono, Rizal to express the resident's gratitude to its patron Saint Clement. The parade giants is held every Sunday before the town feast on November 23. However, what makes it unique is its origin. Based on Angono folklore, the 'higante' symbolizes the agrarian protest during the later years of the Spanish colonization when Angono was a *hacienda* (large tract of lands). However, Saguinsin, as cited by Marcial (2020), theorized that the higante was inexistent and the locals of Angono actually referred to a tall and towering 'katiwala' or hacienda caretaker named *Karias Tangkad* as the giant whom the residents were exacting and taking revenge, which is 'higanti' in Filipino. The people of Angono used the festival as an opportunity to mock hacienda owners by making papier-mâché caricatures (Tan, 2012).

Among the five festivals chosen in this study, the Higantes Festival is arguably the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest when it comes to its origin, however, the festival's origin is a bit hard to decide on, which is also the reason that makes the Higantes festival unique. The aim of the festival is also vague in the beginning, as some sources tell it was a form of protest against the rich landowners of Angono, or a form of revenge (*higanti*) against a tall/giant (*higante*) caretaker of the land of Angono, or a form of morale booster for the people of Angono during the post-World War 2 period. However, one thing is for sure, the festival as we know it today, since Angono is the art capital, it makes sense that the festival is about parading creative giant paper maches to showcase the local artists and their creativity. The contemporary festival started as an event which is part of the town's fiesta with only three giants (a family) being paraded. Then it was proposed by the late Perdigon Vocalan to make more giants, to encourage the local artists to join, and for it to be celebrated on a different day from the fiesta. The main purpose of the festival is to be an event to showcase the creativity and the artistry of the local artists of the town. As mentioned by the son of Mr. Vocalan who also owns a local art gallery/restaurant:

*"The Higantes Festival is from the town fiesta of Angono. Before there were only three giants, a family of giants. Then my father proposed a project in the NCCA(National Commission for Culture and Arts) why not multiply it and make it a festival. Back then, it was celebrated together with the town fiesta. My father proposed why not celebrate the Higantes Festival on a separate day. A workshop was held on how to make a giant out of papers, and it was open to all the barangays who wanted to join. A contest was held for the best giant, until it became a tradition and later, the LGU has acquired total control of the festival."*

**- Male, 52 yo**

### *The Coconut Festival*

The Coconut Festival, more popularly known as Coco Festival is celebrated by the City of San Pablo, Laguna. This festival has been celebrated annually since 1996. According to Ladanga, Padrigalan & Muya (2018), it is



held every second week of January in conjunction with the town's fiesta. It is a festival that features not only one of the City's agricultural products (coconuts), but it also aims to boost tourism by promoting art, the rich culture of the town, and other agricultural products as well (Ladanga, Padrigalan, & Muya, 2018). What makes this festival unique is that San Pablo City is one of the oldest cities in Laguna and it is well known for its lakes. Thus, it is called as the City of Seven Lakes, but it has chosen to feature its agriculture products primarily the coconut instead of the lakes in the festival.

What makes the Coconut Festival unique is that it is one of the oldest festivals in Laguna that was fully conceptualized, implemented, and controlled by LGU. It has been celebrated for 25 years prior to the pandemic. It is celebrated in conjunction with the town feast. Resolution No. 96-765 is the ordinance that officially proclaims the Coconut Festival as the official festival of San Pablo City. The aim of the Coconut Festival is to give importance to the coconut industry of San Pablo City. It is very important because it is one of the primary reasons why the city is recognized as a first-class city, the first city to be declared as such in Laguna. According to the tourism officer:

*"We conceptualized the Coco Festival in 1996 through Resolution No. 96-765 which recognizes that this will be the official festival of the city of San Pablo. We have reached 25 years last year, unfortunately pandemic so we did not have any activity particularly the highlight of our festival. It was implemented to give importance to the coconut industry because that's why we became the first-class city in the province of Laguna."-Female, 56 yo*

#### *The Pahiyas Festival*

The *Pahiyas* festival is another unique festival if not the most unique of them all, because its origin is believed to date back during the precolonial period, when the first Catholic church was established in Lucban, Quezon, under Captain Lukas Martin in 1630, under the supervision of Fr. Alfonso de San Miguel (1628). During this time, there was an increased emphasis on converting indigenous population towards a more religious side. This initiated those natives and locals to ask the help of their parish priest during their harvest time. They then brought their agricultural products inside the new and much bigger church in which where the parish priest traditionally bless the harvest as a form of thanksgiving to the Lord. As a result, the following year, the farmers experienced another plentiful harvest, thus intensifying beliefs and devotion to Saint Isidore (1595) as the intercessor of God's blessing to them. The *Pahiyas* festival has been observed actually prior to the coming of the Spaniards, but it was absorbed into the feast of town's patron saint (Antohilao, 2004).

When it comes to origin, the *Pahiyas* Festival is the oldest and the most famous among the five festivals of this study. It can also be argued that it is one of the oldest in the Philippines. It is believed that the natives of Lucban, prior to their conversion to Christianity had already been practicing the *Pahiyas*, but when the locals were converted the practice was integrated into the celebration of the feast of San Isidro Labrador. The



implementation of the festival now is headed by the local government in partnership with the church, the church is still involved, however unlike before it was spearheaded by the church together with the town people. There is an official ordinance that institutionalized the celebration of the festival and transferred the control of the festival to the local government of Lucban. According to the tourism officer of Lucban:

*“Celebrated during the feast to San Isidro Labrador, it is thanksgiving to the patron saint of the farmers for the bountiful harvest of the year. It has been believed that even before the conversion of the natives to Christianity (1500) they were already giving thanks for their bountiful harvest. When the natives were converted the church found a way to integrate the festival into the feast of San Isidro Labrador, still not losing its main objective, which is to give thanks for the bountiful harvest of the year. The festival has been institutionalized and has been under the supervision of both the local government and the church (catholic). So, the decoration only revolves around the town proper during the festival, sometimes the route changes, just depends on the LGU what streets will be part of the route.)- Female, 45*

*Effects of the Festival on the Social Capital of the Host Communities*

Table 1. Effects of the Festivals on the social capital of the host community

DIRECT QUOTATION/NVIVO	Description/CODES	THEMES
<i>I met a lot of people because of the festival who became my friends</i>		
<i>The team of Kapuso Mo Jessica Soho and they were able to feature my cheesecake.</i>		
<i>People come who are potential long-term customers</i>		
<i>Able to have a project in another province.</i>	<i>Extension of network</i>	<i>Bridging Social Capital</i>
<i>Friends of friends became my friends.</i>		
<i>My art café gained new customers.</i>		
<i>Met a lot of people in participating in the events and as contestant of the events</i>		

*Friends and relatives*

*Family and officemates*

*We get to be reunited with friends and relatives. The festival is a good bonding event*

*We bring friends we met from other towns/cities/countries for them to experience the fun and hype.*

*bonding moments with family, former classmates, and quality time with friends.*

*Renewal of trust*

*Bonding Social  
Capital*

*Officemates and friends from other provinces*

*Venue for reunions and family gatherings*

*Friends from Manila*

*Family members or relatives*

*the final decision is with the brotherhood of the Hermandad. We cannot bypass them.*

*The Municipality of Balayan provides manpower, financial, and/or traffic management assistance*

*It was institutionalized thru a law.*

*The festival has been institutionalized and has been under the supervision of both the local government and the Catholic church.*

*Aside from the annual budget, it is heavily sponsored by local businesses, personalities and big companies both from local and national.*

*Partnership*

*Linking Social  
Capital*

*Seek the support and participation of the different stakeholders.*

*Tapping of social media influencers and mainstream media such as Channels 2 and 7.*

*Seeks the support of the private and public sectors, small businesses, big corporations, participation of all the members of the community*

### *Bridging Social Capital*

The participants affirmed that they met several persons who later became permanent acquaintances. Because of the festival she was able to extend her network and that she was able to convince one co-volunteer to transfer to the school that she is currently enrolled in. They have been very close with one another. A connection that she would have never had if not for the festival.

For the businessmen, it is an event where they were able to gain new customers that are now their regular customers. The festival is a venue where they met someone and that someone gave a big project to that local artist. It is also a venue where they gained new regular customers One of them even mentioned that because of the festival their product was featured in a big-time prime time television show and because of that, her product

is now one of the most famous products of Balayan which extended her network. A network that would not have existed if it was not for the festival:

*“Yes, the team of Kapuso Mo Jessica Soho and they were able to feature our cheesecake which became a hit in Balayan and some parts of Batangas and Manila as well.” - Female, 49 yo*

*“Yes, we do try to make it a point to serve food during the feast, so that when visitors come, we can offer them something and they turn in to a permanent customer.” - Male, 53 yo*

According to the local artist who owns a gallery art café and employee, respectively:

*“ Yes, because of the festival, my art café gained permanent customers.”-Male, 42 yo*

*“Yes, my boss met someone who gave him a project in the province because of the festival.”-Female, 28 yo*

According to the participants, because of the festival they met people whom they were competing with in an event of the festival, and they became friends, and one mentioned they became family. Because of the festival, they were able to extend their networks. These are the words of the contestants in the events of the festival:

*“I learned stories about their personal lives and gained more friends whom I now consider as family.” - Male, 24 yo*

*“I gained new friends specially the group of dancers from San Pablo City.”-Male, 28 yo*

They became friends because of the dance contest, and they now became connected that are giving each other tips when a dance competition in other places is being held, so that their groups may join the competition and compete with one another. For the participants, the festival is a place where they met friends of friends and almost became lovers as mentioned by one of them:

*“I gained friends, friends of friends whom I shared drinks with, one almost turned into a relationship.”-Female, 24 yo*

### *Bonding Social Capital*

When the researcher asked some of the research participants who attended some of the events of the festival, they negated meeting someone new/permanent because of the festival. However, in watching/attending events of the festival they were usually with their relatives, friends and classmates. This means that the festival is an event where the residents of Laguna can enjoy and bond together. The participants answered they were with their:

*“Family, Friends and relatives”-Female, 22 yo*

As the respondents mentioned, in watching the events and joining the parade, most often they are with their clubs whose members are now working in a different town, relatives who are now residing outside Balayan, workmates of those who are residents of Balayan but are working outside the town, loved ones, and immediate family members. The Lechon Festival is a place where old acquaintances renew their trust with one another as it serves as the event to do reunions with one another. According to the respondents, if they are watching an event of the festival, they are with their friends, some who are from other places, family and relatives some are within the same household and some are also from other places the festival serves as an event where they renew their trust with one another. As the respondents mentioned:

*“Friends from other places, there are also from friends from Angono.”-Female, 28 yo*

The festival is also a venue where they spend time with their high school and college friends and reminisce their times when they were still studying and friends from other places as well. An event where they renew their trust with one another as mentioned by the tourism officer. This was confirmed by the participants who were interviewed via focus group discussion:

*“The festival is a venue for reunions and family gatherings, we put these events during the festival.”-Female, 56 yo*

*“When I was in college, of course my friends.”- Female, 24 yo*

*“We go to the plaza, to the booths to spend quality time with my friends.”- Female, 26 yo*

*“I am with different people during the different events of the festival, just like one time, I watched the festival with my friend from Batangas.”- Female, 24*

The festival is also an event where they attend the different events with their family and relatives, officemates, spend quality time together, be relaxed, and enjoy each other’s company and rekindle their friendships. According to the participants:

*“One of the family members who married a non-resident, there are also friends from outside the city, it now becomes a chain reaction. There are also cases that the husband of a local is a foreigner, so we do have foreign visitors/tourists.”*  
- Female, 27 yo

*“Friends and family, boyfriend”- Female, 26 yo*

*“My officemates from Cebu, Batangas, Cavite, Bulacan” – Female, 24 yo*

*Linking Social Capital.*

Based on the interview with the festival organizers, which is also an agency under the provincial government, the festivals are also a linking social capital as the organizers ask for the participation and support of all the local governments from the different towns in the province of Laguna. The festival organizers also tapped the different institutions such as schools, church, public and private sectors for their participation and local and national businesses for sponsorships and participation. One of the festivals is initiated by the Hermandad (private group), however, it is properly coordinated with the local government, in terms of funding and other necessary support needed by the Hermandad. Aside from the LGU, they also seek the support of the business sector in terms of participation and funding. As mentioned by the tourism officer:

*“So, that is how we the plan festival but the final decision is with the brotherhood of the Hermandad. We cannot bypass them. The Municipality of Balayan provides manpower, financial, and/or traffic management assistance.”*

**-Female, 28 yo**

*Other Characteristics/Features of the Festivals that Contributed to the Development of the Host Communities*

Table 2. Thematic Analysis Characteristics/Features of the Festival

DIRECT QUOTATION/NVIVO	Description/CODES	THEMES
<i>It was able to attract investors to put up companies thus creating jobs</i>	<i>Tourism</i>	Economic
<i>It brings tourists and showbiz personalities.</i>		impact
<i>It brings local and international tourists.</i>		
<i>Seminars are conducted according to the activities they joining in, for the participants to do well.</i>		
<i>Seminars are conducted according to the activities they joining in, for the participants to do well.</i>	Education (Training/Seminars)	Norms
<i>Seminars that are related to the events of the festival such as workshop on personality development for the pageants.</i>		
<i>Seminars that are related to the events of the festival such as workshop on how to make a giant.</i>		

*A lot, more or less 30 programs under the festival.*

Civic engagement

Network  
and trust

*Sponsorship or actual participations with the events*

*From five days, the festival is now celebrated in eight days.*

*Different clubs are asked for financial support for their activities pertaining to the festival in exchange for advertisement during the festival.*

*Those who are part of the route must participate; prizes in the form of money are given (may reach up to P220,000.00).*

*Seeks the support of the private and public sectors, small businesses, big corporations, participation of all the members of the community*

*The Mardigra is open to private or public school.*

*Events that target the different members of the community*

*Everyone can join the decoration of the houses or in any event of the festival.*

*It was Ferdigon Vocalan, a local artist, who gathered the local artists to make the festival open for all. A seminar was held for those who are interested.*

*Usually, school and churches and even the members of the LGBT*

Community  
Involvement

Network

*A venue for all sectors of the community: old, young, LGBTQ, everyone may join. There are activities for all members of society.*

*Seek the support and participation of the different stakeholders.*

*Tapping of social media influencers and mainstream media such as Channels 2 and 7.*

*Programs that target most of the sectors of the community.*

*Almost all sectors are targeted. Programs of the LGBT, senior citizens, PWDs, women, men, children, and local artists.*

*Absolutely everyone may join the festival (events)*

*Individuals are being approached or summoned to participate.*

*This is the event where we always get to be reunited with our extended family members and relatives.*

*A week-long celebration that has different programs that target most if not all the members of the community.*

*local artists, residents, all sectors of the community and even foreigners*

*Yes, sense of belonging for me, I am not really from Laguna (born).*

sense of  
belonging/social  
inclusion

Norms and  
trust

*Gives an identity to the people of Lucban*

*Gives the community that feeling that the "festival is ours*

*It makes me proud especially seeing your hometown competing.*



*The venue of the events itself improved a lot (provincial capitol).*

Infrastructure

Physical

*Roads are now wider, the heritage space site, streetlights in the plaza area.*

Improvement

Impact

*The road going to the plaza from the highway.*

*The town plaza itself.*

*Streetlights, roads that are part of the parade are widened; traffic management, accommodations, arcs for photo opportunities*

*It is a venue to showcase the unique products and services of each town.*

community well-  
beingNorms and  
Trust

*Local, small businesses by participation.*

*Big, national companies for sponsorship (San Miguel Corporation).*

*To give thanks and share the blessing*

*Uplifts our feelings as members of the community.*

*through friendly competitions.*

*A much-awaited event that Filipinos from all parts of the world are looking forward to be part of.*

Civic Pride

Norms

*Proud of my hometown*

*Because of the festival, we are known not only in the Philippines, but also internationally.*

*Through the festival, Angono is more recognized as the Art Capital of the Philippines all over the world.*

*Gives an identity to the people of San Pablo*

*It allows the locals to showcase their creativity, industry, the pride of the locals as being shown in the designing of the houses with kipings. It shows a tradition handed down from generations.*

*It gives joy, fun and memorable experiences to the community.*

Community

trust

Cohesion

*It brings the community together.*

*It unites the people,*

*More towns people coming back.*

*A venue where people reunite (family, relatives, friends).*

*This is the event where we always get to be reunited with our extended family members and relatives.*

All the festivals help promote or develop community cohesion, although competitions of some sort are present in the festivals. These competitions are healthy competitions as such they are ways for the people in the community to know one another, to bond with people they are competing with or against. All these festivals have a parade of some sort under their events and these parades let all the people involved in the festival to come and be with one another, it lets them know one another. The festivals also develop the people of the community; holding them a sense of belonging, as these festivals are something they are associated with. When they are meeting someone new and they ask where they are from, the people they meet will then associate the place with the festival, and it makes them easier to have a conversation starter with people whom they just met. The festivals also promote the well-being of those involved and those who watch the events under the festival. They relax the people, make them enjoy what they are watching, and make the people competing or presenting in the events feel good about themselves as they can show their talents and represent their people in competitions. The festivals also allow the locals to share their culture and history to the tourists confirming what Sumbarova (2011) found out, that is, festivals are determinants that cause people to travel to other countries to know the local art, culture and history of the communities that hold them.

The festivals in this study conduct trainings and seminars imbedded in the programs under the festivals. They target certain groups of people every festival. In 2019, the Anilag Festival had a program for making a Longganisa Festival out of the knife fish which is considered a pest in the Laguna Lake. In doing this, they conducted a training for those who will be involved and interested on how to make the knife fish into a longganisa, a form of value-adding to a pest that is a problem of the province. To maximize the involvement of the local community in the celebration of the festivals, ordinances have been passed to make the day of the festival or some of the days of the festival as non-working holidays. The organizers of the festivals make sure that there will be a program for almost everyone in the community to join, attend, or watch.

All the participants, when asked if the festival makes them proud as an individual and as a member of the community, all of them answered yes, which can be related to civic pride. The festivals made them proud of

who they are and where are they from. They are proud even if they are just attendees of the festival, and it makes them prouder if they are part of the organizers and a participant of the events of the festivals. As mentioned in the above results, there are events under each festival that target a specific group of people in the community. There is a program for the businessmen, there is a program for the LGBTQ+, a program for the young ones, the middle-aged, the senior citizens, the agricultural sector, the schools, the sports enthusiasts, the private sector, and the public sector. As such, all the festivals promote social inclusion which is one way of ensuring the success of the festivals, giving the local communities involvement and a sense of ownership of the festivals; just as what Getz (1989) mentioned, festivals provide opportunities to participate in distinctive and collective experiences. As concluded by Raj (2003), festivals add tourism attraction and influence the cultural and economic growth of the place and all the five festivals attract tourists, local or international. With the tourists coming, it adds to the economic growth of the places where they are held.

## Conclusion

The object of this study was to (1) Describe the longest running festivals in CALABARZON, Philippines; (2) Determine and describe the impact of these festivals on the communities that hold them in relation to social capital theory; and (3) Identify the feature/characteristics of these festivals that contributed to the development of the host community.

The Anilag Festival of Laguna is festival initiated by the provincial government during the middle to late 1990's. It is done to showcase primarily the agricultural products of the province. The festival is celebrated during the foundation of the province. It is called and known as the *"mother of all festivals"* in Laguna because it features all the cities and municipalities of Laguna.

The Lechon Festival of Batangas is controlled by a private organization and not under the supervision or control of the local government of Balayan; but it is recognized by the LGU and is heavily coordinated with them. The Lechon Festival is the oldest festival in Batangas. It was celebrated as a thanksgiving and share the blessings the townspeople from one part to the town's less fortunate residents.

The Higantes Festival is arguably the second oldest festival covered by this study and the oldest festival in the province of Rizal. The origin of the giant marionettes is bleak. Some stories will tell that the origin dates back to the Spanish colonial period as a form of mockery to Karia, a tall caretaker of the lands of Angono. It was used during the post-World War II period to give confidence to the people of Angono. The current format that is famous right now was introduced during the late 80's. The contemporary festival was initiated by the private sector (local artist of Angono); but is now under the local government of Angono. The was implemented mainly to showcase local artist of Angono, Rizal which is known as *"Art Capital of the Philippines"*.

The Coco Festival of the City of San Pablo, was one of the oldest cities in Laguna. The festival was initiated in

the mid 90's by the local government of San Pablo City, Laguna. It aimed showcase coconuts, the primary agricultural product of the city. According to the tourism office, it is the reason why the city became a first-class component city. The festival is celebrated in conjunction with the town fiesta as well.

The Pahiyas Festival of Lucban, Quezon is arguably the oldest of all the festivals in this study its origin dates back during the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines, it was a done to show the gratitude of the town's people for the bountiful harvest, it was integrated in the town fiesta during the colonial period, led by the church but the festival's control has been transferred to the local government of Lucban.

All the festivals lead to community development in relation to social capital theory as each festival develops network, norms, and social trust. Specifically, the festivals lead to: (1) community cohesion, (2) sense of belonging, (3) well-being of individuals, (4) education (trainings/seminars), (5) community involvement, (6) civic pride, (7) social inclusion, (8) cultural improvement and preservation. All the five festivals help promote or develop community cohesion, since there are competitions of some sort present in the festivals. The festivals also develop in the people of the community holding them a sense of belonging. The festivals also develop or promote the well-being of those involved and those who watch the events under the festival because of their relaxing effect.

## Recommendations

For other researchers it is recommended that another study should be done during the actual celebrations of the festivals is highly recommended to fully appreciate/grasp the experiences of the people in the celebration of the festivals and add tourist to get their perspective of the festivals they are attending. In addition, the Pahimis Festival of Cavite should be added to have a full representation of the festivals in CALABARZON, Philippines.

For Community Development Practitioners as shown in this research, festivals may be used as a strategy to develop communities. The results may be used by community development practitioners and festival organizers to ensure the success of festivals.

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## Herbularyo (Folk Healer): An Herbal Medicine Card Game

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**Abstract:** Herbularyo, a card game teaching about herbal plants (HPs), was created and evaluated as a viable educational card game based on Tuomisto and Aksela's criteria. A quasi-experiment was performed on 81 Grade 8 students from a private high school and 50 Grade 11 from a public high school. Independent t-test revealed that the control group (CG) and experimental group (EG) ( $p=0.386$ ), and EG1 (played  $\leq 5$ ) and EG2 (played  $>5$ ) ( $p=0.681$ ) are not comparable with each other. Paired t-test showed EG performed better ( $p=0.001$ ) than CG ( $p=0.901$ ) whereas ANCOVA showed that playing Herbularyo improved students' information retention ( $p=0.006$ ). EG1 and EG2 both performed well after playing the game (paired t-test  $p=0.000$ ). However, there was no significant difference in learning based on the quantity of games played (ANCOVA  $p=0.188$ ). Likert scale was used to evaluate 17 statements. Herbulayo (overall = 4.25) was able to capture the student's attention (mechanics and structure = 4.55) and foster interest in HP (feedback = 4.44). Preliminaries (4.05) and pedagogy (3.97) of the game received a lower rating. Nonetheless, Herbularyo proves to be an effective game for promoting knowledge about common herbal medicinal plants in the Philippines.

**Keywords:** medicinal plants, game-based learning, natural products, educational games

**Citation:** Magsino, M. & Guidote, A. M. (2024). Herbularyo (Folk Healer): An Herbal Medicine Card Game. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 686-699), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The Philippines has a diverse species of plants with thousands endemic to the Philippines. The country is one of the 18 mega-diverse countries with two-thirds of the world's biodiversity (Philippines - Main Details, n.d.). In Philippine history, plants have been used as medicine for oral ingestion and external application. The Manobo Tribe in Agusan del Sur alone was documented to use 122 species of herbal plants (HPs) with different ethnopharmacology (Dapar, Alejandro, Meve, & Liede-Schumann, 2020). In Palanan, Isabela, most residents know the uses of different medical plants that they learned from their ancestors (Baleta, Donato, & Bolanos, 2016).



Apart from traditional usage, the importance of HPs can be seen around the globe. Around 80% of the total population of developing countries depends on these as primary treatments (World Health Organization, 2013). Moreover, HPs are used as an alternative to cope with the symptoms of chronic diseases. With the majority of the top 10 causes of death in the world linked to chronic diseases (World Health Organization, 2020), the need for alternative and preventive medicines should be given importance.

HPs are being utilized in drug preparation. About 25% of medicines prescribed worldwide are derived from plants (Wachtel-Galor & Benzie, 2011). Different studies are being conducted on HPs to scientifically back up their healing effects and ensure they are safe for consumption. With the affordability of HPs, especially in places with expensive health care, knowing the effects of different HPs can be beneficial in helping people afford a healthier life.

In the Philippines, different HPs and their properties were summarized and published. The Encyclopedia of Common Medicinal Plants of the Philippines summarizes the traditional and pharmacological properties of various native plants in the country. It provides vital information such as the appearance and structure of the plant, its molecular composition, and the clinical development study that has been performed. The dissemination of this kind of information is relevant in educating people about these plants, enabling them to make use of their newfound knowledge.

To spread this awareness and knowledge on different health benefits of HP, an alternative approach can be utilized: Educational Board Games have been shown to be an effective tool in improving the learning experience of students. Studies have shown that students show positive responses to classes where games are used to improve their learning experience (Liu & Chen, 2013; Crews, 2011).

Correspondingly, Mariscal, Olivia, and Gil (2015) showed that the games have a positive impact on the students' perception which includes better learning of chemistry than traditional learning, simplified content, higher participation of students, and better appeal to students. Correspondingly, educational board games such as card games show promising results as supplementary materials for learning chemistry by improving attitude, engagement, and inquiry-based learning (Srisawasdi & Panjaburee, 2018; Ndirika, 2013).

Card games are used to simplify information, keep players engaged, and have better appeal to the audience (Mariscal, Olivia, & Gil, 2015). This research aims to create a card game incorporating knowledge about the healing properties of the different common HPs in the Philippines. Herbularyo was designed to appreciate and understand the medicinal properties of common HPs in the Philippines while interactively presenting the information. The effects of playing Herbularyo were assessed by determining how playing can help participants familiarize themselves with different properties of various HPs, and how the quantity of games played could impact the amount of information about HPs the participants can recall.

**Method**

**Conceptual Framework**

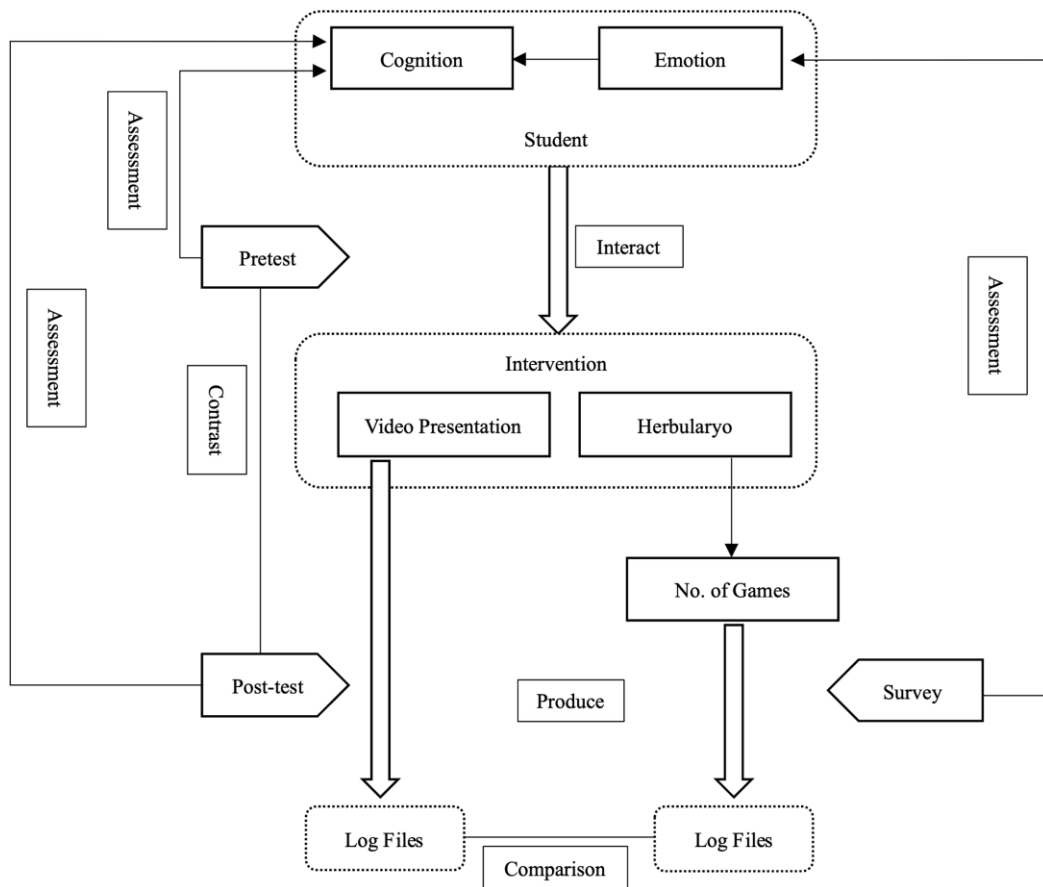


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for the Assessment Analysis of Herbularyo

Based on the proposed conceptual framework by Zhao, et al. (2021), Figure 1 is the conceptual framework that was used in this study.

Herbularyo aims to teach students about the application of different HPs commonly found in the Philippines. To assess the effectiveness of Herbularyo, cognition and emotion (learning motivation and interest) were assessed. For cognition, pretests and post-tests were given and compared to determine if there was a significant improvement in learning about HPs after the intervention. For the students who played Herbularyo as their intervention, the effect of the number of games on their learning was also assessed. The log files of the data from both the students who underwent video presentation (CG) and Herbularyo (EG) were analyzed and compared to each other to determine which intervention was better at teaching HPs.

*Method Summary*

The following is the summarized step-by-step process followed when conducting the research.

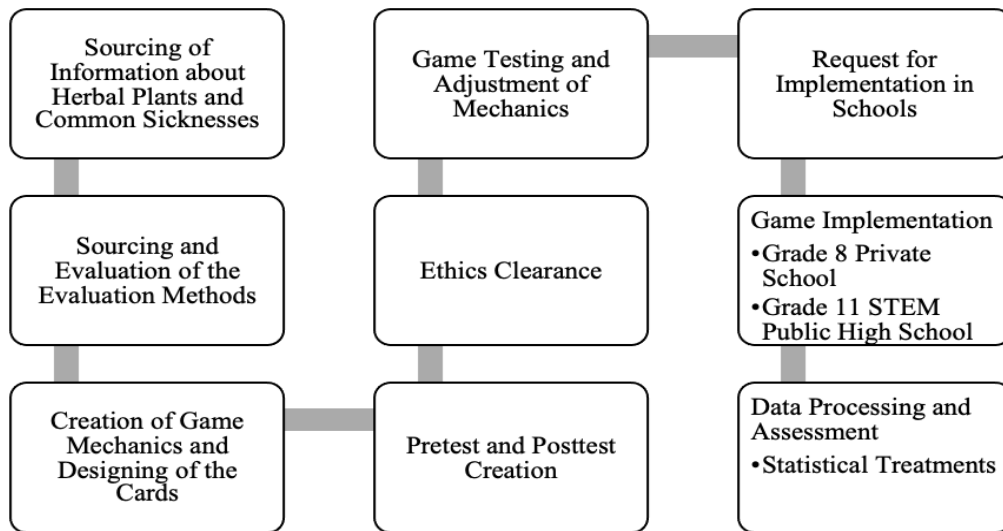


Figure 2. Method Summary of Herbularyo

#### *Sourcing of Information about Herbal Plants and Common Sicknesses*

Herbal medicines from the Encyclopedia of Common Medicinal Plants of the Philippines were listed with the corresponding sicknesses that show healing capability that underwent at least a pre-clinical trial. Specific compounds or molecules responsible for the specific healing property of the HPs were also listed. Afterward, the 11 most common sicknesses that can be healed by different HPs were chosen to be part of the final list of Sickness Cards. A final list of HPs and their healing molecules was made with the corresponding sicknesses they can heal.

#### *Sourcing and Finalizing of the Evaluation Methods*

The evaluation questions were derived from the study conducted by da Silva Júnior JN et al. (2021, 2022), supplemented with additional evaluation questionnaire items. Each question was categorized under one of the four general Tuomisto and Aksela (2015) educational card and board game criteria. Their theoretical framework determines which aspects of creating a game must be considered to improve educational games. The summary of the criteria that must be considered are as follows:

1. Mechanics and Structure
  - a. number of players
  - b. length of gameplay
  - c. simplicity of instructions
  - d. mobility of the game (can it be played anywhere)
  - e. game paraphernalia.
2. Pedagogy
  - a. Unpredictability
  - b. Difficulty

3. Preliminaries
  - a. Prerequisite knowledge needed
  - b. The concept of chemistry used
  - c. Application of the concepts
  - d. Representational levels (macro, sub-micro, symbolic)
4. Student feedback
  - a. Interest in playing
  - b. Overall feelings while playing
  - c. A feeling of achieving the goal
  - d. Engagement while playing
  - e. Retained information

The mechanics and structure are the basics of any game that should be present in the first place. Those criteria must be clear and easy to follow to make sure that anyone can proceed with the game. The “game” aspect of educational card games should not be lost. There needs to be a sense of unpredictability and difficulty that each player can utilize to win the game. Chemistry knowledge, on the other hand, must be determined beforehand so there is no confusion as to what concepts must be understood by the students before they can play the game. The chemistry concepts must be clear and applied well in the game. Lastly, the students’ feedback provided a quantitative evaluation of whether the game succeeded in achieving its goals. After playing the game, knowledge should be, at least, gained by the players. In the case of *Herbularyo*, it aims for the players to be familiar with the different HPs and their healing properties.

A 17-question evaluation form was made. Four questions are under Pedagogy, another four are under Mechanics and Structure, and six questions are under Feedback. The remaining three questions are under Preliminaries.

A Likert Scale derived from a study conducted by Nyutu, et. al. (2021) was adopted in this study. Only the participants from the EG were asked to answer the evaluation. The evaluation for each rating interval is shown.

Table 26. Likert Scale Evaluation

Likert Scale Description	Likert-Scale	Likert-Scale Interval
Strongly disagree	1	1.00 – 1.80
Disagree	2	1.81 – 2.60
Neutral/Uncertain	3	2.61 – 3.40
Agree	4	3.41 – 4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21 – 5.00

#### *Creation of Game Mechanics and Designing of the Cards*

An 89-card deck was created which was divided into two major types of cards. There were 12 sickness cards (11

different illnesses and one patient card which can accept all types of healing cards) which each player needed to heal and 77 action cards to help them win the game. The following is a summary of the different kinds of cards and their usage.

Table 27. Herbularyo Cards and Description

Type of Cards	Description
Sickness Cards	A separate deck composed of 12 cards will be shuffled and distributed equally to players facing up and making sure everyone sees them.
Action Cards	A separate deck of cards where players will get their five held cards. Cannot be seen by other players and the player must use this to their advantage.
Healing Card	A card that contains information about the herbal plant and the molecule responsible for the healing. Shows which sicknesses the card can heal. Should be placed on top of the sickness cards.
Helping Cards	A type of card that has a different use that the player can use to their advantage. A one-time-use card will be thrown to discard a pile of cards after use.
Binat (Relapse) Card	A type of card that has different use per card. Must be used by the player to disadvantage their opponent and prevent them from healing their sicknesses.
Special Card	Can be used by the player whether or not it is their turn to play during each round. Used to counter any action cards used by their opponents. Can be used against itself.

The game mechanics were drafted and underwent a series of revisions. After finalizing the rules, the game was first played by test participants. The following are the general game mechanics of Herbularyo:

1. The game can be played by 2-4 players.
2. Players will shuffle and distribute an equal number of sickness cards. These cards should be placed up front and seen by everyone.
3. Players must shuffle the action cards and distribute five cards to each player. These cards must be hidden by the players from their opponents.
4. The player that has the "Patient card" as one of their sickness cards will be the first player. The rotation of the game is clockwise or to the left of the players.
5. To consider a sickness healed, it needs three healing cards that can heal that specific sickness.
6. The Patient card needs any five healing cards to be considered healed.

7. For each turn, players will have 5 action cards; they only have three moves during their turn, meaning they can use at most 3 action cards before ending their turn.
8. After finishing their turn, the players must draw cards from the deck of action cards to replenish their cards. Drawing a card signifies that they have ended their turn.
9. The first player to heal all his or her sickness will win.

Here are some of the special rules while playing Herbularyo:

1. Players must say the name of the molecule, the name of the herbal plant, and the name of the sickness they are trying to heal when using a healing card.
2. The players must hold five action cards at all times. During their turn, however, the player can only replenish their card after they end their turn.
3. If the player cannot use any of their action cards, the player can discard at most three of their action cards. Discarding cards will be considered a move so if they discarded three cards, they must end their turn.
4. All players share one pile of discarded cards. All the players can see the cards thrown in the discarded pile.
5. If the players run out of action cards before having a winner, they can take the discarded cards, shuffle them, place them down, and use them as the deck of action cards.

As for the card design, two different colors were used for sickness cards and action cards to distinguish the two. Red was used as the cover color for the sickness cards while blue was used for action cards. The action cards are divided further. The healing cards that contain the HP and molecules used light blue as their border color. Each healing card contains one molecule from a specific HP and the sickness that it can heal. Sickness symbols were used so it would be easier for the players to determine which sickness the molecule and plant can heal. The helping card is color green, the Binat (health relapse) card is yellow, and the Special card is color black. Additional cards were added to the deck which contains the different kinds of cards and the summary of the mechanics of the game. These cards were distributed to the players as a game guide but are not part of the game mechanics.

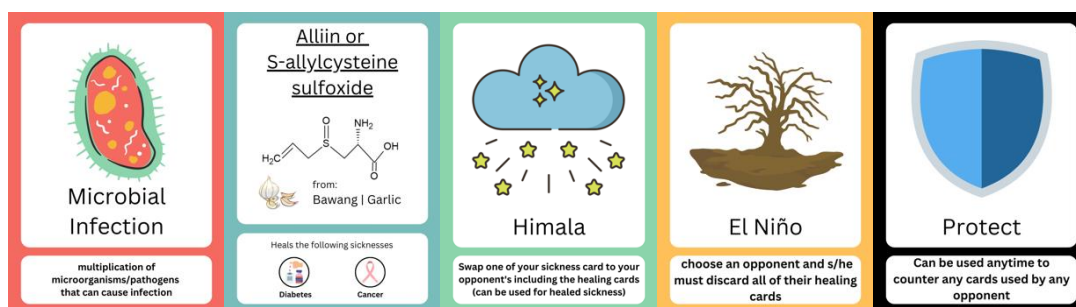


Figure 3. Final Herbularyo Card Designs (left to right): Sickness, Healing, Helping, Binat, and Special Cards.

### *Pretest and Post-test Creation*

A 20-item pre-test was given to each student which is used to determine the prior knowledge of students about HPs. There are two types of questions: one is determining the specific HP and molecule that can heal the specific sickness being asked. The other one is determining the molecule found in a specific HP that is responsible for healing a specific sickness being asked. Similar questions were used for the post-test.

The names of the participants are asked in the questionnaire for recording purposes and to ensure that the pre-test and post-test scores being compared are from the same participants. The researcher individually checked and recorded the answers of each participant in the pretest and post-test to ensure that the data of the participants were protected and only the researcher had access to them.

### *Game Implementation*

Two schools were visited to have the study implemented. In a private school, two sections of Grade 8 students became participants in this study. Two sections of Grade 11 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand students from a public high school also took part in this study.

Each group was then given an intervention where CG was given a video presentation about different HPs and their medicinal properties, while the EG played *Herbularyo*. The CG and EG students were given a 20-item post-test while EG was given an additional evaluation question to determine their overall assessment of the *Herbularyo* game.

In the private school, there was a total of 81 students took part in this study. About 38 students were part of the CG while the remaining 43 students were part of the EG. A quasi-experiment was performed where the participants were not randomly selected but grouped according to their current section. The reason for this was because of the school facilities' availability, student availability, and teachers' willingness to allow the researcher to borrow their period for the specific class. Overall, a quasi-experiment was the most efficient and convenient method for data gathering given the circumstances of the school.

For the public school, 50 students participated. Seventeen (17) students played five games or less and 33 students played more than five games of *Herbularyo*. EG1 played five games or less of *Herbularyo* while EG2 played more than five rounds of *Herbularyo*. The data gathered from EG1 and EG2 were used to determine if there was a significant difference in learning about *Herbularyo* depending on the number of games played.

### *Data Processing and Assessment*

A two-sample t-test was used to determine if the pre-test scores of the groups were comparable with each other. The paired t-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the scores of the pretest and



post-test scores of the students within the same groups. This is to determine how the intervention (video presentation and playing Herbularyo) affected the learning of the participants. Since a quasi-experiment was performed, it was expected that the two groups for each school (CG and EG for the private school; EG1 and EG2 for the public school) are not comparable with each other. Thus, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores of the two groups. It determined which group had better learning based on the intervention given while also considering the covariance between the groups. The covariance considered is the pretest scores.

EG participants evaluated Herbularyo using the Likert scale. SPSS Statistics was used to automatically calculate the statistical treatment used while Google Sheets was utilized to analyze the evaluation scores of the participants.

### *Ethical Consideration*

Ethics clearance was obtained from the Ateneo de Manila University. Assent forms were given to the participants before asking the participants to play the game. They confirmed their participation in the game and allowed their answers for the evaluation form to be used for analysis. It also contained a short explanation of the objectives with the contact details of the researcher.

Only those students who willingly participated in the study were included. The soft copy of the assent form was given to the contact teacher at the respective schools to be distributed to the participating students. The consent form was then printed and signed by the students and their guardians. Some of the personal information such as name was asked for data processing purposes only. Confidential information of the participants was accessed only by the researchers.

After the research is conducted, the data from the participants will be kept for two years. After two years, the raw data from the participants will be deleted permanently, along with the participants' information. Only the summary of their data will be kept. The participant's information will not be used for anything outside the research.

## **Results**

The following are the results of the two-sample t-test, paired t-test, and ANCOVA testing. The null hypothesis of the statistical treatment used assumes that the mean of the two comparing groups is equal while the alternative hypothesis used is that the means are not equal. A confidence level of 95% was used. To determine if there is a significant difference between the two groups, the calculated p-value must be below 0.05 or 5%. As such, the null hypothesis, where the means of the groups are equal, can be rejected.

### Grade 8 Student from a Private School

The following are the results of the statistical treatments used in Grade 8 Students from a private school.

Table 1. Statistical Testing Results for G8 Students from a Private School

	Two-sample t-test	Paired t-test (CG)	Paired t-test (EG)	ANCOVA
H <sub>0</sub>	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$
H <sub>a</sub>	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$
p-value	0.386	CG: 0.901	EG: 0.001	0.006
Interpretation	Do not reject H <sub>0</sub> The two groups are not comparable	Do not reject H <sub>0</sub> There is no significant improvement in learning about HPs in CG	Reject H <sub>0</sub> There is a significant improvement in learning about HPs in EG	Reject H <sub>0</sub> There is a significant difference in learning about HPs in EG than in CG

The p-values for the two-sample t-test and paired t-test of the CG are 0.386 and 0.901, respectively, which are above the 0.05 significance level. On the other hand, the paired t-test for the EG is 0.001 which is below the 0.05 significance level. Similarly, the ANCOVA p-value is below 0.05, which has a value of 0.006.

### Grade 11 STEM Student from a Public School

The following are the results of the statistical treatments used in Grade 11 STEM students from a public school.

Table 2. Statistical Testing Results for G11 STEM Students from a Public School

	Two-sample t-test	Paired t-test (EG1)	Paired t-test (EG2)	ANCOVA
H <sub>0</sub>	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$	$\mu_1 = \mu_2$
H <sub>a</sub>	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$	$\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$
p-value	0.681	EG1: 0.000	EG2: 0.000	0.188
Interpretation	Do not reject H <sub>0</sub> The groups are not comparable with each other	Reject H <sub>0</sub> There is a significant improvement in learning about HPs	Reject H <sub>0</sub> There is a significant improvement in learning about HPs	Do not reject H <sub>0</sub> There is no significant difference in learning about HPs in terms of the number of games played

As for the results of the Grade 11 STEM students from a public high school, the two-sample t-test is 0.681, which is above the 0.05 significance level value. On the other hand, both the EG1 and EG2 have a p-value of 0.000. The ANCOVA result, however, has a value of 0.188.

### *Game Evaluation*

Table 3. Summary Evaluation of the Participants on Herbularyo

Evaluation	Values	Description
Mechanics and Structure	4.55	Strongly Agree
Pedagogy	3.97	Agree
Preliminaries	4.05	Agree
Feedback	4.44	Strongly Agree
Overall	4.25	Strongly Agree

The students who played Herbularyo gave the game an overall rating of 4.25 out of 5. Mechanics and structure have the highest evaluation of 4.55 while pedagogy has the lowest rating of 3.97. It is followed closely by preliminaries, having a 4.05 rating. Lastly, feedback has a rating of 4.44.

### *Observations and Student Feedback*

Some of the additional observations by the researcher, while the participants were playing the game, are as follows:

- Students were enthusiastic while playing the game.
- Students were actively asking questions about the use of different action cards in the game.
- Students asked to have a copy of the cards so they could play it in their leisure time.
- Students scrambled for the limited deck of cards I gave away since a lot of the students were asking for a copy.

Moreover, here is some of the feedback directly obtained from the students after the Herbularyo game was conducted:

- Students verbally expressed that they genuinely enjoyed the game.
- Some students stated that they found the game challenging but enjoyed it nonetheless.
- A student suggested selling the Herbularyo.

## **Discussion**

The results from the two-sample t-test from the grade 8 students from a private high school showed that the pre-test scores from the CG and EG are not equal or comparable ( $p=0.386$ , see Table 1). This was expected as a

quasi-experiment was conducted and participants in each group were not randomly selected. The grouping was based on their existing section in their school. ANCOVA was performed with their pretest scores as covariates to account for this difference.

For the paired t-test, CG shows no improvement in learning about HPs ( $p=0.901$ ). This means that the video presentation was ineffective in teaching the students about HPs. On the other hand, EG shows great improvement in learning after playing Herbulario ( $p=0.001$ ). The p-value for ANCOVA is 0.006, meaning there is a difference in information retention after the intervention. Based on the paired t-test results, EG performed better than CG, indicating that between the two interventions used, playing Herbulario improves the learning and familiarity of students with HPs.

As for the Grade 11 STEM students from a public high school, the two-sample t-test results of EG1 and EG2 have a p-value of 0.681 (see Table 2). Like the previous school, the two groups are not comparable since a quasi-experiment was performed. As for the paired t-test, both groups have a p-value of 0.000, which means that the two groups both significantly learned about HPs from playing Herbulario. The ANCOVA ( $p=0.188$ ), however, showed insufficient evidence to suggest that the number of games played significantly differs in the amount of information recalled.

As for the evaluation, Herbulario gained an overall rating of 4.25 (see Table 3) which corresponds to a “strongly agree” rating. The mechanics and structure (4.55), together with feedback (4.44), are the strong points of the game where Herbulario effectively engages the players, promotes learning, and fosters learning about HPs. Pedagogy (3.97) had the lowest rating which can be attributed to the difficulty of completely healing all the Sickness cards given to them and how the game was also based on their luck in getting good cards. Preliminaries (4.05) only had an “agree” rating which may be attributed to the complexity of the structure and pronunciation of the molecules. Although there was a lot of information about HPs that were included in Herbulario, the game shows promising results as a viable educational board game.

## Conclusion

The statistical treatments showed that Herbulario was an effective tool in teaching players about the healing properties of different HPs found in the Philippines. The results of Grade 8 students from a private school showed that the students learned and retained more information about HPs while playing Herbulario compared students who had video presentations. In the Grade 11 STEM students from a public school, the results showed that there was no significant difference in learning based on the number of games played. When evaluating the game using the criteria by Tuomisto and Aksela, Herbulario got an overall rating of strongly agree indicating that this game is an effective tool in teaching players about HPs and their healing properties, not just in improving the retention of information about the HPs but also in terms of playability, fairness, and enjoyment of the players. Overall, Herbulario not only taught the students information about HPs, the molecules found in

them, and the sickness they can heal but also allowed players to learn so much information in an innovative and fun way together with their peers.

## Recommendations

Instead of performing a quasi-experiment, randomly selecting the participants for each group can be performed instead. Moreover, having the same background such as year level for the CG, EG1, and EG2 can be performed to have an accurate comparison of how playing Herbularyo, and the number of games played can affect the learning of the participants about HPs. These were assessed on separate occasions from different schools and year levels for this study. Focused group discussions (FGDs) can also be utilized to understand further the players' perception of the game, and how effective it is as an educational car game. As for the mechanics, it can be improved by adding an expansion pack incorporating information on how to use or prepare HPs to treat certain sicknesses.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the Office of the Admission and Aid of the Ateneo de Manila University for providing the funding for this study. We also would like to thank the following for making our presentation possible:

- University Research Council of the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU)
- American Chemical Society (ACS) and ACS –Ateneo de Manila University Chapter
- Dr. Raphael A. Guerrero, School of Science and Engineering (SOSE) of ADMU
- Mayor Marcy and Cong Ma-An Teodoro, Local Government Leaders of Marikina City

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## Reconceptualizing Multitasking in Synchronous Online Learning through the Lens of Merleau-Ponty's Embodiment Theory

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**Abstract:** Multitasking which has been reported to occur more frequently in online learning classes compared to traditional face-to-face settings has been found to have negative effects on students' learning. Albeit extensive research has been carried out on the effect of multitasking in education, there is scant research that sheds light on multitasking behaviors and the reasons behind these multitasking behaviors in the context of online learning. Hence, to bridge the gap, the study drawn on the lens of Merleau-Ponty's notion of lived body and the intertwined relationship between the body and objects and others in the context of 27 Vietnamese university students from the Mekong Delta. Data was collected from six focused group interviews. The finding of this paper showed that multitasking is a result of the intertwinements between students as lived bodies and environmental factors, including objects and factors in carrying out non-academic purposes at students' synchronous learning time at their physical learning space. This study adds nuance to the existing literature on students' multitasking in online learning by shedding light on the causes of students' multitasking behaviors through the lens of the Merleau-Ponty's phenomenon. Based on the findings, several implications have been proposed to enhance students' online learning experiences.

**Keywords:** multitasking, non-academic activities, online learning, physical learning space, learning environment

**Citation:** Le, M.T.T. & Tran, K.V. (2024). Reconceptualizing Multitasking in Synchronous Online Learning through the Lens of Merleau-Ponty's Embodiment Theory. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 700-711), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

One significant aspect of students' engagement in online learning is multitasking, which refers to performing at least two activities with different purposes at the same time (Gazzaley & Rosen, 2016). Lately some studies have confirmed that students in online classes have experienced more multitasking than brick and mortar classes (Aivaz & Teodorescu, 2022; Lepp et al., 2019). Multitasking has been claimed to bring harmful effects for



students learning process since it brings interruption (Aivaz & Teodorescu, 2022) and influences on students' cognitive load (Sweller et al., 1998).

Recognizing the significance of having a framework of influential factors of multitasking, Zhou and Deng (2022) have also established the framework for media multitasking in education. However, online students from their own physical learning space may experience more interruptions from other factors besides media. Hence, there is still a missing piece of research on providing understanding of the underlying reasons of students' multitasking behaviours while participating in online sessions.

To fill this gap, this paper draws on Merleau-Ponty' notion of body and the intertwinements between the body and objects and others to gain insight into students' multitasking behaviours in their own learning space. In his perspective, the lived body understands the environment and with its understanding the lived body can act skilfully with the situation provided by objects or other people to act toward the goals that are important to the body at that moment. The authors of the paper proposed that the participants in the study could conduct non-academic activities with the non-academic objects or tasks required by surrounding people while learning online. Therefore, this research sought to answer the research question: How do the students engage in nonacademic activities while simultaneously fulfilling online learning requirements? This study adds nuance to the existing body of research on students' multitasking in online learning by providing insight into multitasking behaviors and factors that drives students to engage in multitasking from a theoretical framework. By addressing the gap, the findings provide insight into how to support and engage students in online learning.

## Literature Review

### Definition of Multitasking

Multitasking involves undertaking more than one task simultaneously during the same period of time to reach different goals (Gazzaley & Rosen, 2016). Actually, it is possible to conduct two activities simultaneously without effort such as walking and talking when comes to things that we can do automatically, but normally our "conscious mind" can only fully focus on one action (Bannister & Remenyi, 2009, p. 2). In addition, according to the cognitive load theory, working memory is crucial to the learning process, but it has a finite capacity (Sweller et al., 1998); hence, multitasking can significantly burden the cognitive process of multitaskers. Therefore, it is possible that multitasking is harmful for learning since when multitasking, they experience interruption, according to Aivaz and Teodorescu (2022). In general, student's multitasking can be defined as student's conducting at least one activity which interrupted or distracted the learning activity.

#### *Some interrupting activities in learning*

Students' engagement with non-academic activities alongside learning activities has been well-documented through both current non-empirical and empirical research.

Dontre (2021) who also synthesised a significant quantity of prior related literatures concluded that smartphones and social media are the primary technological distractions on learners' online learning. In the same vein, after summarising related studies, Wang, (2022) proposed another type of distractions, including the phrase 'unexpected interruption' which is defined as some events that "immediately catch all of people' attention and raise the level of their excitement, such as someone unexpected visit" (p.7). He also defined 'consistent interference' is a distraction which occurs when "visual information or auditory information, such as background music, web page advertisements, or a smartphone in sigh" consistently attracts all your attention (p.8).

Lepp et al. (2019) had a discussion with group of 17 students and finalised a list including nine activities that students usually do while learning online and offline, including "sending text messages, email, visiting online social networking sites [e.g., Instagram, Twitter], surfing the Internet for purposes unrelated to class, watching videos, playing video games, listening to music, talking with friends, scribbling absentmindedly" (p.4). This list has been used to compare the extent student multitasking between online class and offline class among their college students. Prabawangi et al. (2021) found that 226 undergraduate students from four cities and seven universities in Indonesia multitasked in their synchronous online learning. Their popular activities are doing daily activities, using social media, driving, and watching movies. Likewise, Gonzáles-Gutierrez et al. (2022) have employed the lists of multitasking, such as communicating through social networks, watching TV or videos, reading non-academic topics on the Internet, playing video games, and chatting with friends' to measure how multitasking affects 264 university business major students' self-efficacy for self-regulated learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico. In the same vein, Aivaz and Teodorescu (2022) found that their Romanian college students engage more with non-academic activities on digital devices in online classes with convenient sampling method. Finally, two surveys conducted in Philippines by Bahian et al. (2020) and Baticulon et al., (2021) reported that performing household chores while studying online are popular students' activities that distracts them from learning online during the covid time.

In general, from these related studies, the popular students' non-academic activities that have happened at the same time with learning online are using the Internet and technological devices for non-academic purposes (e.g., playing games, listening to music, checking email, etc), performing household responsibilities, and other unexpected distractions that cause students full attention (e.g., unexpected visitors).

#### *The conceptual model of multitasking in education*

Zhou and Deng (2022) have synthesized nine empirical papers from 2009 to 2020 and proposed three reasons behind media multitasking behavior in education based a framework of Technological-Personal-Environmental Model (TPE) by Jiang et al. (2010), including technological based predictor, personal based predictor and environmental based predictor. According to Zhou and Deng (2022)'s findings, technological factors includes the habit of using technology, personal based determination consists of multitasking preference, self-efficacy, physiological conditions, mood, motivation and engagement, and environmental factor contains course quality

and social norms. With the introduction of the framework, this is the first study which presents a holistic understanding of the reasons for media multitasking.

However, as presented earlier, students have experienced distractions not only from media but also from other things and individuals available at their own physical learning space. In the sphere of education, the physical learning environment has been considered a significant factor. It directly affects student's motivation in active participation in learning activities, personal behavior and school attendance (Asiyai, 2014), learner's learning satisfaction (Zandvliet & Fraser, 2005) and facilitating students' learning and social engagement (Nyabando & Evanshen, 2021). Recently, Khurana (2022) has argued that schools need designed their physical space in accordance with curriculum and enhance the positive relation amongst educators, learners and the learning environment to enhance learning by exploring the school buildings in India, Ireland, and the United States which represent the relationship between physical spaces and curriculum, instruction, materials, and assessments. In this respect, a good learning environment should include elements that support students learning activities.

Therefore, we argued that these understanding of the determinants provided by Zhou and Deng (2022) cannot fully explain all of the factors that lead students' multitasking at their physical learning space at their online learning time. Related studies have found several distractions from students' physical learning environment. However, lack of research shed light on the reasons of students multitasking this issue under a theoretical framework and the popular nonacademic activities students have done at their learning time. Therefore, this study employed the embodiment theory of Merleau-Ponty to holistically get insight into the gaps.

#### *The embodiment theory*

##### *The notion of lived body*

Merleau-Ponty is probably known as the most famous phenomenologist to have focused his attention to developing a phenomenology of the body (Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2005). In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, the body is perceived as the central key, which is explicitly stated by his saying, "I am my body" (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. 231). Regarding his perspective, there is the unity of mind and body in conducting intentional purposes (Matthews, 2002), which is impossible to separate between mind and body. Also, there is the harmony relationship between goals and behaviours and this signifies the understanding of the lived body in its world; and one example of the body understanding of the environment is habits and when it comes to habits, the body adjusts to the message intended (Merleau-Ponty, 2005). All in all, our lived body has ability to understand situations that emerge in its space and act in a harmony way with these situations.

##### *The relationship between body and objects and other bodies*

In Merleau-Ponty's view, lived body is only in existence in its relationships with objects or subjects in a situation that matters to it (Matthews, 2002). In the interaction between the body and the world, the body

follows the solicit of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). In this sense, human beings might act in harmony with objects and other bodies surrounding within situation(s) that is important to them.

Regarding the incorporation between lived body and objects for its purpose, this relationship is described as a “drawing”, which reveals that the meaning of the objects can be shown through the body’s behaviour and the body’s intention is clear through the harmony action with the objects (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. 152). In this regard, the objects have vital roles as “soliciting” our bodies and it is our bodies that adapt the objects intended meaning (Diprose & Reynolds, 2008, p. 186).

Moreover, he also mentioned the interaction between body and others through intercorporate communication. Specifically, the body can make another “speak, think and become what he is but never would have been by himself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.19). This harmony between bodies in a situation has been repeated one more time in the phenomenology of perception as “my body and the others are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon.” (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. 412).

In conclusion, objects or subjects presented in the place situated by lived body might have roles as solicitations which defines what the body is. This has been shared by Gallagher and Zahavi in way that “The environment calls forth a specific body-style so that the body works with the environment and is included in it. The posture that the body adopts in a situation is its way of responding to the environment” (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008, p.138). In this regard, we argue that online learning students are lived bodies situated in their own physical learning space which comprises situations caused by objects or subjects surrounding, and with the understanding of their environment these lived bodies can act in harmony with objects or people of their purposes. Therefore, we would like to employ this theory to explore the behaviours of our participants at their learning time and space through their reflection.

## **Research methodology**

### **Research design**

This study was shaped by a constructivist worldview which refers to a philosophical belief about the world and the nature of research that researchers integrated into their research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to constructivists, individual’s knowledge of the world is constructed in their contexts where they live and work and via social interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Crotty, 1998). Therefore, it is vital to focus on the participant’s perspective in context to understand their specific context. In this study, we interacted with Vietnamese students to gain insight into the non-academic activities that they encountered while learning online. Therefore, the constructivist paradigm is adopted as a guide because it is aligned with the purpose of the research.

The constructivist’s worldview manifests qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2009),

which enables researchers to understand the way people constructed their insight into their world and experience they have in the world (Merriam, 2009). In addition to this, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological lens of intertwined relationship between the lived body and the world, this study aimed to seek an explanation of Vietnamese university students' multitasking while attending their synchronous online classes. Hence, this study applied phenomenological qualitative inquiry.

### *Participants*

The participants were 27 (12 males and 15 females) Vietnamese students majoring in different disciplines from four universities and two colleges in the southwest of Vietnam. Their ages ranged from 19 to 22. They have had experience with synchronous online learning since COVID 19. These participants were selected based on a purposive sampling method because it allows us to select individuals that are the most familiar with the research topic, meaning that they would become good samples for our study (Patton, 1990). First, at the end of the semester, we shared our research with our students and invited them to participate in our study. After selecting our first group of participants, we asked our students to introduce us to their friends who had experienced the same online learning mode from other neighbouring institutions. After having interviews with six groups of 27 participants, we had a sense that we would get the same expected information from other participants. This means that the information became saturated, so we stopped at the total number of 27 informants.

### *Data collection*

The data of this study was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with six focus groups, including four groups (five participants), one group (four participants) and one group (three participants). The focus group was applied in this study as it is considered as a more productive method of collecting individuals' viewpoints than other ones (Barbour, 2014). This is because group discussion encourages participants' brainstorming that allows them to think and are inspired and challenge each other to express their viewpoints regarding the issue (Dörnyei & Griffee, 2010). The focus group interviews were held online via Google Meet. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and was recorded. The questions for the interview focused on two main themes including participants' demographic information and the non-academic activities that students perform when attending virtual classes at their physical learning environments (e.g., What activities do you do while attending online classes?). The interviews were undertaken comfortably at their own places via Google Meet. We started with easy questions asking about their demographic information to make the participants feel comfortable and confident (Denscombe, 2010). Consequently, the data could be fruitfully generated (Gill et al., 2008). Vietnamese, the participant's mother tongue was used in the interview to make it easy and comfortable for the students to share their experience. Before conducting the interviews, we sent our research statement and consent forms to all participants to thoroughly explain the purposes of the research and sought their participation. Once their consent forms were obtained, we contacted them to schedule the interviews. During the interview, we also reminded the participants that they did not have to answer any questions that they found uncomfortable. Additionally, they could withdraw their participation without any consequences at any stages of the research

process.

### *Data analysis*

The study followed three analysing phases including data preparation for analysis, coding and data representation proposed by (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Additionally, it applied a thematic analysis which is a process that encodes qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998) by searching across a data set to capture repeated patterns of meaning (themes) associated to the overall research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Firstly, the data from the six focus groups were organized and prepared for analysis. We transcribed the interview recordings in Vietnamese to prevent the meaning from being lost if the data are analysed in a foreign language (O’leary, 2004). In addition to the transcription, key themes and sub-themes related to non-academic activities were created based on the literature review, which also were the answers to the research questions (O’leary, 2004). Secondly, we read the transcripts intensively to obtain a general sense of the data. While reading the transcripts, participants' emergent ideas related to subthemes were captured as a unit of data, a potential answer to the research question (Merriam, 2009). These elements were then manually categorized into the themes. The process of coding theme and subtheme was carried out independently among the two researchers and we cross checked and discussed our coding results together to ensure the credibility of our interpretation of our results. Finally, the findings were translated and presented in English. Our translation was proofread by our colleague who has taught English -Vietnamese translation course for more than five years.

## **Findings**

### **The harmony interaction between the body and objects which were irrelevant to learning purposes**

While virtually joining learning activity, 23 out of 27 students reported their engagement with internet and technological devices for non-academic activities. They mostly emerged in social media. For example,

*What I did while joining online class was surf Facebook, Tiktok, and responding messages on Zalo. Even I surfed Facebook when I had no notifications* (Lan in group 1)

Besides surfing for information and response to messages, watching movies and listening to music with the electronic devices are popular activities online. For instance, Xuan in group 4 stated that “*I sometimes watched online films (when learning online)*”. Na in group 2 claimed that “*I enjoyed listening to music while working in group with friends.*” Besides, they received phone calls from shippers, then went out and skipped a part the lesson as a result. For example, Nhung in group 6 claimed that “*When shippers called, I left the lessons to go out to get the package. So, I missed a part of the lessons, which made me not understand the lessons*”. She also commented that her phone notification sound made it impossible for her to pay attention to learning online. She illustrated that “*while learning, I paid attention to my phone ringing instead of the lecture*”.

10 out of 27 participants reported that they actively partook household chores while they learned online. They reported that they were sometimes doing them while listening to the lecture in the online class or completely leaving their learning devices at their own room to perform household chores. For instance, Hoai in group 3



recalled that “*I couldn’t help doing housework, I felt ashamed of letting my parents do it themselves. These chores needed me. [...] I usually stayed home alone, therefore, I had to do all household chores like cooking while learning online*”. Like Hoai, Thinh in group 3 reported that he had to do the laundry and dried clothes outside, and he had to finish these chores in the morning because he had to do other stuff in the afternoon.

*The intercorporeal communication between the body and other bodies who provided them with non- academic tasks.*

10 out of 27 participants claimed that they had unexpected visitors. They can invite students to go out for more relaxing tasks. For example,

*My friends traveled far away from their home to my house and invited me to hang out with them. I had to accept their invitation, but I still attended the online class with my phone and wore earphones to listen to the lectures. Whenever my teacher called me, I stopped my motorbike to answer my lecturer’s questions. Honestly, I could not learn anything in that case.* (Hoai in group 3)

These people might need some help from the students. For example,

*My grandparents nearby sometimes called me for some help, I left the room with my online class there.* (Thang in group 4).

*Once I was taking in my exam. My father entered my room and asked me something. I felt embarrassed.* (Hieu in group 6)

Tram in group 5 recalled: “*One day, when I was learning, my mother needed things urgently, but no one else at home with her except me. So, she asked me to go to the convenience store nearby to buy them for her. I went to the store with my phones (with virtual classes) inside pocket. I still listened to (the lecture) [...] after that I asked my classmates what the lecturer was talking [...] Once my house was selling grapefruits. My father displayed them in the front door. When someone asked. I left my laptop [online class] in my room and went out to sell them.*” Furthermore, Hue in group 1 and Dat group 2 shared the similar story when they had to take care of their younger sisters while learning online.

Besides, 10 out of 27 experienced noises from surrounding people.

*Once my neighbours’ quarrel was very noisy, which made it impossible for me to listen to my lecturer.* (Dat in group 2)

*Once I listened to the rhythm and lyrics of my favourite song played by my neighbours, I automatically sang along and forgot my online classes.* (Hieu in group 6)

*My [next door] neighbour was a welder who worked very noisily [...] the means of transportation went over (my house) was noisy, too.* (Nam in group 1)

## Discussion

We found that online students were surrounded with objects and people supported for non-academic tasks, which led them to multitasking. Multitasking arises from surrounding object including technological devices



and internet are consistent with previous findings (Dontre, 2021; Gonzáles-Gutierrez et al., 2022; Lepp et al., 2019). In addition, the unexpected access of other people might have influence on students' online learning engagement which confirm the power of the other people appeared at students learning site on the student's behavior by Wang (2022). Last but not least, doing household chores were carried out in students' learning process which concurs with findings by Bahian et al. (2020) and Baticulon et al.(2021). This finding emphasizes the significant roles of physical environment on students' learning which are supported by previous scholars, such as Nyabando and Evanshen (2021) and Khurana (2022). Our finding has added that when these environmental factors are important to students surround them in physical learning environment, these factors can attract students and cause multitasking behaviors.

Based on the findings, it is possible for objects and other people for irrelevant learning purposes at their physical learning might cause interruptions on students' engagement with virtual learning. Since the positive prospect of online learning in the future, it is necessary to pay attention to develop learning environment, especially in students' physical places when they join online classes. We suggest that students should create the physical learning space that supports learning. In this regard, students should build up their own learning space in accordance with the seven criteria: choosing your favourite space, eliminating disturbances, making their places comfortable but not too much, having good lightning, being easy to access to enough necessary supplies, adding decoration or artwork or things that maintain their learning motivation, and keeping this place for only learning purpose (Khan Academy, n.d.). In addition, it is noticeable that one student added that the participants and her/his family considered that learning is important, so they did not do anything to distract his/her learning activities. In this case, this participant successfully engaged in online virtual learning space because learning activities matter to him and to his family members. In this case, students' self-regulated learning strategies are necessary for successfully harmony with online learning activities. Therefore, students should improve their self-regulation learning strategies (Dontre, 2021).

Besides, educators should consider the impact of the environmental factors on students' concentration on online learning tasks to conduct more productive virtual learning engagement by minimizing the side effects caused by multitasking. For example, in teaching reading (Ekuni et al., 2022) suggest utilizing retrieval practice (answering multiterm or fact questions about the texts), which may potentially limit the negative effects of multitasking.

### **Limitation and Recommendation**

Due to the purposive sampling method and the fact that this is a cross sectional study, the findings from our study might be limited in its generalization to other contexts. Future research should be conducted on larger scales to provide more persuasive explanation for students' multitasking at their physical learning space. Another limitation is that the self - reported data. It is necessary for further study to be conducted with more data sources to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

## Conclusion

In the current context, the participants engaged in the non-activities with things and people surrounding them at their online learning time, which made them multitask. Through the lens of embodiment theory, multitasking results from the intertwinement between the body and the world, including objects and other bodies to achieve the body's intention purpose. The findings from our study suggested that the physical learning places at students' own homes should be improved and the understanding the causes of such behaviours through the lens of the intertwinement between the body and people and things can benefit students in preparing more suitable learning places to optimize their learning space for online learning. In the same vein, these findings can provide insight into students' behavior which encourages educators to plan their activities more productively in online learning.


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## Comparison of Performance of Conventional Controller and Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller (ASMC) for Induction Motor Drives

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**Abstract:** In most industrial applications, an induction motor is used because of its ruggedness, reliability, and relatively low cost. However, a control scheme is required for the induction motor because it is highly non-linear in dynamic structure and intense in dynamic interaction. Thus, robustness for electrical fault perturbations, load disturbances, speed variation, and parameter uncertainties is needed. The primary focus of this paper is to accomplish the robustness of induction motor drives based on the adaptive sliding mode control (ASMC) algorithm. The ASMC algorithm is based on the conventional robust sliding mode controller with the adaptive switching gain control strategy and discontinuous sigmoid functions to eliminate the undesirable chattering phenomenon. The developed ASMC is utilized for the outer speed and inner current loop, emphasizing two standard PI controllers. Moreover, two control loops of the inner current loop and the outer speed loop in this research are employed from the IFOC structure to drive the three-phase induction motor. The simulation study and numerical design are carried out using PSIM electronics simulation software Version 11. The features of an ASMC are compared with conventional SMC and classical PI controllers. As a result, high-performance control of AC induction motor is achieved by providing effectiveness and robustness regarding overshoot, undershoot, rise time, fall time, and chattering for different operating conditions compared to conventional controllers.

**Keywords:** adaptive sliding mode control, chattering, induction motor, PSIM simulation, robust control

**Citation:** Patakor, F. A., Salleh, Z., & Mohd Aziri, M.H. (2024). Comparison of Performance of Conventional Controller and Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller (ASMC) for Induction Motor Drives. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 711-722), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Over recent years, the application of induction motors in the industry cannot be denied. Induction motor applications, such as centrifugal pumps, compressors, elevators, and punching presses, are vast. It is extensively used due to easy maintenance requirements, high reliability, and lower cost for variable-speed operation in broad areas (Wenping Cao; Abid Ali Shah Bukhari; Lassi Aarniovuoro 2019). In addition, industrial applications have become more attractive, especially with advances in microprocessors and power electronics as a modern electrical drive for high-performance characteristics such as robust to parameter variation of the system, inexpensive maintenance with free implementation operation, small overshoot, and steady-state error with the fast transient response (Jahns 2017).

Classical control techniques such as the Proportional-Integral (PI) and Proportional-Integral-Derivative (PID) controllers are commonly used to regulate torque, current, and speed, respectively, in an induction motor. However, these classical control techniques contribute to non-optimal and modest performance in variable speed and position control (Boukhalfa et al. 2019). Therefore, these limitations are solved by using intelligence or adaptive control algorithms such as Fuzzy Logic Controller (FLC), Sliding Mode Controller (SMC), and Artificial Neural Network (ANN). Accordingly, the FLC provides good dynamic performances and robustness to parameter variations, while the ANN accommodates the complicated of arbitrary and nonlinearity (Bouhoune et al. 2017). On the other hand, SMC is excellent for system order rejection and disturbance rejection and is easy to implement (Bagheri et al. 2023).

Generally, SMC has been widely studied and successfully implemented in speed controller applications in AC motor drives (Y. Zhang et al. 2021), (Fereka, Zerikat, and Belaidi 2018), (André and Loro 2020) and other applications such as in power supplies (Fei, Wang, and Fang 2022) and mobile robots (Xie et al. 2021), (Goswami and Padhy 2018). However, conventional SMC algorithms are striving to surmount the chattering phenomenon. Essentially, the associated problems of chattering effects are highly undesirable because of the large switching gain typically applied to handle uncertainties such as external load disturbances and parameter variations (Shao et al. 2021), (Tian et al. 2021).

Chattering problems from the classical SMC method are technically prompted with the integral SMC by modifying the control function. Therefore, the conventional control law is strictly disposed for the operation, and the modified control function is dynamically obtained from the discontinuous control function to the continuous control function, respectively (X. Zhang, Liu, and Zhu 2014). Undoubtedly, the classical SMC is unstable due to control precision for smoothness control performances. Consequently, the control strategy significantly relies upon the proposed adaptive switching gain control strategy.

Therefore, to overcome these inconveniences, this research introduces a new algorithm with a slight modification of classical sliding mode control. For that reason, one variable of gain depends on the system state to reduce the

chattering effect and give robustness for the control performance of induction motor drives.

## Sliding Mode Controller

### IFOC of Induction Motor Drives

Generally, control features are isolated from two loops, such as the speed controller of the outer loop and the current controller of the inner loop. The speed controller will process the error from the contrasting result of the rotor speed command,  $\omega_r^*$ , with the rotor speed,  $\omega_r$ . Subsequently,  $i_{ds}^*$  is the nominal value of the flux command for each speed reference, considered the right command of the rotor flux. Where  $i_{qs}^*$  is outlined as the current reference of the stator q-axis. Conversely, transformations of Park and Clark from both of the d-q axis current references are technically compared from the current feedback of the motor.

Figure 1 shows the indirect field-oriented control block diagram of the study. The speed controller uses adaptive sliding mode. At the same time, the inner loop of PI current controllers will be processed as the error signal of the voltage command. Then, the switching signal of the Voltage Source Inverter (VSI) will be generated from the Inverse Park Transformation by converting the voltage into two-phase and fed to Space Vector Pulse Width Modulation (SVPWM). Notably, the current model is based on a field-oriented control technique. So, the motor speed is technically controlled by the stator winding current.

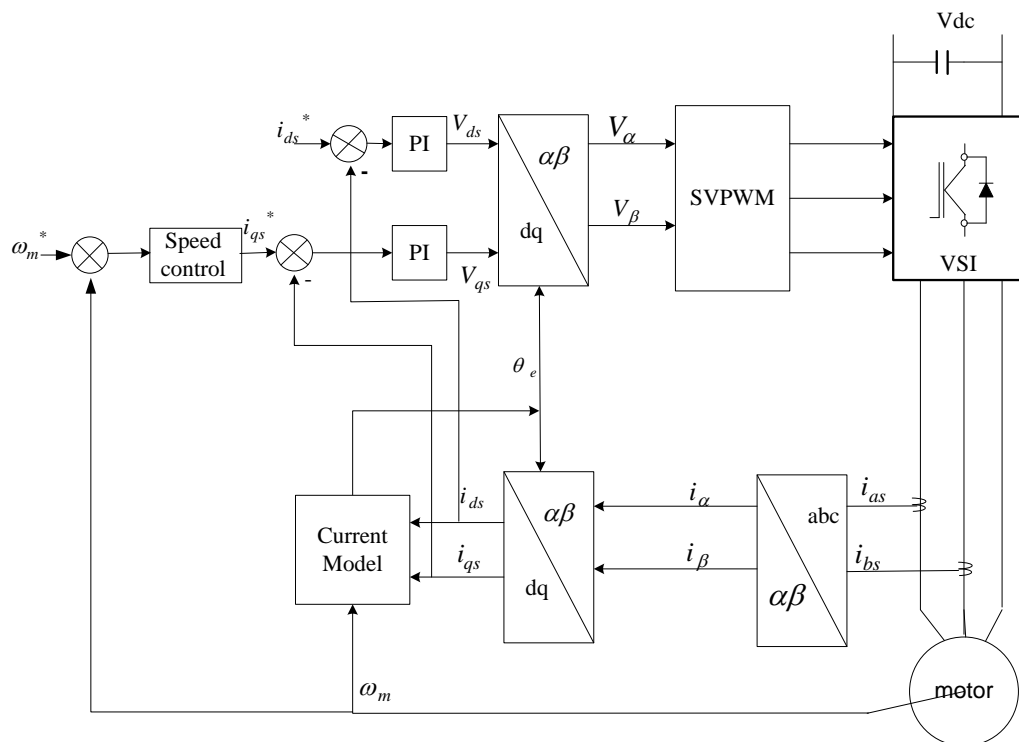


Figure 1. The block diagram of Indirect Field Oriented Control (IFOC)

### Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller

The advancement of the sliding mode control strategy for suppression of the chattering phenomenon is clarified in this section. The control law from Equation (1) supplants the signum function in conventional sliding mode to the sigmoid function that considering as:

$$\text{sigm}(\rho', S) = \frac{2}{\pi} \arctan\left(\frac{S}{\rho'}\right) \quad (1)$$

Technically, the control method based on discontinuous function is disposed of the entire operation by implementing with fast sigmoid function. Where  $\rho'$  is approximates the boundary layer thickness from a small value with the positive constant. Thus, the modified control algorithm obtains the boundary layer based on the sigmoid function as follows:

$$\rho' = \rho_1 [(1 - |\text{sigm}(\rho', S)|) + \alpha_1] \quad (2)$$

The proposed boundary layer's natural behaviour is adjusted by the system conditions to be progressively proficient when dealing with vulnerabilities. In particular,  $S(t)=0$  is the sliding control variable that will be pointed to the origin when vulnerabilities occur in the control system. Then,  $S(t)$  is the specific value that will be changed to the origin when the control system is normally stable. On the other hand,  $\rho'$  is the constant boundary layer with maximum setting and also pointed to the origin when there are no vulnerabilities in the framework of the sliding variable. Meanwhile, the adaptive switching gain is designed, to be proportional to the absolute sigmoid function as:

$$\beta' = \beta_1 (|\text{sigm}(\rho', S)| + \alpha_2) \quad (3)$$

Where  $\beta_1$  and  $\alpha_2$  are considered constant and sufficient for operating a sliding mode, occasionally,  $\beta'$  will be expanded prior to vulnerabilities in the frameworks or will remain at the satisfactory value of switching gain when in normal conditions. So, the adaptive switching gain practically relies on vulnerabilities by adequately limiting the boundary layer in the entire operating control framework and diminishing the chattering phenomenon. In. Thus,  $i_{qs}^*$  is the stator  $q$ -axis of the current reference will be written as:

$$i_{qs}^* = K e(t) - \beta' \cdot \text{sigm}(\rho', S) - \frac{a}{b} \omega_m^* \quad (4)$$

The switching gain and the boundary layer thickness are tuned to nearly approach the zero error of tracking speed performances. Along these lines, the  $\beta'$  shows a varying switching gain that contingently upon vulnerabilities of the framework and  $\rho'$  displays the sigmoid function by varying boundary layers to viably wipe out the input of the chattering phenomenon, respectively.

## Results and Discussion

The simulation study is carried out by using PSIM 64-bit professional version 11 software. This software contains an embeddable C/C++ that is significant for dynamic system simulation, motor drives, and power electronics which makes it easy for hardware implementation. Fig. 2 shows the main system model of IFOC for three-phase induction motor drives in PSIM software.



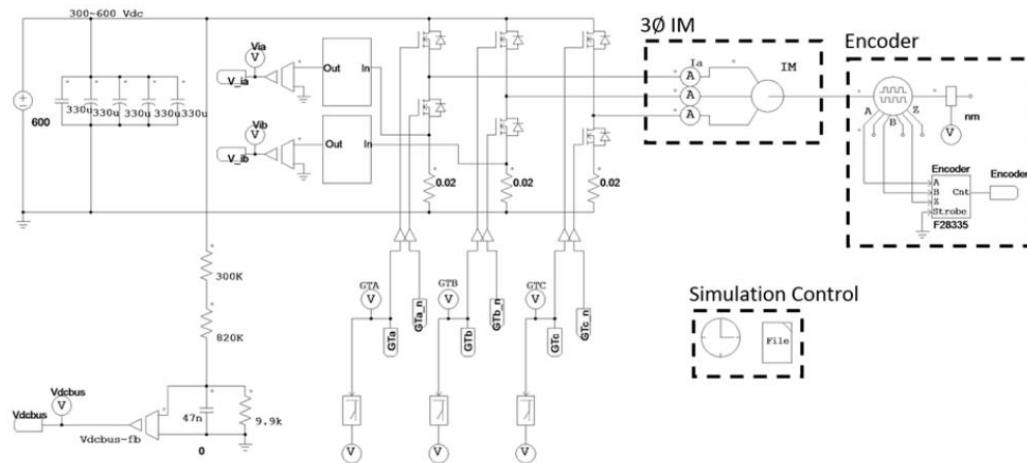


Figure 2. Main system model of IFOC for three-phase induction motor drives

*Comparison Performance in Simulation Environment*

To shows the effectiveness of this study, two tests were conducted which perform the variety of speed under no-load condition and loaded condition. The motor parameter of the induction motor is tabulated in Table 1. Meanwhile, the simulation cases are observed in term of speed commands as shown in Table 2.

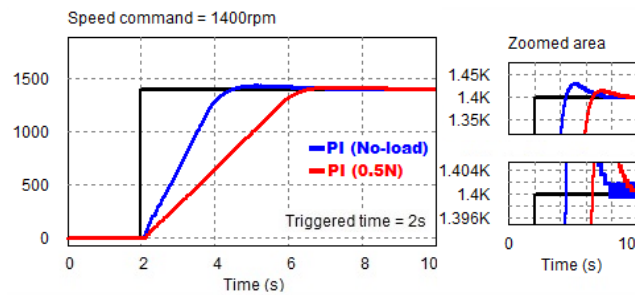
Table 1. Induction Motor Parameters

Parameters	Specifications
$R_s$ (stator)	11.05 $\Omega$
$L_s$ (stator)	6.11 H
$R_r$ (rotor)	0.32 $\Omega$
$L_r$ (rotor)	0.32 H
$L_m$ (magnetizing)	0.029H
No. of Pole	4
Moment of Inertia	0.91 kg.m <sup>2</sup>

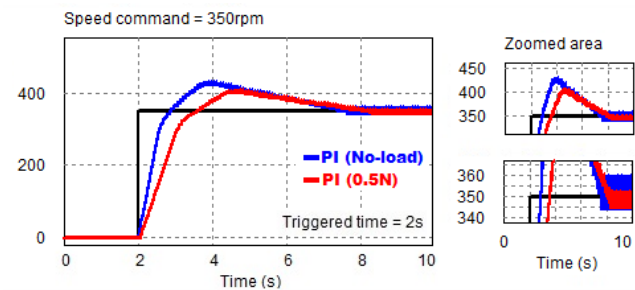
Table 2. Simulation Cases

Cases	Speed Commands (rpm)
1	Full rated speed =1400
2	Low rated speed =350

The specific test for PI speed controller with no-load and a load of 0.5N at speed command of full rate 1400rpm and low rated speed command at 350rpm when at 2s of triggered time. Technically, the PI speed controller is tuned using Ziegler and Nichols method in closed-loop condition. Therefore, the best parameters of  $K_p$  are 0.7 and  $K_i$  are 0.9 to achieve superior transient performances respectively. The performance is depicted as Figure 3 for PI controller.



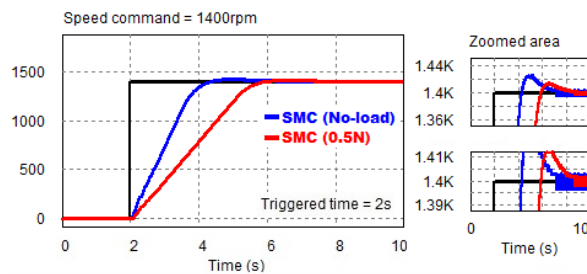
(a)



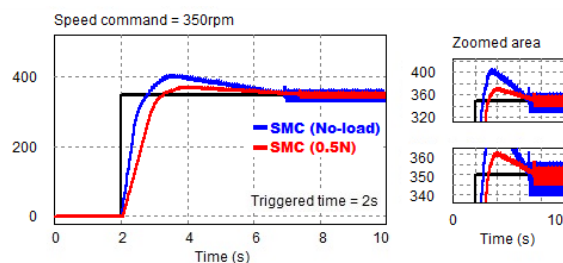
(b)

Figure 3. Simulated results for speed response of PI speed controller with no-load and load = 0.5N at (a) 1400rpm; (b) 350rpm

Meanwhile the identical experiments for both the Sliding Mode Controller and the proposed Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller (ASMC) are conducted. The outcomes of these experiments are visually represented in Figure 4 for the Sliding Mode Controller and Figure 5 for the ASMC.



(a)



(b)

Figure 4. Simulated results for speed response of Sliding Mode with no-load and load = 0.5N at (a) 1400rpm; (b) 350rpm

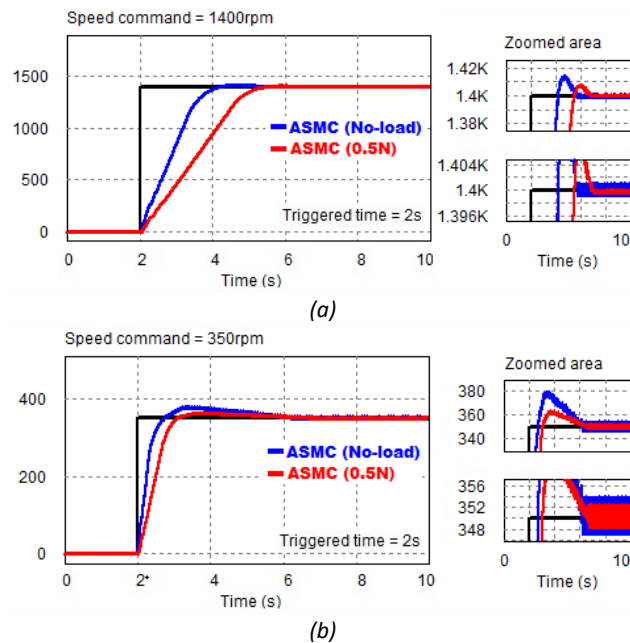


Figure 5. Simulated results for speed response of Adaptive Sliding Mode with no-load and load = 0.5N at (a) 1400rpm; (b) 350rpm

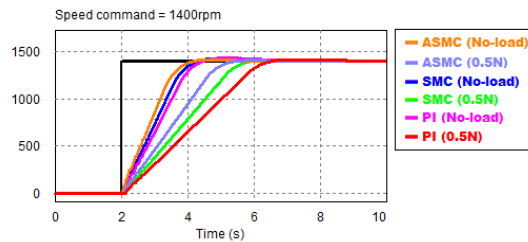
Table 3. Clarifications of simulation cases for comparative performances on different speed controllers with no-load and load=0.5 at 1400rpm when triggered at time=2s

Cases	Speed Controllers	Load (N)	$t_d$ (s)	$t_r$ (s)	$t_p$ (s)	$M_p$ (%)	$t_s$ (s)
1	ASMC	0	2.83	4.18	4.71	14.4	5.78
2		0.5	3.51	5.52	5.98	7.44	6.91
3	SMC	0	2.97	4.33	4.98	24.42	7.18
4		0.5	3.79	5.92	6.62	13.29	8.79
5	PI	0	3.09	4.46	5.21	30.41	7.88
6		0.5	4.15	6.56	7.27	14.94	9.97

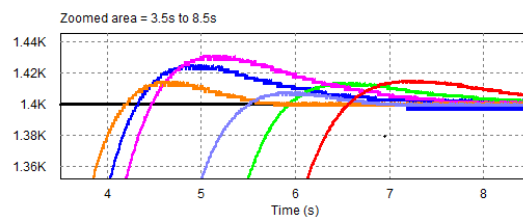
Table 3 shows in the summarize of comparative study of three speed controllers operating at 1400 rpm and when initiated at 2 seconds. In particular, the ASMC speed controller is classified in case 1 at the no-load condition and case 2 at 0.5N of loaded condition. Then, the SMC speed controller is classified in case 3 at the no-load condition and case 4 at 0.5N of loaded condition. Lastly, the PI speed controller is classified in case 5 at the no-load condition and case 6 at 0.5N of loaded condition. In particular, the induction motor speed performances are clarified using time domain specifications of delay time ( $t_d$ ), rise time ( $t_r$ ), peak time ( $t_p$ ), maximum % overshoot ( $M_p$ ) and settling time ( $t_s$ ).

The Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller (ASMC) demonstrated robust performance with moderate overshoot and relatively short settling times under both no-load and 0.5 N load conditions. However, it's worth noting that the ASMC exhibited slightly longer rise times and peak times as the load increased. On the other hand, the Sliding

Mode Controller (SMC) exhibited faster response times but at the cost of higher overshoot and longer settling times, especially when subjected to a 0.5 N load. While the Proportional-Integral (PI) controller showcased significant overshoot, particularly under no-load conditions, while still achieving acceptable settling times. ASMC speed controller is achieved superior performances for all time domain specifications based on an activated load of 0.5N and no-load condition at speed command of 1400rpm compared with differences speed controllers of SMC and PI respectively. Furthermore, Figure 6 and Figure 7 depict the overlapping results, illustrating the comparative performances of different speed controllers.

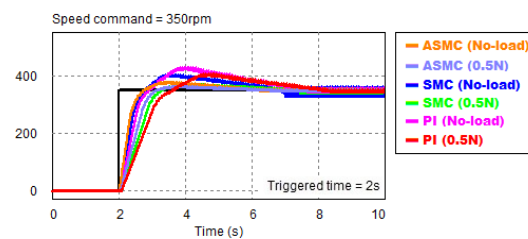


(a)

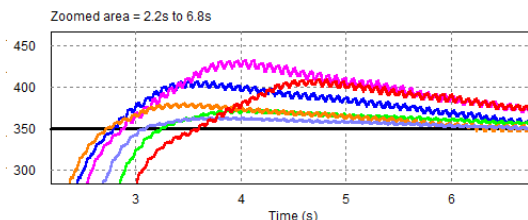


(b)

Figure 6. Overlapped simulated results for comparative performances on different speed controllers with no-load and load = 0.5N at (a) 1400rpm; (b) zoomed area from 3.5s to 8.5s



(a)



(b)

Figure 7. Overlapped simulated results for comparative performances on different speed controllers with no-load and load = 0.5N at (a) 350rpm; (b) zoomed area from 3.5s to 8.5s

Table 4. Clarifications of simulation cases for comparative performances on different speed

controllers with no-load and load=0.5N at 350rpm when triggered at time = 2s

Cases	Speed Controllers	Load (N)	$t_d$ (s)	$t_r$ (s)	$t_p$ (s)	$M_p$ (%)	$t_s$ (s)
1	ASMC	0	2.23	2.73	3.47	8.54	6.14
2		0.5	2.45	3.09	3.71	3.66	6.62
3	SMC	0	2.28	2.81	3.59	15.85	6.96
4		0.5	2.55	3.25	4.05	6.15	7.42
5	PI	0	2.35	2.87	4.05	23.23	7.59
6		0.5	2.66	3.61	4.73	16.57	8.28

Table 4 provides a comprehensive evaluation of Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller (ASMC), Sliding Mode Controller (SMC), and Proportional-Integral (PI) controller, under no-load and 0.5N load conditions at a speed of 350 rpm. For cases with no-load, the ASMC exhibited a rapid rise time ( $t_r$ ) of 2.73 seconds, modest overshoot ( $M_p$ ) at 8.54%, and a settling time ( $t_s$ ) of 6.14 seconds, while the SMC displayed a similar performance profile with a slightly longer rise time (2.81 seconds) and higher overshoot (15.85%).

The PI controller, in contrast, demonstrated a longer rise time (2.87 seconds) and a substantially higher overshoot of 23.23%. When subjected to a 0.5 N load, all controllers exhibited slightly longer rise times, with the ASMC maintaining the lowest overshoot (3.66%) and the shortest settling time (6.62 seconds), followed by the SMC and PI controllers. These findings underscore the influence of load conditions on controller performance, with the ASMC proving to be a favourable choice for rapid and stable control at 350 rpm.

#### *Hardware Performance for Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller*

The experimental works are based on high voltage digital motor control (HVDMC), digital signal processing control card TMS320F28335, an incremental encoder and three-phase induction motor. Technically, the HVDMC from Texas Instrument (TI) is used for experimental work with 32-bit floating-point DSP control card to drive the three-phase induction motor through Code Composer Studio (CCS) version 6 and Power Simulation (PSIM) professional version 11.

In particular, the target module of F28335 from PSIM software is generated ready-to-run C code automatically from the control schematic by validated from the control algorithm in PSIM and finally debug the C code in CCS software respectively. Then, the real-time waveforms are monitored from DSP oscilloscope based on PSIM software. The hardware setup is depicted as Figure 8.

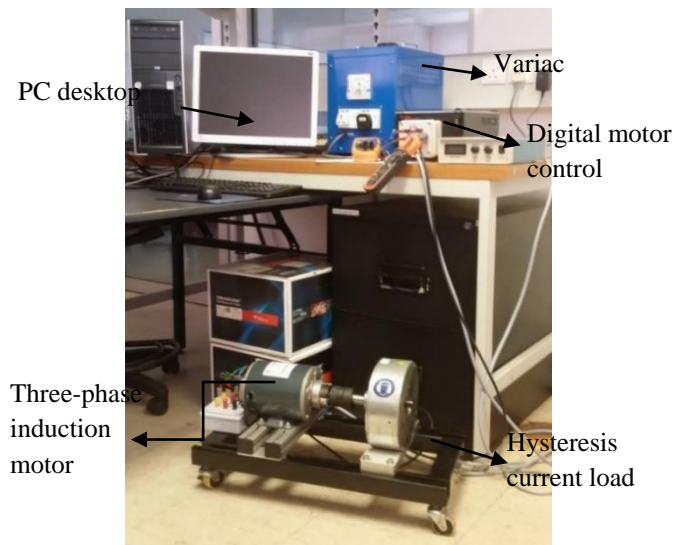


Figure 8. Hardware for experimental setup

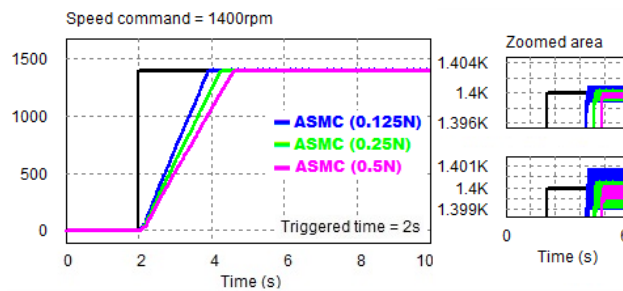


Figure 9. Experimental results for comparative performances of ASMC speed controller under different conditions at 1400rpm

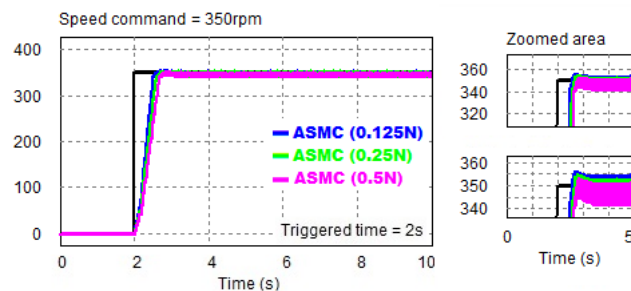


Figure 10. Experimental results for comparative performances of ASMC speed controller under different conditions at 350rpm

The specific experimental test in Table 5 is clarification cases for ASMC speed under loaded conditions at a speed command of 1400rpm for case 1 and case 2 at 350rpm as depicted in Figure 9 and Figure 10. Hence, the loaded conditions are tested at 0.125N, 0.25N and 0.5N for all cases. Technically, the ASMC speed controller is tuned using the trial-and-error method in the closed-loop condition. Then, the best selected parameters of switching gain based on sigmoid function ( $\beta$ ) is 5, constant boundary layer ( $\rho$ ) is 3 and constant gain (K) is -0.3 to achieve superior performances respectively.

Table 5. Clarifications of experimental cases for ASMC speed controller under loaded condition at 1400rpm and 350rpm.

Cases	Speed (rpm)	Load (N)	$t_d$ (s)	$t_r$ (s)	$t_p$ (s)	$M_p$ (%)	$t_s$ (s)
1	0-1400	0.125	2.99	3.98	4.07	0.065	4.11
		0.25	3.17	4.39	4.44	0.023	4.28
		0.5	3.35	4.78	4.82	0.0075	4.37
2	0-350	0.125	2.32	2.61	2.72	1.86	4.41
		0.25	2.36	2.72	2.83	1.42	4.53
		0.5	2.41	2.81	2.89	0.91	4.68

In Case 1, the ASMC controller exhibits remarkable performance adaptability to different load conditions, showcasing rapid rise times, minimal overshoot, and consistently short settling times. As the load increases from 0.125 N to 0.5 N, the controller maintains its efficiency, with negligible deviations in its performance metrics, illustrating its robustness across a range of loads. Similarly, in Case 2, conducted at 350 rpm, the ASMC controller continues to demonstrate excellent performance attributes under varied load conditions. It exhibits swift rise times, minimal overshoot, and short settling times, indicating its stability and reliability in the presence of different loads. As the load escalates from 0.125N to 0.5N, the controller maintains its impressive performance consistency, further reaffirming its suitability for applications demanding precise and dependable speed control across different load and speed settings.

## Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis of speed controllers operating at different speeds and load conditions highlights the Adaptive Sliding Mode Controller (ASMC) as superior performance. Whether at a rated-speed of 1400 rpm or a lower speed of 350 rpm, the ASMC consistently demonstrates rapid rise times, minimal overshoot, and relatively short settling times. Even when subjected to a 0.5N load, it maintains its commendable performance, underlining its adaptability and stability across diverse operational scenarios. These findings position the ASMC as the preferred choice for applications demanding precise and swift control, making it the standout controller in this comparative study.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the supporting given by Politeknik Merlimau and Department of Polytechnic and Community College (PolyCC), Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia for their support.

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## Enhancing Road Design Education: A Comprehensive Analysis of Micro-Field Trips from the Perspective of Students

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**Abstract:** Road design education faces challenges in effectively bridging theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. Traditional classroom-based teaching methods often fall short in preparing engineering students for the complexities encountered in practical scenarios. To address this gap, innovative pedagogical strategies, such as micro-field trips, have been introduced to enhance the learning experience. This study explores the influence of micro-field trips on the learning experiences of students in the 'Road Construction II' course at Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja. The course adopts a varied instructional approach, incorporating micro-field trips to bridge theoretical understanding with practical, hands-on applications. Two student groups, Group A (22 students) and Group B (45 students), participated during the academic period from April to August 2023. A confidential survey was conducted a week before the semester's end to gather student perceptions of micro-field trips, revealing that students agreed with the one-hour weekly duration and its alignment with weekly topics. The study aims to provide insights for optimizing future implementations. Results indicate the positive impact of micro-field trips in reinforcing theoretical concepts, fostering professional skills, and addressing real-world problems. Despite these advantages, challenges such as time constraints, weather dependency, and content coverage limitations are identified, necessitating strategic planning for enhanced effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Micro-field trips, Road construction education, Student perceptions, Educational challenges.

**Citation:** García-Ramírez, Y. (2024). Enhancing Road Design Education: A Comprehensive Analysis of Micro-Field Trips from the Perspective of Students. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024 - International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 723-735), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

As societies advance, the demand for resilient and well-organized road networks becomes increasingly evident. This emphasizes the necessity for engineering students to acquire a thorough understanding of road design principles. The complexity of this field doesn't just stem from the employed formulas but also from the fact that road design typically involves three dimensions: horizontal alignment, vertical alignment or profile, and in cross-section elements. Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of engineers and students mastering the use of these three dimensions in road design (Hassan et al., 2011; Kuhn et al., 2012).

While traditional classroom-based teaching has long been fundamental to education, its application in the realm of road design encounters inherent challenges. Theoretical instruction often falls short in adequately preparing students for the complexities they will face in real-world scenarios. The gap between classroom learning and practical application imposes limitations, impeding the development of skills crucial for effective road design. Consequently, several studies have sought to cultivate these skills, particularly through project-based learning methods (Castro, 2012; García-Ramírez, 2021, 2023). When complemented with visual elements or practical cases to aid students in comprehending the three dimensions, the results are markedly improved. These elements may involve the use of software (Castro, 2012; Liao & Levinson, 2012), virtual reality (Han et al., 2006), or simulators (Van Der Horst & Hogema, 2011) to enhance understanding of this critical concept.

The integration of field visits as a pedagogical tool enhances the educational experience by providing students with tangible exposure to the intricacies of road design. Unlike virtual trips, which have shown success in certain areas like construction science (Man et al., 2023), students in the realm of roads must be aware of measures, sizes, shapes, etc., that cannot be fully experienced in a virtual setting. Real field visits offer distinctive pedagogical advantages, including the improvement of critical thinking, long-term retention, and transfer potential. They also foster positive attitudes towards science and nature (Manner, 1995) and provide immediate contact with knowledge objects, interdisciplinary study, and diverse teaching methods. This, in turn, enhances motivation, social relations, and fieldwork skills (Andelković et al., 2018). Particularly valuable in the early weeks of higher education, field trips contribute to personal and social development, stimulate interest and motivation, and imbue learning with meaning (Larsen et al., 2017). These benefits can be further amplified through the integration of active learning, collaborative problem-based activities, place-based learning, and rapid feedback, applicable to both virtual field trips and classroom activities (Jones & Washko, 2022). Field visits often involve logistical challenges and potential risks for students. For example, measuring the cross-section of a road with heavy traffic can be particularly demanding and hazardous.

Therefore, an alternative approach is to conduct micro-field trips instead of full field visits. Unlike traditional field trips that often entail extended periods away from the classroom, micro-visits are short, focused excursions scheduled for one hour per week. During these micro-visits, students venture inside the campus to observe and analyze road infrastructure directly related to the weekly topic under discussion. For instance, if the focus is on road transversal sections, students step out of the classroom to witness and measure the cross-section of a road within the campus. This targeted, hands-on experience is designed to provide students with immediate, practical exposure to the specific aspects of road design they are studying, creating a dynamic link between theoretical concepts and real-world applications. The essence of micro-field trips lies in their ability to bring the learning environment to life, making it an integral component of the overall road design curriculum.

The integration of micro-field trips into road design education is motivated by several compelling reasons. These expeditions offer a unique opportunity to address the challenges inherent in traditional classroom-based teaching methodologies. By exposing students to real-world scenarios and practical applications through brief, targeted visits, micro-visits bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience that is

needed for the demands of the field.

The main goal of this article is to investigate the impact of micro-field trips on students' learning experiences in the 'Road Construction II' course used as a pedagogical strategy in supporting the teaching of road design. To achieve this, the study examined the perceptions of two groups of students enrolled in the 'Road Construction II' course at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja during the academic period from April to August 2023. Through a thorough examination of the impact of micro-visits on student learning outcomes, engagement, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge, the article aims to offer insights into the potential benefits and challenges associated with this innovative approach. The ultimate objective is to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of road design education, providing guidance for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers on the role and effectiveness of micro-visits in enhancing the overall learning experience.

## Method

### Study Groups

During the academic period from April to August 2023, students registered for the 'Road Construction II' course at the Technical University of Loja. The students were divided into two groups: Group A, consisting of 22 students, and Group B, consisting of 45 students. Classes for Group A were scheduled on Wednesdays, while Group B had classes on Thursdays.

### *Course content*

The 'Road Construction II' course builds upon the content covered in the 'Road Construction I' course, which primarily focuses on traffic and alignment horizontal design. In 'Road Construction II,' students delve into the study of vertical alignments of profiles and cross-sections, supplemented by additional aspects of road operation, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Detail of the Content of the 'Road Construction II' Course in this Study

Nro.	Topic	Detailed content
1	Vertical alignment	1.1 Introduction 1.2 Geometric elements comprising the vertical alignment 1.3 Parabolic curve geometry 1.4 Visibility on roads 1.5 Criteria for determining the lengths of vertical curves

Table 1. Detail of the Content of the 'Road Construction II' Course in this Study

2	Combinations of horizontal and vertical alignment	2.1 Introduction
		2.2 General design controls
3	Cross section elements	2.3 Alignment coordination in design
		3.1 Introduction
		3.2 Geometric elements comprising a cross-section
		3.3 Curve widening
		3.4 Typical cross-sections
		3.5 Shoulder widths
		3.6 Cross-sectional area
		3.7 Earthwork volumes and measurement
4	Capacity and level of service	3.8 Earthwork volume movement
		4.1 Introduction
5	Climbing lane	4.2 Calculation of capacity and level of service
		5.1 Introduction
6	Escape ramps	5.2 Additional passing opportunities on two-lane roads
		6.1 Introduction
		6.2 Need and location of escape ramps
		6.3 Types of escape ramps
7	Roadway marking	6.4 Design considerations
		7.1 Introduction
		7.2 Horizontal signage
8	Safety analysis	7.3 Vertical signage
		8.1 Introduction
		8.2 General formula
		8.3 Use of IHSDM (Interactive Road Safety Design Model)

### *Course details*

The course extended over 16 weeks, with two weeks reserved for the midterm and final exams, during which no micro-field trips took place. Consequently, there were a total of 14 micro-field trips conducted throughout the course. The instructional approach integrated five pre-analyzed learning moments (García-Ramírez, 2023), involving activities such as watching prerecorded lectures, creating a comic image, participating in synchronous classes, and preparing an infographic or presentation to showcase the road project's progress. Furthermore, micro-field trips were introduced, as depicted in Figure 1.

As depicted in Figure 1, the instructional approach employs a diverse range of active learning methods to enrich student engagement and comprehension. Students actively participate in their learning journey by watching

prerecorded lectures, fostering creativity through the creation of comic images, engaging in real-time interaction, and collaboratively developing a road project in teams during synchronous classes. They also demonstrate their understanding through the preparation of infographics or presentations that showcase the progress of the road project. Additionally, micro-field trips, illustrated in Figure 1, have been incorporated, providing students with practical, hands-on experiences that complement theoretical knowledge. This multifaceted approach is designed to accommodate various learning styles, fostering a dynamic and immersive educational experience for the students.

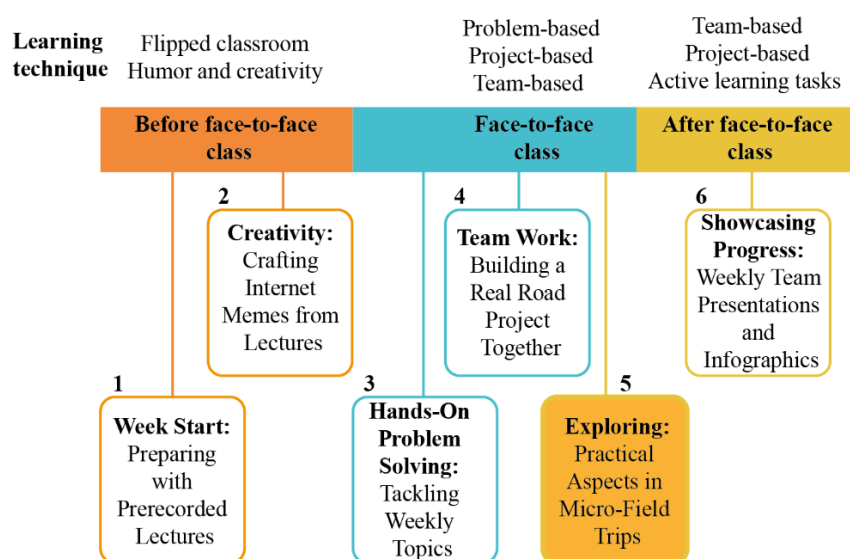


Figure 1. Academic Activities Performed during the Course

The micro-field trips occurred during the last hour of the class, following 2 hours dedicated to problem-solving and 2 hours of teamwork on the road project. The chosen site typically had minimal vehicular traffic and included all the elements analyzed in class. However, only one location fulfilled these criteria, situated between Prendho UTPL and the UTPL residence, covering an approximate distance of 400 meters. These trips did not involve topographic equipment; instead, basic measurement instruments like rulers, tape measures, and tape were utilized, as depicted in the examples presented in Figure 2.

*Data collection and processing*

A confidential survey was administered one week before the semester concluded, seeking insights into students' perceptions of the micro-field trips. One question inquired: "On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest, how would you rate the micro-visits conducted during the semester?" This question was accompanied by inquiries such as "On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest, how much of the subject's learning was done by you?" and "On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest, how would you overall rate this course?" Additionally, students were asked to elaborate on the micro-field trips, specifically providing a minimum of two advantages and two disadvantages of this type of



academic activity.



Figure 2. Photographs illustrating some of the Micro-field Trips conducted during the Course

The survey was shared online, and participation was voluntary. The numerical responses underwent analysis, including the calculation of averages and confidence intervals. For the text responses, an analysis was conducted, involving categorization and presenting a general summary of the answers.

**Results**

Initially, the survey garnered responses from all students in both groups, indicating substantial participation and yielding noteworthy results for the sample. To provide context, Table 2 displays the academic outcomes of the respective groups.

Table 2. Summary of Group Grades and Reprobation Percentage

Group	n	Average Grade ± 95% Confidence Interval	Min	Max	% of Reprobation
A	22	7.25 ± 0.63	1.34	8.40	27
B	45	7.51 ± 0.07	7.06	8.24	0



## Group A

In response to the query about the extent to which students contributed to their learning in the subject, the average response was  $7.76 \pm 0.89$  (min = 3, max = 10). The overall course rating averaged  $9.19 \pm 0.34$  (min = 8, max = 10), while the micro-field trips received a rating of  $9.86 \pm 0.16$  (min = 9, max = 10). Overall, it is evident that students engaged in significant self-directed learning, providing high ratings for both the course and the micro-field trips.

After analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the micro-field trips, a summary of the responses received has been compiled. Let's begin with the perceived advantages reported by this group:

1. **Practical Application of Theory:** Relating theoretical concepts to practical scenarios enables a deeper understanding.
2. **Development of Professional Skills:** Provides an experience akin to analyzing projects in a professional environment.
3. **Identification of Real Problems:** Allows the detection of specific issues that might go unnoticed with theoretical knowledge alone.
4. **Reinforcement of Learning:** Facilitates the assimilation of knowledge by observing and applying it in the field. Enables a better comprehension of theoretical calculations by physically observing what is studied in class. Offers the opportunity to reinforce concepts that may not have been fully understood in class.
5. **Generation of Ideas and Dialogue:** Encourages the discussion of ideas and teamwork.
6. **Improvement of Critical Thinking:** Contributes to the development of integrative critical thinking.
7. **Knowledge of Real Measurements:** Facilitates understanding the actual dimensions of what is studied at scale in the classroom.
8. **Field Experience:** Presents new challenges that contribute to gaining experience in real-world situations.

Despite the students recognizing the benefits of the micro-field trips, they have some perceived disadvantages, as reported by Group A:

1. **Difficulty Due to Lack of Theoretical Understanding:** A lack of theoretical comprehension can hinder practical learning. There is a possibility that topics reviewed in class may be confused during practices.
2. **Time Limitation:** Temporal constraints may impact the coverage of topics and the depth of practices. Limited time may restrict the number of topics addressed during micro-field trips. Short timeframes may not be sufficient to comprehend or solve problems during practices.
3. **Limited Availability of Participants:** Reduced availability of certain group members can be an inconvenience.
4. **Dependency on Weather Conditions:** Weather conditions, such as rain or excessive sunlight, can affect

the execution of practices. Climate conditions may complicate the execution of outdoor visits. Outdoor practices may be canceled due to adverse weather conditions.

5. Lack of Necessary Materials: The absence of materials can be a limitation for conducting practices effectively.

#### Group B

In response to the query about the extent to which students contributed to their learning in the subject, the average response was  $7.20 \pm 0.54$  (min = 3, max = 10). The overall course rating averaged  $9.30 \pm 0.28$  (min = 7, max = 10), while the micro-field trips received a rating of  $9.25 \pm 0.39$  (min = 5, max = 10). Overall, it is evident that students engaged in significant self-directed learning, providing high ratings for both the course and the micro-field trips.

After analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the micro-field trips, a summary of the responses received has been compiled. Let's begin with the perceived advantages reported by this group:

1. Practical Experience: Micro-field trips related to daily classes provide an opportunity to gain practical experience, surpassing theory. Also, familiarizes students with the practical application of concepts taught in class. Aids in the formation of criteria for students to navigate the professional environment.
2. Clarification of Doubts: Contributes to resolving doubts while gaining experience, enhancing the understanding of concepts. Allows a real-time doubt clarification for the clarification of doubts that arise during the practical experience.
3. Rewarding Learning: The visit offers a rewarding way of learning, identifying and understanding with the teacher's explanation.
4. Theory-Practice Relationship: Allows for relating theoretical concepts to their practical application. Facilitates the direct application of theoretical concepts in real-world settings. Provides practical knowledge of activities conducted in class.
5. Development of Social Skills: Facilitates the development of social and emotional skills through interaction with peers and the guide.

And the summary of the disadvantages of Group B is detailed below.

1. Recurrence of the Same Location: In most visits, the same location is repeated, suggesting exploration of nearby places for a better application of concepts. There are not many nearby places where practices can be conducted effectively. Zone limitation affects the variety of practices that can be carried out. Visiting only one road restricts exposure to different scenarios that could enrich the experience.
2. Limited Time: The allocated time is insufficient for conducting some micro-field trip activities, suggesting the allocation of more time to fully leverage these experiences.
3. Lack of Resources and University Support: The lack of time, resources, and university support hinders

visits to other sites with diverse information. The lack of equipment and space for practical activities is a limitation.

4. Weather Conditions: Weather conditions can affect the planning and execution of field trips.
5. Limited Content: While they offer practical experience, there may be limitations regarding specific concepts or topics that can be addressed.

### *Overall Analysis*

Both Group A and Group B recognize the benefits of micro-field trips in enhancing their learning experience. The advantages perceived by both groups include the practical application of theoretical knowledge, the development of professional skills, the identification of real problems, reinforcement of learning, generation of ideas through dialogue, improvement of critical thinking, understanding of real measurements, and gaining valuable field experience. However, there are also shared concerns and disadvantages expressed by both groups. These include challenges related to time limitations, with insufficient time for certain activities during micro-field trips. Both groups highlight the dependency on weather conditions, which can affect the planning and execution of outdoor visits. Additionally, there are concerns about the recurrence of the same location, limited availability of participants, lack of necessary materials, and the overall limited content coverage in some cases.

In summary, while micro-field trips offer substantial advantages in practical learning, challenges such as time constraints, weather dependency, and limitations in variety and content coverage are recognized by both groups as areas for improvement in the implementation of these experiences.

## **Discussion**

The study explores the impact of micro-field trips on students' learning experiences in the 'Road Construction II' course at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, focusing on two student groups (Group A and Group B). The instructional approach employed a multifaceted strategy, integrating various learning moments and activities such as prerecorded lectures, synchronous classes, and micro-field trips. Micro-field trips were introduced to provide practical, hands-on experiences, offering a dynamic complement to theoretical knowledge. However, these trips raised certain challenges, as discussed by both Group A and Group B.

In analyzing the advantages and disadvantages reported by both groups, common themes emerge. Both groups acknowledge the practical benefits of micro-field trips, citing advantages such as the practical application of theoretical concepts, the development of professional skills, and the identification of real-world problems. These experiences contribute to the reinforcement of learning, fostering critical thinking, and providing valuable field exposure. In previous research, field trips have been shown to enhance learning by providing real-world context and fostering critical thinking (Krakowka, 2012; Manner, 1995). When designed with a purpose, they can promote higher-order thinking skills (Foo & Foo, 2022). These trips also create opportunities for first-hand

experiences, cognitive development, and motivation (Manner, 1995). In higher education, field trips can integrate active learning, co-creation of knowledge, and place-based learning, contributing to the value of field trips as a pedagogical tool (Jones & Washko, 2022).

Despite the shared benefits, challenges are identified by both groups. Time constraints emerge as a common concern, with insufficient time allocated for certain activities during micro-field trips. The influence of uncertain travel times on activity schedules, with some activities, being canceled due to increased travel time (Rasouli & Timmermans, 2014). The dependency on weather conditions poses a significant challenge, impacting the planning and execution of outdoor visits. This is particularly evident in the case of adverse weather, where drivers tend to acquire more information and make changes to their travel plans (Kilpeläinen & Summala, 2007). However, the impact of weather on field trips can be mitigated through consistent learning outcomes, an immersive field area, and flexible assessments (Jolley et al., 2019). The influence of weather on active transportation is also notable, with significant changes in travel behavior observed in different weather conditions (Saneinejad et al., 2012). The recurrence of the same location, limited availability of participants, lack of necessary materials, and concerns about content coverage are additional shared disadvantages.

The findings suggest a need for careful consideration in the planning and execution of micro-field trips. Strategies to address time limitations, such as better scheduling or extending trip durations, should be explored. Previous discusses the tradeoff between maintaining temporal flexibility and maximizing quality in schedule optimization, which is a key consideration for field trip planning (Policella et al., 2005). Additionally, measures to mitigate the impact of weather conditions, such as having alternative indoor activities or rescheduling trips, could enhance the overall effectiveness of these experiences. Furthermore, efforts should be made to diversify locations and ensure comprehensive coverage of course content during micro-field trips.

In conclusion, while micro-field trips offer substantial advantages in enhancing practical learning experiences, the identified challenges underscore the importance of thoughtful planning and continuous improvement. The study provides valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers seeking to optimize the integration of micro-field trips into coursework, ensuring a balanced and effective approach to experiential learning.

## Conclusion

The diverse instructional approach effectively engaged students, with micro-field trips proving instrumental in providing practical, hands-on experiences alongside theoretical learning. Reported advantages, including the practical application of theory and skill development, underscore the positive impact of micro-field trips. However, challenges like time constraints and weather dependency demand careful planning adjustments, potentially involving revised schedules, extended durations, and contingency measures. Concerns about location repetition, participant availability, and content coverage suggest opportunities for improvement in trip variety and scope. Enhancing location diversity, ensuring comprehensive content coverage, and optimizing participant

involvement are essential considerations. While micro-field trips significantly enhance practical learning, addressing identified challenges is crucial for maximizing their overall impact. Strategic planning and ongoing refinement are key for educators and curriculum designers, offering guidance to optimize experiential learning benefits in engineering and construction-related courses.

## Recommendations

- Consider revisiting scheduling strategies for micro-field trips to address time constraints. This could involve optimizing the duration or frequency of trips to allow for more in-depth exploration.
- Develop contingency plans for adverse weather conditions that may impact the execution of outdoor micro-field trips. This could involve having alternative indoor activities or rescheduling trips as needed.
- Explore opportunities to diversify the locations of micro-field trips to avoid the recurrence of the same site. This can enrich students' experiences and provide exposure to a variety of real-world scenarios.
- Address concerns related to the limited availability of participants by implementing strategies to optimize involvement. This might include flexible scheduling options or alternative ways for students to catch up on missed experiences.
- Implement a feedback loop for continuous improvement by regularly evaluating the effectiveness of micro-field trips. Gather feedback from students and use it to refine the planning and execution of future trips, making adjustments based on their experiences and suggestions.
- Collaborate with the university to enhance support for micro-field trips. This could involve securing additional resources, allocating dedicated spaces for practical activities, and fostering a supportive environment for experiential learning.
- Encourage documentation of successful practices and challenges encountered during micro-field trips. Share these experiences with other educators to contribute to a collective pool of best practices in implementing similar experiential learning approaches.

These recommendations aim to address identified challenges and enhance the overall effectiveness of micro-field trips in the 'Road Construction II' course. They emphasize a strategic and continuous improvement approach to ensure that these experiences align with educational objectives and provide meaningful learning opportunities for students.

## Acknowledgements

I extend my gratitude to ChatGPT for its invaluable support in shaping this article. ChatGPT significantly contributed to the clarity of the content. Additionally, I appreciate the support and resources provided by the

Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL), enriching the research process. This collaborative effort highlights the role of innovative technologies and institutional support in advancing educational research.

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## Project-Based Learning: The Influence of Engagement on Teamwork

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**Abstract:** One of the latest learning models developed by Bina Nusantara (BINUS) University is Project Based Learning (PBL). The main theoretical basis used in this research is Dewey's theory. This research aims to describe the teamwork of BINUS students who apply the PBL model in learning activities. Does engagement occur in the work team? Does engagement influence the spirit of team collaboration effectively so that the PBL goal is achieved, namely cooperation as one of the competency targets (quality or skill) for graduates from the 9 BINUS Graduate Attributes (BGA) that BINUS requires of all students and alumni? Respondents (n) in this study were 108 people consisting of class LB24 (n=52) and class LI24 (n=52) in the odd semester of 2023. Each class was divided into 9 groups randomly with the number of members 5-6 per group. The research method used is the Class Action Research (CAR) model, consisting of 3 stages of PBL, namely Planning, Implementation, and Reporting (PIR) with eight learning activities. Based on the results of a questionnaire with a Likert scale, the following description was obtained: Groups that felt stronger engagement were also able to work together better than groups that felt less engaged. This research also shows the result, groups that feel stronger engagement make more creative efforts in Community Service activities which are a form of implementation of PBL.

**Keywords:** project-based learning, engagement, teamwork

**Citation:** Siregar, C. & Pane, M.M. (2024). Project-Based Learning: The Influence of Engagement on Teamwork. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024—International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 736-746), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

There are at least three interesting facts about learning at Bina Nusantara University (BINUS) in the last five years. Firstly, facts related to the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka). This curriculum is the most actual reference (the latest curriculum) in the development of education in Indonesia. This curriculum encourages changes in various aspects, from a teacher-oriented paradigm-shifting to a student-oriented paradigm; encouraging scientific learning models that build students' thinking constructions starting from observing, asking, experimenting, associating and communicating; and efforts to encourage high-level understanding by providing 21st century skills, namely critical thinking, communication, collaboration and

creativity in learning activities (Hendrastomo & Januarti, 2023). Hendrastomo and Juniarti further said that through the Independent Curriculum, students are invited to explore the world, carry out analysis, and find solutions to the problems that befall them. Secondly, this fact is related to learning methods. Currently, the learning method applied at BINUS is an andragogical learning method, adult learning, which is critical-analytical, multi-directional, and emphasizes group collaboration without excluding individual or personal aspects. This model at BINUS also requires students to learn by doing and applying ideas. Students are engaged in real-world activities that are similar to the activities that adult professionals are engaged in. At BINUS, the models or approaches that are considered appropriate are Problem-Based Learning and Project-Based Learning. Specifically for the Character Building course at BINUS, the approach used is Project-Based Learning. Thirdly, a fact that is no less interesting is related to the characteristics of the learners themselves. Students at BINUS, especially for the Character Building Pancasila course which is mandatory and given in the first semester, are followed by the post-millennial generation (Gen-Z). The definition of Gen-Z according to experts has several different criteria. Schmidt et al. (2023), said Gen-Z was born in 1997-2012. Meanwhile, Dwidienawati & Gandasari (2018), said that Gen-Z in Indonesia was born in 1995-2015. The general characteristics of Gen-Z are as follows: This generation is known as iGen or the Internet Generation. They grew up with smartphones, social media, and the internet dominating their daily lives. According to Dwidienawati & Gandasari it is impossible to imagine their life without the internet. This generation is known as digitally naïve and hyper-connected junkies. They are the first generation to have access to wide-scale digital communications technology in the form of cell phones, Wi-Fi, and interactive computer games. They like to collaborate in doing work, are a flexible generation, like challenges and are motivated by achievement, like to explore looking for new ways to solve problems, are tech savvy, like to indulge in privacy, are independent, tolerant, like to communicate virtually, and have ambition. Their attention span is short, meaning they find it difficult to focus on something for long periods of time. However, Gen-Z spends an average of 6.5 hours every day in front of screen electronic devices. They write and receive 109.5 texts per day. They consider smartphones to be an important part of their lives. Even though Gen-Z spends most of their time in front of electronic screens, they are not necessarily anti-social.

This research aims to describe the teamwork of BINUS students who apply the PBL model in learning activities. This goal is an important thing related to the BINUS Graduate Attribute (BGA). BINUS Graduate Attribute (BGA) is a collection of attributes related to qualities or skills that BINUS University graduates need to possess and develop while studying at BINUS University through the Educate, Enrich, and Empower processes in order to prepare themselves for the future. BINUS Graduate Attributes (BGA) consists of nine (9) qualities or non-technical skills (soft skills) which are developed based on the profile needed by a student in carrying out his career. The nine attributes or skills developed in BINUS Graduate Attributes are Global Standard Technical Competencies, Adaptability, Applied Management Skills, Collaboration, Critical & Creative Thinking, Digital & Technology Fluency, Growth Mindset, Initiative, and Social Awareness. BGA development is based on BINUSian Values (S-P-I-R-I-T): Striving for Excellence, Perseverance, Integrity, Respect, Innovation, Teamwork. The aim is to strengthen character as a BINUS University student. These qualities or skills prepare graduates to be able to undertake 3 alternative career choices, namely as an Employee, Entrepreneur, or Further Study. In other words, the implementation of BGA based on BINUS values is carried out so that BINUS

University graduates could have competitiveness and strength that can support their career achievements in the future.

This research focuses on the issue of cooperation or teamwork which is one of the attributes and values of BINUS. Collaboration is also a characteristic of Gen-Z, the model promoted by the Independent Curriculum, and is the core pattern of Project-Based Learning. In connection with these matters, the questions in this research are:

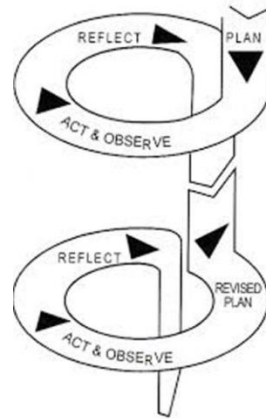
1. Does engagement occur in the work team?
2. Does engagement influence the spirit of team collaboration effectively so that the PBL goal is achieved, namely cooperation as one of the competency targets (quality or skill) for graduates from the 9 BINUS Graduate Attributes (BGA) that BINUS requires of all students and alumni?

## Methods

This research uses the literature study method, especially Dewey's theory as the basis for the thinking framework. Apart from that, this research uses the Class Action research method consisting of 3 stages of PBL, namely Planning, Implementation and observation, and Reporting (PIR). This approach is based on the model created by Kemmis and McTaggart (1982, 2000). Firstly, Planning or Preparing: During forum group discussions (FGD), instructors and researchers work together to create cooperative learning designs that will be used in instructional activities. Researchers offer suggestions and original ideas for developing practical contextual learning designs in this exercise. Secondly, Doing or Acting and Seeing or Observing: Teachers and researchers jointly consider the student activities that have been going on. The instructor instructs the class using the lesson plan as a guide. Researchers observe the teaching and learning process in this section while documenting and observing how the learning methods are used when carrying out teaching and learning activities. Thirdly, Reporting: After Seeing and observing, through FGD, the researcher and teacher try to improve the plans for the upcoming meeting, they refer to or consider the reflection points in this part. All these activities are called planning-to-do-see-observe-report-and-reflecting-cycles. This research was carried out by conducting direct observations of the learning process over eight (8) sessions or cycles of repeated learning activities and distributing questionnaires with a Likert scale to all respondents in the study to get a picture or description of the final results of their involvement during teaching and learning activities using the group discussion method.

The focus object of engagement of this research is classrooms. There are 4 categories/levels of engagement that we focus on in our research: Highly Engagement, Moderate Engagement, Barely Engagement, and Disengagement. In the Likert scale, there are 3 domains (cognitive, affective, psychomotor) that will be measured, each consisting of 5 questions with a total of 15: Affective/emotional (low-interest enjoyment, boredom) with 5 questions, behavioral (skipping class) with 5 questions, cognitive (lack of attention to task) with 5 questions. The questions are positive with answers ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D),

Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (A). SD=1 point, D=2, N=3, A=4, SA=5. If the total score of the average answer for members in one team is 60-75 points, it means a highly engaged team; 45-60 points moderately engaged; 30-45 points barely engaged; and 15-30 points disengaged team.



Picture 1. Class Action Cycle according to Kemmis & Mc Taggart.

Respondents (n) in this study were 108 people consisting of class LB24 (n=52) and class LI24 (n=52) in the odd semester of 2023. There were 18 groups in this research, each class was divided into 9 groups randomly with the number of members 5-6 per group. Class LB24 is the research target (treatment class), and class LI24 is the control class (non-treatment class).

## Results and Discussion

Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2012) said that the average parent considers that many students feel bored in class as something that does not need to be taken too seriously. Those who think so believe that this problem is only experienced by students who get bad grades and not the same for students who get good grades. They also believe that if students who get bad grades study more seriously then they will not feel bored because they get good grades. But in fact this is not the case. Almost all students who get good grades also experience boredom (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). Therefore, Krajcik and Blumenfeld concluded that the problem of students feeling bored in learning does not lie with the students themselves. There was something wrong with the structure of schooling. If we could find a way to engage students in their learning, to restructure the classroom so that students would be motivated to learn, that would be a dramatic change.

Krajcik at.al. (1994) and Blumenfeld at.al. (2000) noted that there are many researchers in the field of education who develop curriculum models and learning methods with the aim of increasing student engagement and helping students to deepen and understand important points in learning. One model developed since the 1990s is Project-Based Learning. Project-Based Learning allows student to learn by doing and applying ideas. Student engage in real world activities that are similar to the activities that adult professionals engage in. PBL is a form of situated learning and is based on the constructivist finding that students gain a deeper understanding of material when they actively construct their understanding by working with and using ideas. In PBL, students

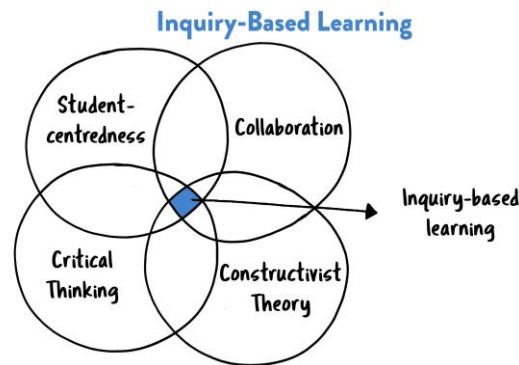
engage in real, meaningful problems that are important to them and that is what scientists, writers, historians, mathematicians do. In PBL classes students have many opportunities to ask questions, propose hypotheses and explanations, discuss their opinions, challenge other people's ideas, and dare to try new ideas. Various research has also proven that students who study in PBL classes have better scores compared to students in traditional classes (William & Linn, 2003; Marx et al. 2004; Rivet & Krajcik, 2004).

There are five main keys in PBL, namely:

1. Starting with a guiding question regarding the problem to be solved. In learning at BINUS, especially LB24 and LI24 which are the Character Building Pancasila classes, the questions asked are related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions and 17: Partnerships for the goals. Students are invited to choose projects, answer questions, according to their interests.
2. Students explore the driving question by participating in authentic, situated inquiry—processes of problem solving which are central to expert performance in the discipline. As students explore the driving question, they learn and apply important ideas in the discipline.
3. Students, lecturers, and community members engage in collaborative activities to find solutions to the driving question. This mirrors the complex social situation of expert problem solving.
4. While engaged in the inquiry process, students are scaffolded with learning technologies that help them participate in activities normally beyond their abilities.
5. Students create a set of tangible products that address the driving question. These are shared artifacts, publicly accessible external representations of the class's learning. In BINUS students product poster. (Blumenfeld, et.al, 1991; Krajcik, et.al., 1994; Krajcik, Czerniak, & Berger, 2002).

According to Krajcik and Blumenfeld, based on their research and experience of more than ten years of teaching using the PBL method, the roots of PBL are found in the theory developed by the philosopher John Dewey, who was also an educator (1959). Dewey, through his research in his school laboratory at the University of Chicago, developed the inquiry process in learning activities. Dewey argued that students will develop personal investment in the material if they engage in real, meaningful tasks and problems that emulate what experts do in real-world situations. Further Dewey and Dewey (1919) says, learning by doing does not, of course, mean the substitution of manual occupations or handwork for text-book studying. At the same time, allowing the students to do handwork whenever there is opportunity for it, is a great aid in holding the child's attention and interest.

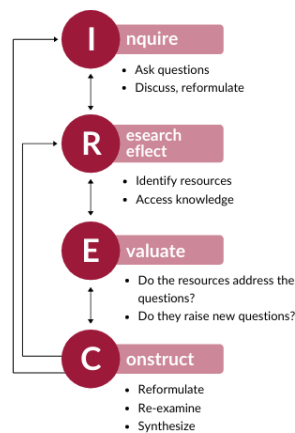
Research conducted by Dewey regarding the importance of active inquiry in developing deeper understanding, according to Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (1999) has produced at least four ideas in learning, namely active construction, situated learning, social interactions, and cognitive tools (technologies in learning, such as video-based learning and other interactive activities). These four ideas are also known in a learning theory called Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL), one of the strategies that can be used in the learning process to improve students' thinking abilities and help them understand the material better, which has four pillars, namely constructivist theory, student-centeredness, collaboration, and critical thinking.



Picture 2. Inquiry-Based Learning Model

Constructivist learning: This theory encourages learners to build knowledge through exploration and discovery. IBL assumes that this is correct. Student-centred: IBL puts the learner in control, giving them autonomy and allowing them to take charge of their learning journey (within limits). Collaborative: IBL promotes teamwork and interaction when solving problems. Critical thinking: IBL encourages higher-order thinking skills essential for success in the 21st century (Weller, 2023).

Ai et.al. (2008) highlight the following four elements central to inquiry-based learning:



Based on the explanation above, it can be said that the inquiry model has similarities with the project model, except that in the project model the result is in the form of an output called a work product.

In this research, researchers have carried out eight learning cycles or eight learning session activities. In the LI24 Character Building Pancasila class the class is divided into small groups containing 5-6 members in each group. However, this class was not given any treatment at all; that is, after small groups are formed in the class, the learning process is allowed to run naturally. This is different from the LB24 Character Building Pancasila class which is a treatment class. In this class, in each cycle of learning activities, treatment is carried out based on the evaluation carried out in the FGD, every time the learning process in one cycle ends.



### First Cycle

Students were divided into several groups randomly throughout learning cycle 1, each group numbering 5-6 students so that there were 9 groups with (n) 52 students. In the first cycle of the learning process, the lecturer highlighted that students were actively involved both academically and emotionally in pursuing knowledge and information about the subjects discussed. Meanwhile, the instructor functions as a motivator and facilitator, guiding and inspiring the class. Learning activities are student-centered during the learning process. The instructor asks several questions to groups of students, and students are expected to work together in their groups and participate actively in the conversation. The YouTube video (VBL) with the theme Introduction to Pancasila Character Building contained in the BINUS Learning Management System (LMS) is an action given in cycle 1. Then group members are asked to discuss (researchers and instructors are tasked with watching the activity). Before the meeting ended, three groups were randomly selected to give short oral presentations (15 minutes each) regarding the results of the group discussions. After that, using a random interview method, researchers carried out direct observations, specifically noting the presence or absence of engagement and the extent to which students made progress in learning. Learning progress is recorded based on the progress of project assignments for each student group.

### *Second to Eight Cycle*

In the second cycle to the eighth cycle the learning process by providing treatment is still given in the same way as in the first cycle. Lecturers as researchers collaborate with teaching assistants who act as instructors to provide several key questions according to the topic being discussed. Then students in groups discuss the given topic critically. As stated by Johnson & Johnson (1985), group conversations and interactions will teach students how to solve potential social problems and help them recognize each other's differences. This opinion from Johnson & Johnson confirms the conclusions of similar research conducted by Davis (1993), Pane et al. (2017), and Siregar et al. (2018, 2019), which states that the group collaboration method is much more effective in enabling students to remember. Students can remember more learning material by using the collaboration method compared to the traditional lecture method. Various studies also show that students who collaborate in groups experience higher levels of satisfaction than students in other classes who use non-cooperative teaching strategies. Through group discussions and analysis of contextual and actual problems, cooperative learning allows everyone in the group to help each other in solving problems. Gokhale (1995) said that to accept each other's criticism and ideas and work together towards a common goal in completing a task, all group members must understand the content discussed and communicate and respect each other. Developing students' emotional competence is another benefit of cooperative learning, in addition to increasing students' interest and motivation, which helps them achieve academic goals. Cycles 2-8 which use internet-based technology application treatments such as Kahoot (online game, session 2), Mentimeter (online application, session 3), Quizizz (online game, session 4), Roleplay (session 5), Forum discussion (session 6), Podcast onsite (session 7), Debate (session 8) showed quite significant progress in increasing results.

Overall, engagement in the treatment groups in the LB24 class showed more positive results compared to



engagement in the LI24 control class. The following tables explain this:

Table 1. Achievement Target of Engagement during Learning Process in Cycle 1-8 of Action Learning

DOMAIN (CLASSROOM)	GROUPS OF LB24								
	1 (5 members)	2 (6 members)	3 (5 members)	4 (6 members)	5 (6 members)	6 (6 members)	7 (6 members)	8 (6 members)	9 (6 members)
	Score 60-75 (Highly Engaged); 45-60 (Moderately Engaged); 30-45 (Barely Engaged); 15-30 (Disengaged)								
Affective/emotional (low-interest enjoyment, boredom)	63	66	53	66	67	69	63	71	68
Behavioral (skipping class)	68	64	49	67	64	64	66	70	70
Cognitive (lack of attention to task)	64	65	59	67	70	66	65	71	71
TOTAL	65	65	54	66	67	66	65	71	69

Table 1 is the results of a questionnaire with a Likert scale which shows that engagement in the LB24 treatment class is on average in the Engaged to Highly Engaged category. There is 1 group (Group 3) which is in the engaged category and 8 groups of students (Group 1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9) which are in the highly engaged category.

Table 2. Achievement Target of Engagement during Learning Process in Cycle 1-8 of Action Learning

DOMAIN (CLASSROOM)	GROUPS OF LI24								
	1 (6 members)	2 (6 members)	3 (5 members)	4 (6 members)	5 (6 members)	6 (6 members)	7 (6 members)	8 (6 members)	9 (5 members)
	Score 60-75 (Highly Engaged); 45-60 (Moderately Engaged); 30-45 (Barely Engaged); 15-30 (Disengaged)								
Affective/emotional (low-interest enjoyment, boredom)	43	48	53	49	60	32	58	53	59
Behavioral (skipping class)	44	47	49	46	54	34	55	51	58
Cognitive (lack of attention to task)	46	58	59	45	56	44	59	55	61
TOTAL	44	51	54	47	57	37	57	53	59

Table 2 is the results of a questionnaire with a Likert scale which shows that engagement in the LI24 non-treatment class is on average in the Barely to Moderate Engaged category. 2 groups (Group 1 & 6) fall into the barely engaged category and 7 groups of students (Group 2,3,4,5,7,8,9) fall into the moderately engaged category.

Thus, it can be said that treatment in the LB24 class showed much more positive engagement results than non-treatment in the LI24 class. The strong influence of engagement in the LB24 treatment class also shows other results, namely the final exam scores (final PBL assignments in the form of posters and explanations) from the average student are higher than in the LI24 class. This shows that students in the treatment class are more creative than students from the non-treatment class. Pay attention to table 3 below:

Table 3 Comparison of Scores from One of the Final Student Assignments in PBL

POSTER	Competency Standard Score	LI24 (n=52)	LB24 (n=52)
		Average Score	Average Score
Appearance (accurate and informative)	75	78	87
Suitability to the theme	75	80	86
sDesign creativity	75	81	88
Total	75	80	87

Table 3 shows that the groups in the LB24 treatment class got higher scores than the LI24 non-treatment class in

making posters as the product they produced. This can be expected to be directly related to the influence of engagement in the treatment class which is superior to engagement in the non-treatment class.

### **Conclusion**

Does engagement occur in the work team? The answer is yes it does. Especially in the LB24 Character Building Pancasila treatment class. Engagement occurs because the treatment is carried out over eight session cycles. The treatment developed refers to PBL theory which has four pillars: Constructivist theory, student centeredness, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Does engagement influence the spirit of team collaboration effectively so that the PBL goal is achieved, namely cooperation as one of the competency targets (quality or skill) for graduates from the 9 BINUS Graduate Attributes (BGA) that BINUS requires of all students and alumni? The answer is also yes it does. Engagement has increased the spirit of team collaboration effectively. This is proven by the average final score in the treatment class, especially in terms of creativity in making posters, where the group of students from class LB24, which is the treatment class, showed higher final results than class LI24.

Based on the conclusion above, it can be said that the aim of this research is to describe the teamwork of BINUS students who apply the PBL model in learning activities to get success. PBL is effective in creating engagement through teamwork learning.

### **Recommendation**

Several recommendations are offered considering the research findings: 1) Lecturer can select and implement the most appropriate learning model; and 2) a contextual model, like the group discussion in teamwork supported by the interactive activities and tools, can be selected to boost student motivation and academic accomplishment. In connection with this, previous studies might be consulted to guide future investigations. Then, to enhance learning so that the learning process occurs more effectively and maximally and may accomplish the anticipated learning objectives, BINUS University and the others should urge their lecturer to perform classroom action research.

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## The Positive Effect of "Sabilulungan" Culture on Civics Group Discussion Supported by Video-Based Learning

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**Abstract:** This research aims to have an overview of the effectiveness of the "Sabilulungan" culture-based group discussion model assisted by Video-based learning (VBL) to increase the motivation and learning achievement of Tri Mulya Middle School students after the COVID-19 pandemic. The research subjects were Civics students (n=36), 8<sup>th</sup> grade (even semester 2022). The research method was Class Action Research (CAR) with 3 to 4 stages: Planning, doing, observing (and reflecting). The activities were carried out in three cycles. The data demonstrates a rise in student learning outcomes, particularly in the areas of affection and cognition, as well as motivation. Students learning completeness as a percentage of 76.01 based on cycle 1's cognitive test and a percentage of completeness of 77.10 based on the affective test, with a class average of 76.55. The percentage rose to 79.18 on the cognitive exam and 81.13 on the affective test in cycle 2, with a class average score of 80.15. The average score in cycle 3 was 84.18, while cognitive and affective aspects scored 83.07 and 85.29, respectively. These findings show how well the group discussion model based on the "Sabilulungan" traditional culture at Tri Mulya Middle School works with VBL support.

**Keywords:** Learning, Tool, Teamwork, Motivation, Achievement

**Citation:** Siregar, C., Lake, S.C.J.M., & Benawa, A. (2024). The Positive Effect of "Sabilulungan" Culture on Civics Group Discussion Supported by Video-Based Learning. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024—International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 747-757), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

One, possibly the most crucial aspect of raising the caliber of human resources is education. A person gains knowledge, modifies their attitudes, and develops new abilities through education. Both formal and informal education are deliberate, planned endeavors that strive to fulfill people's need for advancement. Learning is the

core activity of education. Students must engage in the process of learning to gain new information, modify their attitudes, and develop their skills. One of the objectives of the Indonesian state, according to the preamble of the fourth paragraph of the 1945 Constitution, is to educate the people of the country. Every learning activity that is planned by the school and carried out by the instructor starts with and progresses toward the curriculum's learning objectives.

The Indonesian government is constantly working to raise the standard of education, and one of its initiatives is to modify, enhance, and polish the high school curriculum. The previous curriculum was refined to create the "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn) curriculum, which was introduced by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim in January 2020. Additionally, this curriculum emphasizes character development in addition to information and skill acquisition, and it gives students additional possibilities for flexible learning. The Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education, one of the main divisions of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, has mandated those students study civics as one of the required subjects. Tri Mulya is gradually beginning to implement the Freedom to Learn curriculum.

A curriculum designed with consideration for each location, the educational unit, and the unique qualities of the students is known as an independent-to-learn curriculum. Along with having more creative control over the selection and creation of instructional materials, this curriculum permits teachers to create their own indicators. Within the framework of the Freedom to Learn curriculum, students are expected to take an active part in their education (also known as student-centered learning), with the teacher primarily serving as a facilitator, motivator, and evaluator of the student's learning. The paradigm for education has shifted from being teacher-centered to being student-centered, requiring students to be engaged, imaginative, and acclimated to critical thinking. It is anticipated that this will enhance the quality of education in terms of processes, products, and results. As a result, learning must be contextual, and educators must give students more chances to experiment, do, and learn on their own (learning by doing and learning by experience). Contextual learning is another name for constructive learning, which is a concept of learning that stresses not only the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills but also the meaningful (to construct meaning) connection between the teacher and the students' real-world experiences. This encourages students to draw connections between their education and how it applies to their families, communities, and workplaces (reflective learning). To learn, students must actively do, try, and experience the content. As part of the Freedom to Learn curriculum, students must also be able to collaborate in groups (cooperative learning). According to Panitz (1987) and Bruffee (1995), students are thought to be able to absorb and retain learning content more easily when they cooperate in groups.

Based on their research, Davis (1993), Pane et al. (2017), and Siregar et al. (2018, 2019) concluded that students who work in small groups, regardless of the type of material being taught, generally learn more about it and retain it longer than students who receive the material in other formats, such as a teacher lecture. Furthermore, the study's conclusions show that students who collaborate in groups experience higher levels of satisfaction than those in other classes where non-cooperative teaching strategies are used. Through group discussions and problem analysis, cooperative learning involves students applying the Sundanese cultural concept of

"Sabilulungan" (means cooperation), which calls for everyone in the group to assist one another. To accept each other's critiques and ideas and to work toward the common goal of finishing assignments, all group members must comprehend the content covered and communicate with and respect one another. The development of students' emotional competence is another benefit of cooperative learning, in addition to raising student interest and motivation, which helps them meet academic objectives (Gokhale, 1995). Students actively participate in the learning process through cooperative learning, which stimulates their minds and emotions. Cooperative learning has several advantages, including social, psychological, and intellectual ones, as noted by Laal and Ghodsi (2012). According to Sotto (2021), students' academic performance or cognitive dimension was significantly impacted by cooperative learning. Related to psychological variables, students who participate in collaborative learning can improve their self-esteem, reduce their anxiety, and form good attitudes toward their teachers. Furthermore, Johnson & Johnson (1985) contend that group talks and interactions will teach students how to resolve potential social issues and help them recognize their differences from one another.

Within the framework of Indonesian education, "Sabilulungan," a Sundanese local culture in the area surrounding Tri Mulya Junior High School, situated in the center of the Sundanese-Javanese traditional community that upholds the "Sunda Wiwitan" belief, and one of the central tenets of Pancasila, an Indonesian ideology deeply ingrained in the lives of all local communities in Indonesia, ought to be taken into account for their efficacy in the educational process. As stated on June 1, 1945, at the BPUPKI summit by Soekarno, the country's first president. An extract from Soekarno's speech to the gathering is as follows:

"Gotong-royong" is the only authentic Indonesian word I have if I squeeze the five (the five principles of Pancasila, which are derived from the Sanskrit language, an ancient Javanese language; "panca" means five and "sila or syila" means joint stone or principle) into three and the three into one. Our nation, the State of Indonesia, was established as a cooperative nation! How wonderful! Nation of collaboration! Brothers, "Gotong Royong" is a livelier understanding than "kinship"! While kinship is a static understanding, cooperation is a company, a charitable organization, or a job, and it is referred to as one task, one performance, Dear Soekardjo. Together, let's complete these charitable tasks! "Gotong Royong" is the collective effort of laboring, perspiring, and battling. All good deeds for the good of all—sweat all for the joy of all. For the sake of all, hol-lopis kuntul-baris! Now that's collaboration!

The values of the fifth sila of Pancasila ideology are practiced following the spirit of "Gotong Royong" (in Indonesian) or "Sabilulungan" (in Sundanese). All Indonesian People: Social Justice is the fifth chapter. Cotton and rice represent the fifth sila. Prosperity and well-being are the key concepts. Soekarno says that "Gotong Royong" describes one "karyo" (creation), one work, one enterprise, and one charity. From ancient times to the present, the Indonesian people, whether traditional or modern, have valued and experienced this spirit, which is deeply ingrained in the community and is particularly evident when deciding how to resolve customary conflicts and issues that arise in day-to-day life. The "Gotong Royong" or "Sabilulungan" culture embodies the elements of convergent communication, specifically mutual understanding, mutual agreement, and collective action. These customs and spirit serve as the cornerstone for all Indonesian communities' ability to assist one another



and meet their basic needs in a participatory manner. According to Zainal in Matoneng et al. (2020), efforts to foster cooperation that is rooted in a community's local wisdom are meant to address issues of poverty and are elements of social capital and social energy that need to be nurtured to attain empowerment and independence, including via education.

As previously said, the researcher is interested in this study to gain insight into how the cooperative learning model grounded in the spirit and ideals of the "Sabilulungan" might enhance student motivation and achievement.

## Research Strategy

Particularly, this study used the three-cycle Class Action Research (CAR) paradigm. Implementing this CAR involves a spiral process with four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This approach is based on the model created by Kemmis and McTaggart (1982, 2000).<sup>36</sup> eighth-grade students from "Tri Mulya" Junior High School participated in this study as respondents during the even semester of the academic year 2022. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data regarding the state of the students is being gathered for this study. Qualitative elements are extracted from student observations by teachers, document evaluations, and interviews that explain how students learn in the classroom. The learning assessment results from cycles 1, 2, and 3 are used to determine the quantitative component. These findings come from students' cognitive and emotional exams on learning as well as their ability assessment results. Both learning and assessment instruments are used in this assessment. The Learning Implementation Plan (RPP, or syllabus in Indonesian) serves as the learning tool. The cognitive and affective components of the exam are measured using this tool.

The application of learning (lesson study) in this research is divided into three phases, which are the following: planning-to-do-see cycles.

Firstly, Planning or Preparing: During forum group discussions (FGD), instructors and researchers work together to create cooperative learning designs that will be used in instructional activities. Researchers offer suggestions and original ideas for developing practical contextual learning designs in this exercise.

Secondly, Doing or Acting: Using the lesson plan as a guide, the teacher instructs the class. To document and observe how the learning method is used when carrying out teaching and learning activities, the researcher watches the teaching and learning process in this section.

Thirdly, Seeing or Observing: through FGD, teachers, and researchers jointly consider the student activities that have been going on. To improve the plans for the upcoming meeting, the researcher refers to or considers the reflection points in this part.

There are three cycles in which the planning-do-see cycle is repeated. The researchers gathered qualitative data during the task. After the data collection process was finished, the data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques to obtain an understanding of the benefits of utilizing the group discussion method with VBL support in learning activities, as well as the positive effects it had on students' motivation and academic achievement based on the local cultural values of "Sabilulungan."

### Research Outcome

Learning is a pattern of interaction between teachers and students that uses different learning resources to support and develop knowledge, and changes in students' attitudes and skills throughout the entire learning process so they can achieve predetermined learning goals, both in the curriculum and in the lesson units. Learning is an interactive and communicative process that can take place both inside and outside of the classroom. Planning learning activities are required to meet the established learning objectives. Student's learning performance can be effectively supported by well-designed, creative, and contextually based learning activities that align with their actual needs. The effective method of learning within the teaching-learning environment Civics instruction at Tri Mulya Junior High School is supported by an appropriate learning model, which is cooperation learning aided by VBL based on the cultural values and spirit of "Sabilulungan." This model is thought to be effective in encouraging students to learn more and assisting them in successfully mastering the material. Teachers can learn about each student's fundamental skills, background, motivation, curiosity, attitudes, and interests through the learning process. Teachers possess the ability to recognize the traits or characteristics of their students who are the primary sources of information and success markers in the educational process. Teachers must carefully arrange learning activities, carry out regular evaluations, and make use of all available resources to support the learning process to meet these learning objectives. This study is conducted as classroom action research using the Teacher's Note "Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (The Unitary State of The Republic of Indonesia)" and the small group discussion assisted by the VBL model. Session 10: Analysis of the concept of national defense; Session 11: Implementation of national defense; Session 12: Perform national defense work. All the sessions (10, 11, 12) for this research were established as extracurricular activities where all teaching and learning activities are carried out alternatively online and face-to-face by offering group discussion tasks, including case studies. Research has demonstrated that utilizing the group discussion model in learning interviews, affective questionnaires, cognitive tests, and observations can enhance students' motivation and learning accomplishment, encompassing both cognitive and affective components. These results support those of other studies of a similar nature, such as those by Deanova et al. (2023) and Islami et al. (2020), which found that the group discussion model can enhance learning outcomes when compared to traditional learning models, which involve students less actively because they place more emphasis on the teacher's role. In a group discussion, Galanes and Adams (2009) stress the significance of observing communication and group culture: tension, fantasy, socialization, norms, and climate. Meanwhile, Albedaiwi (2022) enumerated the following eight factors that had a positive effect on cooperation success: autonomy; task density and complexity; rewards; group size; team and task regulation; positive

interdependence; constructive interaction; and mutual support and motivation. To make cooperative learning successful, teachers' roles are just as important as students'.

### *First Cycle*

Students were split up into groups at random throughout cycle 1 learning, with 4-5 students in each group for a total of 8 groups with (n) 36 students. In the first cycle of the learning process, the teacher highlights that students are actively engaged both academically and emotionally in their pursuit of knowledge and information on the subjects covered. In the meantime, the instructor serves as both a motivator and a facilitator, guiding and inspiring the class. Learning activities were student-centered (learner-centered) during the learning process. The teacher asks groups of students some questions, and the students are expected to cooperate in their groups and actively participate in the conversations. YouTube videos (VBL) with the following URL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0Zd3OwskIY> is the treatment provided in cycle 1. Then the group members have a discussion (the researcher and teacher are invited to witness the activity). Before the meeting concluded, two or three randomly selected group members gave a verbal presentation on the discussion's outcomes. Affective and cognitive questionnaires were completed after learning cycle 1. After that, using the interview method, the researcher did a direct observation, specifically noting the emotive elements of students. Cycle 1's observations, assessments, and questionnaire findings showed that the class average score was 76.55, with a score of 77.10 for the affective component and 76.01 for the cognitive segment. Increases in student motivation and achievement in cycle 1 impact the cognitive and emotive components of their performance. Table 1 displays the completion of each cycle 1 aspect.

Table 1. Achievement Target in Learning Process During Action Learning Cycle 1  
Session 10: Analysis of the concept of national defense

No	Rated aspects	Cycle target 1	(in %)	The average class	Criteria
		Std of success (SKBM)	Accessibility		
1	Cognitive aspect	75 (Grade B)	76.01	76.55	Success
2	Affective aspect	75 (Grade B)	77,10		
	a. Observation		76,01		
	b. Questionnaire		78.19		

Although they fall short of expectations, cycle 1's affective and cognitive outcomes are nonetheless below par. Consequently, cycle 2 activities must be completed to enhance learning and more effectively meet the desired goals.

### *The Second Cycle*

Cycle 2 activities are mostly concentrated on refining and enhancing the limitations identified in Cycle 1. With

4-5 students in each group, the split of groups in this cycle is done but not at random (group members are the same as the group in cycle 1). The teacher gives VBL, the following URL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYkCCCS2Aec>, in the second cycle. Following their viewing of the VBL, students were given a few questions to answer before having to debate and work through challenges in groups. Cycle 1's class activity follows the same pattern in session 2. An affective questionnaire and a cognitive test are administered following the conclusion of the second learning cycle. After that, students' affective characteristics are directly observed. According to cycle 2's observations, assessments, and questionnaires, the class average for achievement was 80.15, with the cognitive parts of achievement coming in at 79.18 and the emotional exam at 81.13. Lesson 12: Perform national defense work with the same pattern in cycle 3 produced results that were not too dissimilar from those of cycle 2—that is, the achievement of cognitive aspects of 83.07, affective aspects of 85.29, and the class average score of 84.18—so these results have reached the optimal target. Table 2 displays each aspect's accomplishment for cycle 2.

Table 2. Achievement Target in Learning Process During Action Learning Cycle 2  
Session 11: The implementation of national defense

No	Rated aspects	Cycle target 2	(in %)	The average class	Criteria
		Std of success (SKBM)	Accessibility		
1	Cognitive aspect	75 (Grade B)	79.18	80.15	Success
2	Affective aspect	75 (Grade B)	81.13		Success
	a. Observation		80.15		
	b. Questionnaire		82.11		

## Discussion

The terms "Dalihan Na Tolu" in North Sumatera, "Tok Tabua" in North-Central Timor and East Nusa Tenggara, "Sabilulungan" in Sundanese, "Krigan" in Central Java which means "mobilization" (from Sanskrit) all refer to sitting together, cooperating, or working as a group to solve problems. The culture of cooperation in many Indonesian regions is ingrained in daily life and encourages cooperative behaviors, even in educational settings. The traditional community of Sunda Wiwitan typically practices "Sabilulungan," or "cooperation," in both special occasions and day-to-day activities. However, it is uncommon for classroom activities that typically employ the one-way (lecture) method to incorporate the group discussion model that incorporates the "Sabilulungan" ideals. Because they must support one another and collaborate to create a learning environment that can help increase motivation and learning ability despite all their limitations, teachers in this research are conditioned to instill in their students the habit of always participating in "sit-down activities" and problem-solving together, especially when case studies are used to support VBL.

Based on Maslow's theory of needs, McClelland (1961, 1987) proposes that people have potential energy reserves that can be produced or released based on their unique motivations and the opportunities and

circumstances to which they have access. McClelland states that three types of needs—the need for achievement, abbreviated as nAch; the need for power, abbreviated as nPow; and the need for affiliation, or the need of affiliation, abbreviated as nAff—are the driving forces behind the mobilization of these potential energy reserves. As per McClelland's research, individuals with high nAch tend to be self-reliant in problem-solving, set moderately challenging objectives for themselves, take calculated risks to accomplish these objectives, and appreciate constructive criticism on their performance. For them, employment pleasure comes from doing the work properly, not from financial incentives. Conversely, Wolf and Smith (1995) contend that two factors—first, whether test questions relate to the student's interests, and second, the student's level of effort during the test—have a significant impact on the student's motivation to learn and finish the assigned material.

In this three-cycle learning process, class action research (CAR) has demonstrated that group cooperation and motivation are critical factors in students' attempts to finish teacher-given homework. All students' unique features are respected, acknowledged in group assignment activities, and taken into consideration when meeting their various requirements and types of motivation. Students who appear to require accomplishment are motivated to get the greatest possible score. It is acceptable for students who require authority to lead groups. It is recommended that students who require affiliation get along with other members of their team. When collaboration in learning (group discussion) based on the cultural principles of "Sabilulungan" is applied, the outcomes grow from cycle 1 to cycle 2 and subsequently to cycle 3. Table 3 displays the comparison of the aspect outcomes between cycles that were obtained based on the findings of tests, questionnaires, and observations.

Table 3 (Table of Results Comparison). Comparison of Intercycle Results Material Session 10, 11, 12

Rated aspects	Accessibility cycle 1 (%)	Average	Accessibility cycle 2 (%)	Average	Accessibility cycle 3 (%)	Average	Information
Cognitive	76.01	76.55	79.18	80.15	83.07	84.18	Increase
Affective	77.10		81.13		85.29		Increase

This study was successful since the evaluated affective and cognitive components had attained the set targets, according to a comparison of the data between cycles 1, 2, and 3.

## Conclusion

The question that the principal of Tri Mulya Middle School asked the research team before this research took place was whether there were alternative solutions that could help students learn better. When this question was confirmed with the team teachers, it was discovered that the problem at Tri Mulya Middle School was related to student demotivation after the COVID-19 pandemic. Demotivation also causes a decline in student learning achievement.

The research team then conducted a direct survey of learning activities in the classroom. The class that the

research team chose was the 8<sup>th</sup> grade which was studying Civics material. The teaching method used by teachers at that time was a traditional method with a two-way pattern. It was indeed seen during the survey that some students were sleepy, chattered, and on average paid little attention to asking or responding to the teacher's questions. The classes that the research team surveyed did not appear interactive, indicating low interest and motivation to learn.

Based on the survey results, the research team proposed a trial of an interactive approach with learning methods which is expected to make the classroom atmosphere more interactive. The expected result is increased motivation and learning achievement of students. Therefore, a group discussion approach based on the typical Sundanese culture, namely Sabilulungan, using VBL tools was tried out. The use of VBL considers the limited internet and Wi-Fi facilities at schools located in rural areas. VBL, which is downloaded or recorded before the class session takes place, will help teachers overcome the limitations of internet-based online social media.

The research results show that the application of group discussion supported by VBL based on the cultural values of "Sabilulungan" can raise students' motivation and learning achievement on the subject matter of Session 10, 11, and 12 of Civics at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of Tri Mulya Middle School, even semester academic year 2022, according to the research findings. These findings answer one of the main problems faced by Tri Mulya Middle School, namely demotivation and a decline in learning achievement after the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Recommendations

Several recommendations are offered considering the research findings: 1) teachers can select and implement the most appropriate learning model; and 2) a contextual model, like the group discussion supported by the VBL model, can be selected to boost student motivation and academic accomplishment. In connection with this, previous studies might be consulted to guide future investigations. Then, to enhance learning so that the learning process occurs more effectively and maximally and may accomplish the anticipated learning objectives, Tri Mulya Junior High School and the others should urge teachers to perform classroom action research.

## Acknowledgments

This work is supported by the Research and Technology Transfer Office, Bina Nusantara University as a part of Bina Nusantara University's International Research Grant entitled Penelitian Internasional BINUS (PIB) with contract number: 061/VR.RTT/IV/2022 and contract date: 8 April 2022.

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## EFL Students' Acceptance of Using Learning Management System for Online Testing

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**Abstract:** The use of Learning Management System (LMS) is widespread in academic institutions across worldwide as technology integration in education keeps evolving. This study aims at investigating students' acceptance of using LMS for online testing. Additionally, the study seeks to thoroughly examine the reasons that lead to their acceptance of this educational technology for online testing. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collects data from 245 university students in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, using both quantitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The theoretical framework, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), directs the examination of the major reasons influencing students' acceptance of LMS for online assessments. Findings from this research indicate that participating students approve of using LMS for online testing due to several reasons. The implications of the study extend to educators, administrators, providing valuable insights for optimizing the integration of LMS into educational practices and fostering a positive online learning environment.

**Keywords:** acceptance, online testing, Learning Management System

**Citation:** Nguyen, T. B. (2024). EFL students' acceptance of using learning management system for online testing. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 758-771), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Modern technology, particularly in the realm of education, has become the predominant means of disseminating information through various platforms and processes (Al-Mamary, 2022). According to Alharbi et al. (2021), the widespread reliance on computers in daily life, accompanied by significant technological advancements, has instigated various changes across different domains, including education. Concurrently, the progress in information and communication technology (ICT) has given rise to the implementation of learning management systems (LMS), which seamlessly integrate course content and student databases within the learning process (Alharbi et al., 2021).

The adoption of LMS is similar to ICT-based learning technologies being included into global educational institutions' infrastructure (Al-Mamary, 2020). The researcher mentioned while the integration of technology in classrooms is not a novel concept and has been practiced for many years, the prevalence of computers in higher

education institutions in developed nations is now commonplace (Al-Mamary, 2020). The integration of technology into the interaction between teaching and learning presents a challenge to traditional teaching approaches. Keeping up with technological advancements in education requires utilizing contemporary tools like learning management systems (Al-Mamary, 2020). The term Learning Management System has been identified by various other terms like Virtual Learning Environment or Course Management System (Kasim & Khalid, 2016; Piña, 2013). According to Kasim and Khalid (2016), Rhode et al. (2017) an LMS is characterized as software designed to oversee and monitor teaching and learning activities. It enables teachers and students to exchange learning materials, facilitates testing and assessment, and promotes interactive communication between educators and learners through an online platform.

Although LMS is a universal and familiar concept in education, students' acceptance of LMS for online testing has still been novel. The research regarding the utilization of online tests in higher education is continuously expanding, with a focus on investigating teacher and student perceptions (Al-Busaidi, 2010; Almarashdeh et al., 2011), its benefits and challenges (Cao, 2023), and the factors influencing students' acceptance of Learning Management Systems in Brunei (Hamid et al., 2020). However, limited studies have explored students' acceptance of using LMS for online testing and the reasons influencing their acceptance, particularly in the Vietnamese educational setting. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study to bridge the gap. This paper aims to explore students' acceptance of using LMS for online testing and seek the reasons why they accept it. From the reasons above, the two following research questions are highlighted in this study:

1. To what extent do students accept using LMS for online testing?
2. Why do students accept using LMS for online testing?

### **Learning management system (LMS), its benefits and challenges**

According to Al-Mamary (2017), Learning Management Systems (LMS) function as digital instruments assisting educational institutions in constructing, executing, and evaluating learning frameworks. Alharbi et al. (2021) highlight that LMS, typified by platforms such as Blackboard, represent a type of communication and information technology widely utilized in higher education. These systems encompass a range of functionalities enabling both educators and learners to access educational materials, providing diverse services tailored to individual platforms. Moreover, LMS has evolved into a crucial platform for virtual interaction between teachers and students in higher education institutions, utilizing the internet and related software to enhance the dissemination of diverse solutions that foster interactive learning and knowledge sharing (Paulsen, 2002). The functionalities of LMS extend to tracking learners' activities, monitoring progress, managing course assignments, and conducting online quizzes. Additionally, it furnishes essential features for generating online reports on each course and learner. These attributes are particularly conducive to distance instruction, as emphasized by Almarashdeh et al. (2011). Consequently, universities and higher education institutions widely adopt LMS to establish a comprehensive digital framework within the educational system.

Noor-Ul-Amin (2013) asserted that incorporating and utilizing technology in teaching and learning will positively impact teaching, learning, and research. This integration not only grants students increased flexibility, allowing them to access instruction at their convenience and from any location, but it also establishes a dynamic and immersive environment for the educational process. Consequently, it is expected to significantly enhance the educational experience by presenting students with new and diverse learning opportunities. It is said that LMS offers users several benefits. First of all, Liu et al. (2019) believe that multifunctionality is one undeniable merit of using LMS as it provides teachers and students with all the tools they need for their teaching and learning activities just on one single platform. Secondly, Kasim and Khalid (2016) said that most LMSs are designed to be user-friendly so that even people who have basic technical skills can learn to use LMS successfully with some initial guides. In addition, users can also manipulate LMS easily because of its simply-designed interface. Thirdly, Cavus and Alhih (2014) and Choi (2019) mentioned interactivity as one of the advantages that LMS has over other teaching and learning tools because it enables teachers and students interact better through communicative functions. Moreover, according to Holmes and Prieto-Rodriguez (2018) and Santiana et al. (2021), flexibility is also an important benefit that LMS offers both teachers and students. LMS is especially useful for blended learning because teachers and students can have easy access to learning resources everywhere and at any time

Despite several advantages of LMS, there are some notable disadvantages. Sayfour (2016) and Bhalalusesa et al. (2013) highlights one of the most common drawbacks is related to internet connectivity. The reliance on a slow or unstable internet connection can disrupt the use of LMS and significantly impact the teaching and learning process. Besides, studies by Al-Handhali et al. (2020) and Darvin et al. (2021) shed light on another challenge associated with LMS usage, namely the simply-designed interface of most LMS platforms. This simplistic design often leads to a monotonous and unattractive user experience, which can result in boredom among users. Consequently, maintaining user engagement becomes more challenging when utilizing LMS. According to Bhalalusesa et al. (2013), teachers and students often feel that they lack adequate guidance and instructions on how to effectively navigate and utilize LMS. This absence of comprehensive guidance creates difficulties for users during their LMS application, hindering their ability to leverage the full potential of the system. Moreover, it is worth noting that using technological advancements, particularly LMS, requires users to possess a certain level of knowledge and skills (Al-Handhali et al., 2020).

#### *Online testing and its benefits*

E-learning incorporates online testing as a segment aimed at evaluating learners' knowledge through electronic means (Abazi-Bexheti, et al. 2013). Recently, the methods for assessing knowledge have evolved to meet the demand for evaluating a large number of learners simultaneously. Consequently, online tests, which are easily and promptly accessible, have gained significant importance in determining learners' outcomes, particularly in online studies (Abazi-Bexheti et al., 2013).

Online testing refers to a type of assessment conducted via technology, known as e-assessment or ICT-based

assessment, which serves various educational purposes such as diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation (Boitshwarelo et al., 2017). Unlike broader e-assessment methods, online tests specifically involve automated deployment and grading through computer-assisted assessment tools (Davies, 2010; Gipps, 2005). Often referred to as online quizzes, these assessments are commonly utilized within learning management systems (LMS) for delivering online and blended learning courses (Boitshwarelo et al., 2017).

The adoption of e-assessment, especially online tests, has surged in higher education over the past two decades due to several advantages. Firstly, it is a response to reduced resources for teaching and an increase in student numbers, requiring educators to do more with less while adapting to the growing use of technology in teaching (Donnelly, 2014; Nicol, 2007). Secondly, the distribution of tests is more convenient for online tests, as they can be delivered to students within a specified time interval without the need for physical presence in the classroom. This flexibility allows students to take the test from various locations, such as while traveling, in the library, or at an internet café (Bexheti et al., 2013). Additionally, the prevention of plagiarism by disabling copy/paste functions is feasible, although it remains an active issue in ongoing developments (Abazi-Bexheti et al., 2013). Furthermore, online tests are considered more objective since they enable the establishment of grades and the determination of correct and incorrect answers during the test construction phase, before testing begins. This independence from the corrector/grader contributes to the impartiality of grading (Abazi-Bexheti et al., 2013). Gipps (2005) highlights the effectiveness and educational advantages of employing online tests, emphasizing their automated grading and feedback mechanisms, which render them highly efficient, rapid, and dependable, particularly in situations with a large student population.

## **Method**

### **Research design**

The methodology used in this study is a descriptive design with a mixed-method approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to achieve a holistic comprehension of the research phenomenon (Fraenkel et al, 2012). The study employed a couple of instruments to collect data, which were a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire, designed to capture quantitative data, comprises closed-ended questions to gather numerical responses from participants. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews provide a qualitative dimension, allowing for in-depth exploration and interpretation of participants' experiences, perspectives, and insights. This combination of methods strengthens the study's reliability by cross-referencing results from both data sets, providing a comprehensive viewpoint on the topic being examined (Mertens, 2010; Creswell, 2023).

### *Participants*

A population of 120 students enrolled at a private institution in Vietnam was the subject of the study. To effectively identify participants for the study's initial phase, convenience sampling was used (Fraenkel et al.,

2012). This method was selected due to its usefulness and ability to save time (Creswell, 2023). A subset of 10 individuals was then randomly selected from the original population for the study's second phase. Following that, these participants were given the chance to express their opinions in semi-structured interviews regarding the acceptability of LMS for online testing. It is noteworthy that the chosen participants had at least one semester's worth of experience with the LMS, or roughly ten weeks of English language training. This length of time for a more thorough examination of their familiarity and acceptance of the LMS as a platform for conducting online tests in the context of their English classes.

### *Instruments*

The research adopted a dual-method strategy, employing both quantitative and qualitative tools for gathering data (Fraenkel, et al., 2012). A survey questionnaire was used to collect information on students' acceptance of the use of learning management systems for online exams in order to address the quantitative component. Five variables were included in the questionnaire, which was constructed based on TAM (Davis, 1989). The 17-item survey used a 5-point Likert-type scale, with one meaning "strongly disagree" and five meaning "strongly agree," to provide a more thorough evaluation of participants' answers.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted to delve deeper into students' perspectives on the acceptance of LMS for online testing. The four open-ended questions in the interviews were designed to align with the four themes derived from the quantitative questionnaire. This approach allowed the researchers to guide participants in providing more detailed and insightful responses, enriching the qualitative data gathered. Combining statistical data with qualitative insights for a more thorough analysis, the two instruments provide a thorough grasp of the elements impacting students' adoption of LMS for online assessment.

To assess the degree of adoption of LMS for online testing, the mean scores for each construct derived from the survey questionnaire were calculated. The interpretation of these mean scores was based on adapted interpretation ranges from Oxford (1990). The mean scores were categorized into four ranges to gauge the extent of adoption. A Low level of adoption was indicated when the mean score fell within the range of 1 to 2.4. The Medium level of adoption encompassed mean scores ranging from 2.5 to 3.5. A High level of adoption was determined when the mean score fell within the range of 3.6 to 4.4. Finally, a Very High level of adoption was ascribed to mean scores ranging from 4.5 to 5. This categorization provided a clear framework for interpreting the degree of acceptance based on participants' responses, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the acceptance of LMS for online testing among the university students in the study.

## **Results**

### **Results from the questionnaire**

Reliability tests for each construct to assess the goodness and consistency of the measures are conducted. The

student's questionnaire shows a high-reliability index (.91), which is reliable enough for the study. The following results show high reliability of each factor including *Perceived Ease of Use* (0.91), *Perceived Usefulness* (0.94) and *Attitude toward the use of LMS for online testing* (0.93) *Behavioral Intention to Use* (0.95).

Table 1 presents data which indicates students' acceptance of utilizing the LMS for online testing, gathered from 245 participants. A Descriptive Statistics Test was conducted to ascertain the overall outcome of the assessment.

Table 1. Mean score of students' acceptance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean score of students' acceptance	245	1.12	5.00	3.95	.79

Table 1 illustrates that the mean score of students' acceptance of using the LMS for online testing (M= 3.95, SD= .79) was at a high level.

A Descriptive Statistics Test was employed to analyze the mean score across five clusters. The outcomes of this examination are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The average mean score of five clusters

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean PU	245	1.40	5.00	3.98	.82
Mean PEU	245	1.00	5.00	4.01	.83
Mean AT	245	1.00	5.00	3.91	.86
Mean BE	245	1.00	5.00	3.85	.92

Participants' agreement levels across various indicators range from 3.85 to 4.01, suggesting a substantial level of consensus. Particularly, indicators such as perceived usefulness (M= 3.98, SD= 0.82), perceived ease of use (M= 4.01, SD = 0.83), attitude toward use (M= 3.91, SD= 0.86), and behavioral intention (M= 3.85, SD= 0.92) received notably high levels of agreement. Notably, perceived ease of use (M= 4.01, SD= 0.83) garnered the highest mean score among these indicators. The overall high mean scores across these indicators suggest that students have a positive acceptance of using LMS for online testing.

#### *Perceived usefulness*

From the findings displayed in Table 2, the mean score of perceived usefulness (M= 3.98, SD= 0.82) was notably elevated. This section presents the five questions concerning perceived usefulness, with Table 3 detailing the students' responses to these questions.



Table 3. The mean score of perceived usefulness

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using LMS for online testing would enable me to accomplish tests more quickly.	245	1.00	5.00	4.10	.92
Using LMS for online testing would help me to do tests better.	245	1.00	5.00	3.99	.96
Using LMS for online testing would increase my scores.	245	1.00	5.00	3.73	1.01
Using LMS for online testing would make it easier to do tests	245	1.00	5.00	4.00	.98
I would find LMS useful for online testing.	245	1.00	5.00	4.07	.90

As indicated in Table 3, students expressed a strong consensus regarding the perception that employing a Learning Management System (LMS) for online testing would enhance their ability to complete tests more efficiently, attaining the highest level ( $M=4.10$ ,  $SD=.92$ ). Additionally, respondents held a positive view on the utility of LMS for online testing, with a notable level of agreement ( $M=4.07$ ,  $SD=.90$ ). Another prevalent belief among students was that utilizing LMS for online testing would simplify the test-taking process, reflecting a high level ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=.98$ ). Subsequently, students embraced the idea that incorporating LMS into online testing would contribute to improved test performance ( $M=3.99$ ,  $SD=.96$ ). Lastly, even though there was the least amount of agreement among the five things, respondents nevertheless recognized that using LMS for online testing may improve their scores and bring them up to an acceptable level ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ).

#### *Perceived ease of use*

As displayed in Table 2, the mean score for perceived ease of use ( $M=4.01$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ) indicated a high level. This section outlines the five questions related to perceived ease of use, with Table 4 showcasing the responses from the students.

Table 4. The mean score of perceived ease of use

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learning to operate LMS for online testing would be easy for me.	245	1.00	5.00	4.04	.93
My interaction with LMS would be clear and understandable.	245	1.00	5.00	4.03	.94
I would find the process on LMS clear and understandable.	245	1.00	5.00	4.02	.92
I am skillful at using LMS for online testing.	245	1.00	5.00	3.96	.94
I find LMS easy to use for online testing	245	1.00	5.00	4.02	.90

According to Table 4, students expressed confidence in their ability to learn how to use the LMS for online testing ( $M=4.04$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ). Additionally, they believed that their interactions with the LMS would be

straightforward and comprehensible ( $M= 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ). Following this, they anticipated finding the processes on the LMS to be clear and manageable ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ), and perceived the LMS as easy to use for online testing ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ). Lastly, students indicated their proficiency in using the LMS for online testing, which received the lowest mean score ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD= 0.94$ ).

#### *Attitude toward use*

Table 2 demonstrates that the mean score of students' attitude toward use ( $M= 3.91$ ,  $SD= 0.86$ ) was at a high level. This section outlines the four questions regarding attitude toward use, with Table 5 displaying the responses from the students.

Table 5. The mean score of attitude toward use

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using LMS for online testing is a good idea.	245	1.00	5.00	3.98	.91
LMS makes online testing more interesting.	245	1.00	5.00	3.89	.99
Using LMS for online testing is a pleasant experience.	245	1.00	5.00	3.91	.92
I like using LMS for online testing.	245	1.00	5.00	3.89	.99

As shown in Table 5, the majority of students expressed a positive sentiment towards the idea of utilizing Learning Management Systems (LMS) for online testing, with this belief garnering the highest level of agreement ( $M= 3.98$ ,  $SD= .91$ ). Additionally, students held the view that the experience of using LMS for online testing is pleasant ( $M= 3.91$ ,  $SD= .92$ ). Subsequently, respondents also conveyed positive opinions regarding the impact of LMS on online testing, stating that it made the process more interesting and expressing an overall liking for using LMS in the context of online testing, both of which received a mean score of 3.89.

#### *Behavioral intention*

As presented in Table 2, the mean score for students' attitude toward use ( $M= 3.91$ ,  $SD= 0.86$ ) indicated a high level. This section outlines the three questions concerning attitude toward use, with Table 6 showcasing the responses from the students.

Table 6. The mean score of behavioral intention

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation.
I intend to use LMS for online testing in the next 3 months	245	1.00	5.00	3.84	.94
I plan to use LMS for online testing in the next 3 months	245	1.00	5.00	3.86	.98
I expect to use LMS for online testing in the future	245	1.00	5.00	3.85	.98

According to the data presented in Table 5, students expressed their intention to utilize Learning Management Systems (LMS) for online testing within the upcoming three months ( $M= 3.86$ ,  $SD= .98$ ), marking the highest mean score. Subsequently, a significant number of students demonstrated their anticipation of employing LMS for online testing in the future ( $M=3.85$ ,  $SD= .98$ ). Additionally, there was a high level of agreement among students who planned to use LMS for online testing within the next three months ( $M=3.84$ ,  $SD= .94$ ).

### *Results from interviews*

To gather understanding regarding students' willingness to utilize LMS for online testing, ten students were interviewed based on the four clusters outlined in the questionnaire.

The findings from interviews showed that the majority of the participants found LMS was useful online testing since it helps them to do the test faster. They shared a similar idea that:

*“Taking online tests on the LMS is so fast and convenient since after I log in with my account I can take the tests immediately, so I can save a lot of time” (Participant 2)*

*“Since it has the time set on the system, that’s why I can manage time effectively while taking the test.” (Participant 6)*

*“Also, I can click on the answers quickly compared to circling when taking the test with paper and a pencil.” (Participant 3)*

Overall, based on the analysis of the interviews, a consensus among the majority of participants emerged, supporting the notion that Learning Management Systems (LMS) were beneficial for online testing, primarily due to the efficiency it offered in completing tests promptly. Participants expressed a shared perspective, emphasizing the speed and convenience associated with taking online tests through the LMS.

Furthermore, in response to inquiries regarding the ease of utilizing the LMS, a majority of students concurred that the system is user-friendly. They also expressed the view that learning to navigate the LMS was straightforward and that their interactions with it were clear and comprehensible. They said:

*“I think that LMS is easy to use since I do not log in with many steps. Also, the instruction on LMS is quite clear to me. I can read and understand it” (Participant 4)*

*“It’s not necessary for me to learn how to operate the LMS because it has the instruction on it which is clear and understandable. Hence, I am confident about operating the LMS for online testing” (Participant 1)*

*However, one of the six participating students share a notable point that should be considered:*

*“I find the instruction on the LMS sometimes hard to understand since it is written in English so I can’t understand all of the notification on it” (Participant 2)*

In short, the majority of students expressed agreement that the LMS is user-friendly. They also conveyed a belief that learning to operate the LMS was easy, and their interactions with the system were clear and comprehensible. However, it also highlights a language barrier which concerns for a particular student and underscores the importance of providing clear instructions in a language accessible to all users.

Moreover, when they were asked about their attitude towards using this platform for online testing, most of students held a positive attitude toward using this platform for online testing since it is a good idea and it is a pleasant experience.

*“I think testing on the LMS is a good idea because it is easy for me to edit my writing or change the answers if I wish, I needn't erase the mistakes” (Participant 4)*

*“To me, it is a good experience since I can manage the time easily, and also students don't cheat in the quiz/tests when using this platform for testing. It is equal, I think” (Participant 6)*

Overall, these sentiments highlight the perceived advantages of the Learning Management System (LMS) for online testing, including ease of editing, efficient time management, and a level playing field for all students, fostering a positive attitude among participants.

Finally, when the participants were asked to share their behavioral Intention to use LMS for online testing, 90% students planned to use it soon. However, 10% of participants pointed out some drawbacks of LMS.

*“I plan to use LMS for online testing next month since we are going to have a Progress Test on the LMS” (Participant 1)*

*“I find one of the drawbacks of testing on the LMS is poor internet connection or technical problems. Sometimes, when many students log in at the same time, the system is very slow, I can't go on with the next parts of the test” (Participant 2)*

From students' sharing, it suggests that while participants recognize certain challenges with the LMS, most of them still intend to use it, possibly because of the perceived benefits outweighing the drawbacks or the necessity of using the platform for specific assessments.

## **Discussion**

This study aims at investigating students' acceptance of using Learning Management Systems for online testing. The results indicate a high level of acceptance among students for utilizing this platform in general. Consequently, the analysis suggests a positive inclination of students toward using LMS for online testing. This affirmation aligns with prior research conducted by Alharbi et al. (2021) and Al-Mamary (2022), who similarly found that students embraced the use of LMS. The detailed exploration of specific findings from both the

questionnaire and interviews follows.

To begin with, both the questionnaire and interview responses demonstrate that students perceive LMS as beneficial for online testing, attributing its usefulness to the ability to complete tests more efficiently. This finding is substantiated by Al-Busaidi et al.'s (2010) study, which highlighted that LMS provides students with flexibility in terms of location, timing, and pace, leading to significant time savings. Furthermore, participants collectively emphasized the convenience associated with taking online tests through LMS. This viewpoint is consistent with research by Holmes and Prieto-Rodriguez (2018), Santiana et al. (2021), and Abazi-Bexheti et al. (2013), who noted that the distribution of tests is more convenient in an online format, allowing for delivery within a specified time frame without the necessity of physical presence in a classroom.

Furthermore, the outcomes also suggest that students embraced the user-friendliness of the online platform, emphasizing its ease of use. They attested to the clarity and comprehensibility of the instructions provided by the Learning Management System (LMS). A majority of students agreed that the LMS interface is user-friendly, and they perceived the learning process of operating the system as straightforward. This aligns with findings from Kasim and Khalid (2016), who asserted that most LMSs are intentionally designed to be user-friendly, allowing individuals with basic technical skills to navigate them successfully with initial guidance. Additionally, the simplicity of the interface enables users to manipulate the LMS easily.

Moreover, participating students highlighted various perceived benefits of utilizing the Learning Management System (LMS) for online testing, such as easy editing, efficient time management, and creating a fair playing field for all students. These positive aspects contributed to a favorable attitude among participants. This is supported by Almarashdeh et al. (2011) who emphasized the LMS's capacity to facilitate learning tasks, enhance learning effectiveness, and increase productivity. The finding is also consistent with a study by Abazi-Bexheti et al. (2013), who said the prevention of plagiarism through disabling copy/paste functions was acknowledged. Consequently, students expressed their intention to continue using LMS for online testing in the next three months. This intention aligns with the findings of Davies (1989), who noted that both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use positively influence the behavioral intention to use.

However, the interviews conducted in this study unveiled some drawbacks of using LMS for online testing. Language barriers emerged as a concern for certain participants, emphasizing the importance of providing clear instructions accessible to all users. This finding concurs with Al-Handhali et al. (2020), who pointed out that utilizing technological advancements, especially LMS, requires users to possess specific knowledge and skills. This contrasts with the findings of Kasim and Khalid (2016), who claimed that instructions on LMS were clear and understandable. Another identified disadvantage is the issue of poor internet connection during online tests. This drawback resonates with studies by Sayfour (2016) and Bhalalusesa et al. (2013), both highlighting that a common challenge is related to internet connectivity. The reliance on a slow or unstable internet connection can disrupt the use of LMS and significantly impact the teaching and learning process.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study set out to investigate students' acceptance of utilizing Learning Management Systems for online testing, with a focus on exploring the reasons influencing their acceptance of this educational technology. The findings of this research reveal a high level of approval among participating students for using LMS in online testing, primarily attributed to its perceived usefulness and ease of use. These positive attitudes underscore the potential efficacy of integrating LMS into educational practices. Notably, participants emphasized the convenience and efficiency of the LMS for test-taking, as well as the platform's role in fostering equal and fair assessment conditions. The implications of this study are significant for educators and administrators, providing valuable insights into optimizing the integration of LMS into educational practices. By understanding the factors that contribute to students' acceptance, educational stakeholders can enhance the implementation of LMS, ultimately fostering a positive and effective online learning environment. As technology continues to play a pivotal role in education, these findings contribute to the ongoing efforts to leverage digital tools for improved learning outcomes and student satisfaction.

## Limitations and Recommendations

While this research offers valuable insights into the acceptance of Learning Management Systems for online testing among students and delves into the factors shaping this acceptance, it's important to recognize certain constraints that could affect the applicability and thoroughness of the conclusions. Firstly, the study centered on a specific demographic – 245 university students in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. The constrained sample size and geographical focus might limit the extent to which the findings can be applied to a broader student populace or different educational environments. Secondly, cultural considerations play a significant role. The research was conducted within the cultural framework of Vietnam, and cultural elements can greatly influence technology adoption. Hence, the results may not directly translate to students in disparate cultural milieus, constraining the study's external validity. Recognizing these constraints holds significant importance in accurately interpreting the findings of the study and directing forthcoming research endeavors geared towards unraveling the complex interplay of factors influencing students' embrace of LMS for online assessment.

## Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the support and contribution of all participants, colleagues in this study.

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# Enhancing EFL Learners' Listening Skills Through the Flipped Classroom Approach

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**Abstract:** The use of the Flipped Classroom model in teaching English has gained considerable traction, particularly in the context of Industry 4.0, with a growing body of research examining its effectiveness. This study was designed to explore the effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom approach on students' listening skills. A total of 37 participants were recruited through convenience sampling and divided into two groups: an experimental group (N=18) and a control group (N=19). The experimental group was taught using the Flipped Classroom method, while the control group received traditional instruction for the same listening course. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, and analyzed using T-tests to determine any significant differences in listening performance between the two groups. The results indicated that the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher performance on the listening test compared to the control group. These findings have important pedagogical implications for the use of the Flipped Classroom model in language education.

**Keywords:** Flipped Classroom model, listening skills, EFL learners

**Citation:** Trung, K.N. (2024). Enhancing EFL learners' listening skills through the Flipped Classroom approach. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 772-786), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

### Rationale

#### *Theoretical Background*

The emergence of English as a global language is closely linked to the ongoing process of globalization, which is evident in the increasing frequency of international trade, travel, education, Internet use, and mass entertainment. This globalization has heightened the significance of English communication skills. As noted by Nunan (2003), among the four fundamental language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—listening has historically been regarded as the "Cinderella skill" in second language learning, often overshadowed by a greater emphasis on speaking skills. Language educators and learners frequently prioritize speaking, neglecting the importance of developing listening comprehension skills as a foundational step toward proficiency in speaking (Chastain, 1988). Flowerdew & Miller (2005) highlight that, while speaking and writing have traditionally been the primary indicators of language proficiency, listening (along with reading) plays a

critical role in achieving communicative competence, warranting greater attention in language education.

In the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), listening skills often receive limited focus, with few sustained efforts to support learners in enhancing their listening capabilities. Although contemporary classrooms have introduced more listening activities, learners often face the challenge of developing these skills with minimal guidance from instructors. This necessitates a broader academic and methodological inquiry to propose innovative approaches for teaching listening skills effectively.

Technological advancements have significantly impacted educational methodologies, leading to a redefined role for both teachers and students. Teachers are no longer the central source of knowledge ("the sage on the stage"), while students are taking on greater responsibility for their own learning. One such pedagogical innovation is the Flipped Classroom model, which aims to improve teaching and learning efficiency by shifting the initial learning process outside the classroom (Chen, Wang, and Chen, 2014). Under this model, students engage with lesson content through videos, readings, or recordings before attending class, allowing classroom time to be utilized for interactive discussions and collaborative activities. This approach has the potential to enhance listening skills, as students can review relevant materials at home and then participate in focused discussions during in-class sessions. This research aims to explore the application of the Flipped Classroom model in the context of teaching listening skills, specifically for TOEIC listening tests.

### *Contextual Background*

In the Vietnamese educational context, particularly in Can Tho City, listening instruction has received comparatively less emphasis. Despite high school textbooks containing all four macro skills, the official English curriculum in Vietnam has prioritized exam-driven instruction, with a focus on grammar, reading, and vocabulary, rather than comprehensive communicative competence (Duong & Chau, 2019; Nguyen & Thai, 2018). This has led to a marginalization of listening skills in many Vietnamese schools.

In my teaching context, where I instruct at a private English center specializing in TOEIC preparation, listening remains a significant challenge, particularly for students with non-English-related academic backgrounds. This may be due to limited classroom time allocated to exploring detailed listening strategies, the complexities of large classes with diverse learning styles, and the requirements of the TOEIC listening test, which demand extensive listening skills, vocabulary, and contextual knowledge. My colleagues share similar concerns about the difficulties in effectively teaching listening skills. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to online learning, further emphasizing the importance of leveraging technology in the educational process.

Given these challenges, this research is driven by the need to examine the effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom model in teaching listening skills and how different subskills of listening (listening for main ideas, listening for details, listening to infer information) can be affected using this approach.

For such purposes, it is worth an investigation that is guided by the following questions.

1. How does the Flipped Classroom model impact the listening comprehension skills of EFL learners compared to traditional classroom instruction?
2. How effective is the Flipped Classroom model in teaching specific listening sub-skills to EFL learners, such as listening for main ideas, listening for details, and listening to infer information?

### *Flipped Classroom model*

The Flipped Classroom model has gained substantial attention, yet a standardized definition or model has yet to emerge. Baker (2000) first used the term "classroom flip," coinciding with Lage et al. (2000), who introduced "inverted classroom" in the context of higher education. As per Lage et al. (2000), the inverted classroom approach signifies that "events that have traditionally taken place inside the classroom now take place outside the classroom and vice versa" (p. 32). This model reflects a reorientation of learning activities, both spatially and temporally. However, it has not been immune to misunderstandings. For example, one misconception suggests that the Flipped Classroom replaces teachers with instructional videos, a claim refuted by Nochese (2011). This misconception raises concerns about the potential for online video content to undermine traditional teaching roles. Another common misunderstanding equates flipped learning with online courses, as noted by Fink (2011). Although the Flipped Classroom involves online elements, it does not necessarily reduce the frequency of in-person classroom sessions compared to traditional models.

Further variations on this theme include Fulton's (2014) interpretation, suggesting that "flipping the classroom" means reversing the traditional order of classroom activities, with direct instruction taking place through out-of-class assignments, and in-class time dedicated to active learning. This approach may involve asynchronous video lectures, presentations, or vodcasts for homework, allowing classroom time to focus on interactive, hands-on, or collaborative learning experiences (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Chen, Wang & Chen, 2014). In light of the varied interpretations and existing literature, this study defines the Flipped Classroom model as an instructional framework incorporating educational video content for out-of-class learning while maintaining regular face-to-face classroom sessions for interactive activities. The terms "flipped classroom" and "inverted classroom" are often used interchangeably; however, in this research, "flipped classroom" is preferred for consistency and due to its prevalent use in related studies.

## **Method**

### **Research design**

The intervention of the study lasted for 8 weeks. During the intervention, both groups received the same instructions from "Skills for the TOEIC test: Listening and Reading" written by Collins. The control group was taught listening skills of the lessons in traditional ways. Meanwhile, for the experimental group, the Flipped Classroom approach (independent variable) was implemented and students' listening performance (dependent

variable) was measured. The implementation of the Flipped Classroom model was monitored during the study.

As the pioneer instrument of the research, the listening test which is a TOEIC listening module is essentially quantitative. The quantitative techniques are applied to provide full analysis of the descriptive data related to the effects of the Flipped Classroom model in teaching listening skills.

### *Participants*

#### *Teachers*

The researcher was in charge of instructing lessons to the experimental group while another qualified TOEIC teacher from an English Center taught the same lessons using traditional teaching methods for the control group. To minimize the effect of the difference in experience if there is any, both teachers worked and planned the activities together based on the same text book. Which meant that they took the same step regarding the content, assessment and the learning outcomes of the course.

#### *Students*

The participants of the study were 37 EFL learners (most of them are students from different schools and office workers in Can Tho city). All the learners were taking part in the TOEIC 2 course (level 2 of a 3-level TOEIC test preparation program at FRIENDS) which lasted for 2.5 months. The participants were the students of two TOEIC 1 classes (intermediate level with the expected outcome score ranging from 405-600/990) with 19 students for the control group and 18 students for the experimental group. To better make use of the data collected from the participants, a “Student information” form regarding personal information of age, job, gender, proficiency level, etc. was delivered to the students before the experiment. According to the results from the online form, 23 of them were female while 14 of them were male with an age range from 18 to 28. Their English proficiency was considered to be at the elementary level proven by the result of the TOEIC placement test which is from 255-400/990 according to the TOEIC score conversion chart provided by (Damayanti & Gafur, 2020). The majority of the participants are undergraduate students majoring in International Business, Environmental Sciences, Commercial Business, Auditing, Information Technology and Logistics and Supply Chain Management. Other participants are working as doctors, office workers, architectures and freelancers. None of them have English-related majors and have never studied abroad in any English-speaking country.

Table 1. Participants of the Control and Experimental groups

Group	Number of students	Gender	
		Male	Female
Control	19	6	13
Experimental	18	8	10

### *Materials*

The main teaching material employed for the current research for both the control and experimental groups was compiled from the “Skills for the TOEIC test: Listening and Reading” textbook written by Collins in 2012. This book is one of a two book series (1 Listening/Reading; 2 Speaking/Writing) and focuses on providing essential language structures, vocabulary, and strategies to help learners handle the integrated skill aspect of the listening and reading sections in the TOEIC test. Each unit lesson is presented in 4 structured parts: from an overview, analysis of examples, providing test strategies to practical exercises.

The exercise section in each unit is logically designed, with the level of difficulty and test format close to the actual TOEIC test, helping learners to accurately self-assess their ability for each different type of question. The book also carefully analyzes the types of topics, sentence patterns, and traps that will appear in the test, which other TOEIC textbooks often do not specifically present or mention.

However, the table of contents of the book is quite sketchy, does not summarize the content to be discussed in each part, making it difficult for readers to follow the progress of each part or choose the appropriate learning sequence. Apparently, it would be difficult for self-learning and therefore, the participation of teachers is needed to instruct, deliver the main contents, and assign the most feasible learning sequence for the students.

Besides, other materials such as online reading texts, listening exercises from TOEIC actual test textbooks and online quizzes through Google Form, etc. were also employed for the lessons.

### *Research instrument*

#### *The TOEIC listening test*

In order to determine the impact of the Flipped Classroom model on EFL learners’ listening skills, the listening module of an actual TOEIC Test of a 5-test ETS TOEIC Test book published in 2017 by YBM was employed as the first data collection tool (for both the pre-test and post-test). The aim of the TOEIC listening test is to provide accurate scores before and after the intervention. Moreover, the test followed what students learn from “Skills for the TOEIC test” written by Collins. This test was chosen as for its reliability and validity was proven by its publisher, YBM, the publishing organization authorized by the American Testing Agency - ETS to organize the TOEIC exam and issue certificates in Korea.

#### *Listening test design*

The test is composed of two parts with 69 questions and takes approximately 35 minutes to complete. The test can be classified into 3 sub-skills as follows:

Table 2. Classification of the sub-skills used in the TOEIC listening test

Part	Sub-skills	Questions
Part 3	Listening for Main idea	35, 44, 50, 53, 56
	Listening for Details	32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 49, 51, 52, 55, 57, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 68, 70
	Listening to infer information	38, 41, 48, 54, 58, 59, 63, 67, 68
Part 4	Listening for Main idea	77, 81
	Listening for Details	72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 82, 84, 86, 87, 89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99
	Listening to infer information	71, 80, 83, 85, 88, 90, 93, 96, 100

## Results

### Participants' listening scores within the two groups before and after the study

A Pearson's correlations analysis showed that there was a positive relationship between pre-test scores and post-test scores within the two groups. Specifically, with the Control group,  $r(19)=.934$ ;  $p=.00$  (two-tailed), showing that the higher participants scored in the pre-test, the higher they would score in the post-test. Similar result was also observed with the Experimental group  $r(18)=.799$ ;  $p=.00$  (two-tailed).

To identify students' changes in listening performance within the Control group and Experimental group, the Descriptive Statistic Test was first performed to identify mean scores of each test for both groups. These scores are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean difference of students' listening scores within the two groups

Group	Test	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Control	Pre-test	19	22.00	41.00	29.74	5.80
	Post-test	19	28.00	53.00	37.00	6.38
Experimental	Pre-test	18	22.00	42.00	31.39	5.37
	Post-test	18	26.00	61.00	42.00	8.02

The results indicates that there were variations in the mean scores achieved from both groups before and after the intervention: the control group (M pre=29.74; SD=5.80, M post=37.00; SD=6.38) and the experimental group (M pre=31.39; SD=5.37, M post=42.00; SD=8.02). From observation, it can be initially depicted that the mean scores of the post-test was higher than those of the pre-test. Thus, a Paired-Sample T-Test was run to figure out whether there was any statistically significant difference between these mean scores. The result presented in the table below showed that a remarkable difference between the mean scores of both group was found: the Control group ( $t=-13.88$ ,  $p=.00$ ), the Experimental group ( $t=-9.12$ ,  $p=.00$ ). It can be concluded that after eight weeks of intervention, students' listening skills of both groups were improved. Table 4 shows the



results of the Paired-Samples T-Test comparing Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Control group and Experimental group.

Table 4. Results of the Paired-Samples T-Test comparing Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Control group and Experimental group

Group	Pair	Pair differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Control	Pre-test – Post-test	-7.26	2.28	.52	-8.36	-6.16	-13.88	18	0.00
Experimental	Pre-test – Post-test	-10.61	4.94	1.16	-13.06	-8.16	-9.12	17	0.00

To give additional information to whether the mean scores within experimental group were significant different between 7 males and 11 females, an Independent Samples T-Test on the post-test were carried out. As can be seen from Table 5, there is no gender difference in the post-test results, according to a significant value ( $p = 0.49$ ). This indicates that there is no discernible gender bias in the efficacy of flipped classrooms for the listening learning process when it comes to men and women. The current findings appear to be in line with Khoiriyah's (2021) research, which discovered that there was no discernible difference in the listening abilities of male and female students using the Flipped Classroom paradigm.

Table 5. Results of the Independent Samples T-Test comparing Post-test Scores between males and females within the Experimental group

Variable	M	SD	T	df	p
Listening Post-test					
Male	40.28	7.52	-.713	16	.486
Female	43.09	8.49			
Independent samples T-Test					

*Participants' listening scores between the two groups before and after the intervention*

The Independent Samples T-Test and the Descriptive Statistic Test were used to compare the listening scores of the two groups of students before and after the intervention. First, Table 6 below shows the outcomes of the Descriptive Statistic Test.

Table 6. Students' listening scores between the two groups

	Group	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pre-test	Control	19	22.00	41.00	29.74	5.80
	Experimental	18	22.00	42.00	31.39	5.37
Post-test	Control	19	28.00	53.00	37.00	6.38
	Experimental	18	26.00	61.00	42.00	8.02

*Students' listening performance between the two groups before the intervention*

The TOEIC placement test scores of both the control and experimental groups placed all of the students in the same TOEIC 2 program; however, the control group's pre-test mean score (M=29.74, SD=5.80) was slightly lower than the experimental group's mean score (M=31.39, SD=5.37). In order to determine whether the participants' proficiency levels at the start of the study were the same, a T-Test was used to analyze their pre-test results. Based on the pre-test scores, an Independent Sample T-Test was conducted. The findings, which are shown in Table 7 below, indicated that there were no significant differences between the groups ( $t=-.898$ ,  $df=35$ ,  $p=.38$ ). This finding suggests that the pre-test scores for the two classes were identical, which means that students' listening performance in the pre-test of two groups was the same.

Table 7. Comparing pre-test results of the two groups

Variable	M	SD	T	df	p
Listening Pre-test					
Control group	29.74	5.8	-.898	35	.376
Experimental group	31.39	5.37			
Independent samples T-Test					

*Students' listening performance between the two groups after the intervention*

Additionally, Table 8 demonstrated that following the intervention, there were differences in the students' listening abilities between the two groups. The means of the post-test for both groups showed significant improvement after eight weeks of the intervention (M=37.00, SD=6.38 for the Control group and M=42.00, SD=8.02 for the Experimental group). To compare the outcomes, the Independent Samples T-Test was used. We may determine that the sig. =.043 < alpha (5%) based on the table below. Thus, the test's outcome indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups' listening abilities.

Figure 1 below showed the mean score performance of both groups. The line chart highlighted that two groups' listening scores performed a noticeably small gap (control group M=29.74, SD=5.8; experimental group M=31.39, SD=5.37) on the pre-test. This result was quite reasonable since participants from both groups experienced nearly similar language competence. While the post- test showed a surged trend in both groups'

speaking mean score, it could not be denied that post-test result of control group (M=37.00, SD=6.38) was significantly lower than experimental one's (M= 42.00, SD=8.02).

Table 8. Comparing post-test results of the two groups

Variable	M	SD	T	df	p
Listening Post-test					
Control group	37.00	6.38	-2.103	35	0.043
Experimental group	42.00	8.02			
Independent samples T-Test					

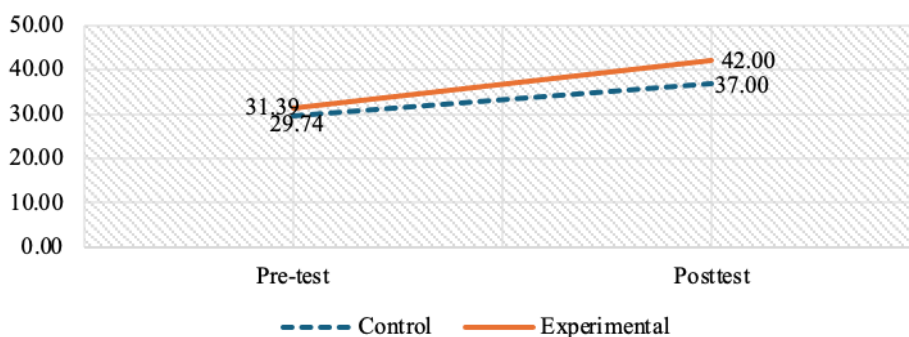


Figure 1. Participants' listening performance before and after the treatment of both groups

*Students' listening sub-skills scores of the experimental group after the intervention*

To evaluate students' listening sub-skills scores of the experimental group, a Paired Samples T-Test was carried out. The results of the Test are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Comparing students' listening sub-skills scores of the experimental group

Variable	Pre-test M	Post-test M	Mean Diff	Sig. (2-tailed)
Listening for Main idea	3.33	5.44	-2.11	.000
Listening for Detail	21.00	26.78	-5.78	.000
Listening and Making Inference	8.56	9.61	-1.06	.109
Paired Samples T-Test				

The findings displayed in the preceding table indicated a significant difference between the students' mean Listening for Detail sub-skill scores (M=21.00) and mean scores (M=26.78) following the Flipped Classroom model implementation (df=17, sig=0.00<0.05). The findings highlighted how exercising listening skills with Flipped Classroom improves EFL learners' ability to answer Detail questions. The results also showed that, with

$M_{pre}=3.33$ ,  $M_{post}=5.44$ ,  $df=17$ , and  $P=0.00<0.05$ , there was a significant difference between the students' mean scores for the Listening for Main concept sub-skill before and after the therapy. Therefore, the outcome demonstrated that using flipped classrooms enabled students to respond to main idea questions in an efficient manner.

However, the results from the Listening and Making Inference category indicated that there was no difference in how students performed in the pre-test and post-test with  $M_{pre}=8.56$ ,  $M_{post}=9.61$ ,  $df=17$  and  $P=.109>0.05$ . It can be concluded that even though there was an increase in listening scores of Inference questions after the Flipped Classroom model was employed, it did not significantly help students answer this type of question effectively.

## Discussion

As seen in the quantitative analysis, the findings of this study indicated that both the control and the experimental groups had a significant improvement on their listening skills. This result could be explained by the fact that after the 8 weeks of learning, the students from both groups received the sufficient new knowledge of how to deal with the listening tests strategically from the qualified teachers. Whether the Flipped Classroom model was applied or not would have a positive impact on how students performed in the post-tests. However, when comparing the results of the post-tests by using the Independent Samples T-Test between the two groups, there was a significant difference in the mean scores proving that even though both groups showed signs of improvement, the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of listening scores and skill improvement with  $sig. = .043 < \alpha (5\%)$ . This echoed the results found in the previous research conducted by El Sakka (2016), Ahmad (2016), Roth and Suppasetsee (2016), Namaziandost, Neisi & Momtaz (2019), Khoiriyah (2021), which were mentioned previously in Chapter 2. All these studies used the same data collection tool which was achievement tests to measure the effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom model on listening comprehension skills. These quantitative results confirmed by the Paired Samples T-Tests revealed the fact that there was a statistically significant improvement in participants' listening comprehension. In specific, all of the students participating in these studies were university students whose majors were not English-related, and they were all at intermediate level of proficiency when they participated in those studies. However, contrary to the current study's encouraging results, Phung & Yen (2020) and Smallhorn (2017), in their studies, found that there were no significant differences in learning outcomes or learners' academic performances between the traditional and flipped classes. The reason for this contrary may be because of the difference in nature of the courses. The current research employed the Flipped model in teaching for a TOEIC course whereas the other two mentioned studies used the Flipped model to teach general English courses. To be specific, in a test preparation course, the success of delivering the course lies in the learners' real practice of the actual tests as well as sufficient class time to discuss the problems or explore the tips and strategies to perform well on the tests. This goal could be best achieved using the Flipped Classroom model.

Sharing the similar results with the current study, Khoiriyah (2021) confirmed the facts that adopting the

Flipped Classroom model to teach listening does not significantly differ for men and women, or, to put it another way, is not prejudiced against either gender. In addition, these students' backgrounds revealed that the studies were conducted under similar conditions in terms of research settings and participants. However, there was a fact that the current research listening course under the experiment tended to equipped learners with strategies and techniques to deal with listening tasks, especially for the TOEIC test whereas the other mentioned studies focused on teaching for general listening comprehension skills. Supporting this aspect of the current research, Khoiriyah (2021) also carried out his study focusing on another specific listening proficiency, the TOEFL test. The results were also positive and together with the current research proved that the effects of the Flipped Classroom model were significant regardless the mode of teaching (both general listening courses and test preparation courses).

In the current study, the researcher also tried to explore the effects of the Flipped Classroom model on 3 specific listening sub-skills, namely Listening for Main Idea, Listening for Detail and Listening and Making Inference. The results showed that among the 3 sub-skills, Listening for Main Idea, Listening for Detail appeared to be the most effectively affected by the model whereas Listening and Making Inference seemed to have the least beneficial effect. This result could be explained by the nature of the sub-skill itself. Marisa (2012) explained the fact that the problems with making inferences skills maybe related to a lack of background knowledge and general knowledge. Besides, a strong working memory also plays an important role in facilitating student's inferential ability. Another possible reason for this result could be because the materials provided through videos and handouts were not sufficient and effective enough to better help enhance this sub-skill. Therefore, the researcher himself needed to review the materials again and tried to look for other reliable sources to teach this sub-skill effectively in future courses.

What elements most significantly contributed to these beneficial benefits is the key question. One component—rather, a conglomeration of interrelated elements—cannot be identified. The first plausible reason explaining the positive results of the current study could be because the participants in the Flipped classroom were exposed to the materials and had a preparation for each lecture's content prior to class. Before class even started, students were exposed to the materials on Google Classroom and they needed to pay close attention to these videos in order to understand the questions on the online quizzes and to build a foundational understanding of the material so they could participate in the sharing and discussion in class. Since the students have had exposure to the content, it is not surprising if they arrive prepared for the lesson with a solid comprehension of the materials. It is backed up by Peregoy and Boyle (2005), who claim that language exposure significantly influences a learner's ability to produce a language. Compared to the typical lecture-based classroom, the Flipped class offered students greater opportunities for practice both individually and in small groups.

Another possible reason for this result could be explained by the effectiveness of class time, which was confirmed by Zappe et al (2009) and Thinh (2021). From the instructor's experience with the Flipped Classroom model, there was no need to spend hours talking and explaining theory which frequently failed to finish the class on time. Better satisfaction with class time was the outcome of this. The current finding was also supported by

Van et al. (2019) who reported that sustaining face-to-face time is a crucial feature for a successful implementation of the Flipped Classroom model. It is the fact that teaching listening skills would be more effective if the time spent in the class was used to do further practices and listening activities rather than explaining the lengthy theory (Astri et al, 2019). The learning opportunities provided by Flipped activities before class have thereby made it easier for students to acquire these key concepts. This idea was also supported by Khoiriyah (2021) who claimed that students are encouraged to ask any questions, in person or online and are expected to collaborate during in-class activities. As a result, students develop their listening comprehension skills through group learning and knowledge sharing as they look for solutions to difficulties they experience.

A further explanation for the positive results is the individualized aspect of flipped learning, which enables each student to learn on his or her own schedule and at his or her own pace. This finding was also supported by El Sakka (2016), comparing to the use of the conventional lecture model, students in flipped classes can review any part of a lecture that has been recorded or take breaks at their own learning pace. Moreover, they can bring specific questions to class if they find the materials confusing or difficult and have plenty of time in class to explore them. Choe and Seong (2016) also claimed that many of the participants in their study preferred the option of doing their assignments or learning the materials when it was most convenient for them. Think (2021) also mentioned in her research that students preferred the format of Flipped Classroom in which they could study the materials at their own pace, in their favorite place, and at any time that was most convenient for them. In addition, the teacher would have more time during class to direct students' practice rather than provide lengthy theory. As a result, she was also more aware of the issues the students were having and how to make accommodations so they could complete the project.

## Conclusion

The findings from the current study indicated that implementing the Flipped Classroom model in a TOEIC listening course had a significant positive impact on students' listening skills. Here are the key conclusions drawn from the results and findings:

Both the control and experimental groups showed significant improvement in their listening skills after 8 weeks of learning, suggesting that strategic training from qualified teachers played a crucial role. Despite both groups showing improvement, the experimental group, which used the Flipped Classroom model, outperformed the control group. This suggests that this instructional approach has additional benefits for enhancing listening comprehension skills. The positive outcomes of the Flipped Classroom model in this study aligned with several previous studies focusing on listening skills. These studies utilized similar methods and tools, reinforcing the idea that flipped learning can be an effective strategy in enhancing listening comprehension.

The mixed results from other studies indicate that the effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom model may vary depending on factors like course content and structure. The lack of improvement in some studies may be tied to

the nature of the courses, suggesting that the Flipped Classroom model might be more effective in test-preparation contexts than in general English courses. Among the three listening sub-skills examined (Listening for Main Idea, Listening for Detail, Listening and Making Inference), the Flipped Classroom model had the most significant impact on Listening for Main Idea and Listening for Detail. The relatively smaller impact on Listening and Making Inference might be due to the nature of this skill, which requires a broader context and stronger working memory.

## Recommendations

It is suggested for any further study to employ a design with a larger than 20 sample of participants. The results should, in the researcher's opinion, be generalized to the full population in order to be more valid. Moreover, even though the flipped instruction was successful in this study, we are unable to generalize from this sample because the participating students in the study had intermediate English proficiency, and the Flipped Classroom model might produce different results in classes with students who have lower proficiency levels. In addition, other future studies should be conducted on different types of English classes with various learner groups, situations, and English learning skills so that the results can be representative for the general English learners with different learning purposes, not just for any specific certificate. Moreover, future research should also consider the factors of students' prior flipped classroom experiences as well as their learning preferences to bring the utmost effectiveness.

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# Students' Achievements and Teachers' Perception: Exploring the Effectiveness of Kahoot for Vocabulary Learning in Vietnamese Classrooms

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**Abstract:** The goal of this classroom action study is to increase the vocabulary of Vietnamese EFL university students by utilizing Kahoot! in the teaching and learning process. Eleven undergraduate Vietnamese students majoring in Information Technology in a university in the south of Vietnam took part in the study. The two-cycle Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) model was used. The investigator employed assessments for learners and surveys for educators to gather information, investigate if including Kahoot! may enhance students' vocabulary acquisition, and ascertain the viewpoints of educators on the benefits and drawbacks of their involvement. The results show that learners' vocabulary performance has improved. Teachers' feedback also shows that the Kahoot! application has increased student engagement in several ways, most notably by creating an enjoyable learning environment where students may practice both individually and in groups. It is reported that Kahoot! is easy to use and convenient. Technical issues and time management are a few of the drawbacks mentioned. The study's findings could be useful in helping teachers implement changes in their classrooms as well as serving as a resource and source of inspiration for academics and researchers with related fields of study.

**Keywords:** Vocabulary acquisition, Gamification, EFL context

**Citation:** Phan, C. N. T., & Tran, A. N. P. (2024). Students' achievements and teachers' perception: Exploring the effectiveness of Kahoot for vocabulary learning in Vietnamese classrooms. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 787-798), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

### Context of the study

Language serves as a cornerstone of communication, enabling individuals to exchange information and ideas (Nunan, 2003). Among languages, English has emerged as a global lingua franca due to its widespread use across nations (Fiedler, 2011). This prominence has led to English permeating various sectors, including economics, technology, and education (Broughton et al., 2003). In the era of globalization, possessing a strong

command of English becomes crucial for accessing diverse fields of human knowledge and becoming a well-rounded global citizen (Nunan, 2003). Recognizing this importance, the Vietnamese government has prioritized English as a foreign language and implemented educational reforms to enhance English teaching and learning (Ngo et al., 2015). Consequently, English is a compulsory subject for most Vietnamese students, starting from primary education (Grade 3) and continuing through university (Vu & Peters, 2021). This emphasis aims to equip students with the necessary English skills to navigate the competitive job market, where professional competence is often coupled with the ability to effectively use the language in work-related tasks (Othman et al., 2011). Therefore, ensuring university students are well-prepared in English is paramount for their confidence, success, and self-development in the workforce, ultimately benefiting both the individual and society as a whole.

Research underscores the crucial link between English proficiency and employability. Studies reveal that graduates with limited English skills encounter difficulties in the workplace, creating challenges for companies (Othman et al., 2011). A concerning trend is also highlighted by Ngo et al. (2015) who found that many Vietnamese university students, even those majoring in English, demonstrate inadequate English proficiency as measured by the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). A recurring challenge faced by Vietnamese EFL learners is limited vocabulary acquisition. This encompasses deficiencies in both receptive and productive knowledge, including understanding the meaning and form of individual words, as well as the ability to utilize formulaic language sequences such as collocations and idioms (Nguyen & Webb, 2017; Dang, 2020).

## Literature review

### The Centrality of Vocabulary in Language Learning and Teaching

The centrality of vocabulary in successful second language (L2) learning has been well-established in English learning and teaching. McCarthy (1989) emphasizes that effective communication in L2 necessitates a strong vocabulary foundation. Similarly, Holderness and Lynn (2017) highlight vocabulary as a vital component of language acquisition, without which comprehension of written texts becomes a significant challenge for students. Several scholars (Syafrizal & Haerudin, 2018; Neuman & Dwyer, 2009) define vocabulary as the set of words learners must master to achieve fluency and effective communication. Cook (2013) suggests that vocabulary development flourishes when learners are initially exposed to new words and their meanings, followed by opportunities to practice retrieving, recalling, and utilizing these target vocabulary items across diverse settings and contexts. In essence, vocabulary knowledge encompasses understanding word meaning, form, and usage, coupled with the ability to apply this knowledge appropriately in various contexts. Therefore, a strong vocabulary base is demonstrably crucial for successful language learning and teaching.

#### *Limited Vocabulary Knowledge in Vietnamese EFL Learners*

Recent research (Nguyen & Webb, 2017; Dang, 2020) indicates that Vietnamese EFL learners typically possess

limited vocabulary knowledge. This limitation encompasses both understanding the meaning and form of individual English words, as well as formulaic sequences such as collocations and idioms. Peters (2019) identifies several factors contributing to this phenomenon, categorized as word-related, contextual, and learner-related factors. While word-related factors affect all English learners, Peters (2019) highlights contextual factors as a primary obstacle for Vietnamese EFL learners specifically. These contextual factors include the frequency of word occurrence, the frequency of the word in the learner's first language (L1), and the frequency of the word in the target language (L2). The limited exposure to high-frequency vocabulary ultimately leads to difficulties in retention (Peters, 2019).

To address these challenges, Vu and Peters (2021) emphasize the importance of both learners and teachers understanding the conditions necessary for effective vocabulary learning. These conditions include repetition and focused attention (Webb & Nation, 2017). Consequently, the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), particularly game-based learning, is being explored to determine its effectiveness in promoting vocabulary acquisition through increased repetition and enhanced learner engagement.

#### *Kahoot!*

Launched in 2013, Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform specifically designed to enhance educational experiences, motivation, and student engagement (Wang, 2015). Widely adopted by educational institutions due to its online and face-to-face functionality, Kahoot! allows educators to create engaging practice activities and readily assess student learning across various topics and subjects (Ahmed et al., 2022). The platform's versatility enables educators to use it for concept introduction, content delivery, and facilitating idea sharing and focus (Rofiyarti & Sari, 2017). In the context of EFL learning and teaching, Kahoot! holds particular promise as a valuable tool. Research suggests that a combination of collaboration, interaction, and enjoyment fosters more successful learning outcomes (Tivaraju et al., 2017). The literature highlights several key advantages associated with implementing Kahoot! in the classroom. First, it effectively boosts student enthusiasm and engagement in the learning process (Dellos, 2015). Second, Kahoot! fosters an interactive learning environment that promotes both independent and collaborative learning with teachers and peers (Rofiyarti & Sari, 2017). Finally, the user-friendly interface, accessible without downloads, and visually appealing design elements (Qian & Clark, 2016) make Kahoot! convenient for both educators and learners, particularly in higher education where students often favor mobile learning (Qian & Clark, 2016). In conclusion, Kahoot! emerges as a potentially transformative tool, addressing the need for increased teaching and learning effectiveness. It facilitates flexible learning modes, fosters positive classroom dynamics by "breaking the ice" (Ginnis, 2008), and enhances student focus and energy levels. These qualities position Kahoot! as an ideal platform worthy of consideration for implementation in EFL classrooms.

#### *Previous studies on the effectiveness of Kahoot! in enhancing EFL vocabulary acquisition*

The application of Kahoot! as a tool to enhance EFL learners' vocabulary achievement has garnered considerable research interest. Boulaid and Moubtassime (2019) employed a quasi-experimental design to

investigate the impact of Kahoot! on Moroccan undergraduate students' vocabulary learning. Their findings revealed positive student feedback regarding increased confidence in vocabulary usage and a more engaging learning process facilitated by Kahoot!'s user-friendly and interactive features. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2022) explored the effects of Kahoot! on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary recall and retention. Their results indicated a significant difference in performance between groups, suggesting Kahoot!'s efficacy in aiding vocabulary recall.

Studies conducted within Indonesia further support the potential of Kahoot! Mansur and Fadhilawati's (2019) action research applied Kahoot! to improve vocabulary achievement for senior high school students, yielding positive outcomes. Kusumayanthi and Rusmiyati (2021) conducted a qualitative study examining Kahoot!'s impact on seventh-grade students' engagement in EFL vocabulary learning, again demonstrating positive results. Ayumi and Chan's (2021) classroom action research at the tertiary level examined the effects of Kahoot! on improving students' vocabulary in a Reading and Writing class at an intermediate level. Their findings revealed that Kahoot! significantly enhanced students' ability to recognize word meanings in context. In a 2021 study by Manurung, a comparative investigation was conducted to assess the effectiveness of Kahoot! and Google Forms vocabulary quizzes in enhancing the vocabulary acquisition of fourth-grade students. The research aimed to determine if there were significant discrepancies between these two strategies in improving vocabulary comprehension. The findings revealed that both applications yielded positive outcomes in student vocabulary development. However, the study also identified potential challenges associated with internet-based learning, including unreliable internet connectivity, limited visibility of the screen for some students, and the potential for time pressure caused by countdown timers, which could be detrimental for young learners.

Beyond vocabulary acquisition, Noori and Azimi's (2023) research explored the impact of Kahoot! on students' motivation to learn English, demonstrating a significant increase in motivation within the Kahoot! learning group. Furthermore, Aibar-Almazán et al. (2024) investigated how gamified learning tools like Kahoot! benefit university students' attention, focus, creativity, and overall learning skills. Their findings indicated that Kahoot! can improve these key areas, particularly in longer learning sessions.

While the literature highlights the potential benefits of Kahoot! in language learning, there is a paucity of research investigating its implementation for vocabulary acquisition specifically within Vietnamese EFL higher education. Furthermore, existing studies rarely explore the perspectives of teachers on incorporating Kahoot! into their vocabulary teaching practices. This gap in research knowledge serves as the impetus for the current study, which aims to address the challenges faced by Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students majoring in Information Technology, as described previously. The project seeks to answer the following research questions:

1-Does the use of Kahoot! as a game-based learning tool lead to statistically significant gains in vocabulary achievements for Vietnamese EFL learners?

2-How do teachers perceive the integration of Kahoot! in their vocabulary instruction and learning activities in Vietnamese EFL classrooms?

## Method

### Research design

This research adopted an action research approach to address a classroom issue impacting several students and aligning with the teacher's goals. Action research, as defined by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), involves educators gathering data within the classroom to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness. Following a cyclical process, educators analyze existing practices, implement changes, observe the results, and reflect on the experience before repeating the cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Burns, 2009). This iterative nature allows educators to continuously adapt and improve their teaching practices (Burns, 2009). The current study employed this approach due to its clear structure, including a reflection stage that enables researchers to refine their plan and make adjustments before initiating a new cycle.

### *Participants*

This study involved 11 sophomore Information Technology students (6 male, 5 female) at a southern Vietnamese university. They participated in a twice-weekly Basic English class for eight weeks (16 total sessions). Initially, vocabulary instruction followed the PPP (Present-Produce-Practice) method with recommended coursebook activities. However, the teacher observed vocabulary learning difficulties using conventional methods, confirmed by mid-course vocabulary test results. The majority of students didn't meet the university's minimum vocabulary requirement of 75, prompting the teacher to explore alternative approaches. Additionally, five university English department instructors participated by completing an open-ended researcher-designed questionnaire on their experiences with the advantages and disadvantages of using Kahoot!.

### *Data collection*

To assess student learning, the study employed pre- and post-tests. The pre-test, administered during the eighth session, evaluated students' vocabulary knowledge on covered topics after traditional instruction. Two post-tests were conducted: the first at the end of cycle 1 (session 12) and the second at the end of cycle 2 (session 16). These post-tests aimed to measure any improvement in student performance following the implementation of Kahoot!. Both tests comprised 25 questions in various formats (multiple choice, gap-filling, matching) and were reordered to prevent students from memorizing answers. To address the second research question, the researcher distributed questionnaires to five colleagues during the study period to gather data on their experiences with Kahoot!.

### *Data analysis*

This study employed a mixed methods approach to address the research questions. Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests was analyzed using Microsoft Excel to assess student learning. Qualitative data from teacher questionnaires was coded to identify various perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of using



Kahoot!.

### *Research procedure*

Cycle 1 of the study employed a cyclical action research design with planning, implementation, and reflection phases. The planning stage involved identifying students' vocabulary learning difficulties and developing lesson plans targeting specific vocabulary with essential resources like Kahoot! activities, pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires. A pre-test was administered in session eight to assess baseline vocabulary knowledge. The implementation phase, encompassing sessions nine to twelve, integrated Kahoot! as an interactive learning activity. The established classroom routine involved the instructor delivering vocabulary instruction followed by a directive for students to access the Kahoot! app on their devices. The prepared Kahoot! was then projected, and the instructor provided instructions. Students joined using a game pin and selected nicknames. Each Kahoot! session lasted approximately 15 minutes, and students were encouraged to ask questions and review the material independently at the conclusion of each session. The post-test administered at the culmination of session twelve, informed by the collected data, revealed a positive trend in student vocabulary acquisition relative to the pre-test. However, student performance still fell short of the minimum proficiency criteria established by the university. Consequently, a second iteration of the program is necessitated, maintaining a similar structure but incorporating modifications informed by the instructor's pedagogical reflections on the initial implementation of Kahoot!

Cycle 2 of the action research design aimed to address limitations identified in Cycle 1 and maximize Kahoot!'s effectiveness in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. Encompassing the final four course sessions, Cycle 2 began with the reflection stage. Here, the instructor analyzed observations and student performance data from Cycle 1, particularly focusing on the rapid response time potentially hindering comprehension. Based on these reflections, the acting phase incorporated modifications. While maintaining the focus on new vocabulary topics, the response time for Kahoot! questions was extended from 15 seconds to 45 seconds. Furthermore, to enhance comprehension and promote active learning, the instructor strategically incorporated brief pauses after each question. These pauses served a dual purpose: firstly, to elucidate the correct answer, and secondly, to assess student understanding through the random selection of students who were tasked with constructing sentences that utilized the target vocabulary. The observing stage remained consistent, with a post-test administered at the conclusion of session sixteen. Finally, the reflection stage involved the instructor analyzing both student scores and observed classroom behavior to assess the impact of the modifications on vocabulary learning and student engagement.

To gather data on teachers' experiences with Kahoot!, an open-ended online questionnaire was distributed to five English department instructors at the university (2 male, 3 female) via Google Docs. Participants were granted a maximum of two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Their responses were then coded and analyzed thematically to identify perceived advantages and disadvantages associated with Kahoot! application in the English language classroom.

## Results

### Learners' vocabulary achievement before and after the implementation of Kahoot!

To address observed student difficulties with vocabulary learning, the instructor implemented Kahoot! as an interactive learning activity within the established classroom routine. This intervention aimed to explore the potential of Kahoot! to enhance student vocabulary acquisition. The effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated through pre- and post-testing. The mean scores for these assessments are presented in the following chart.

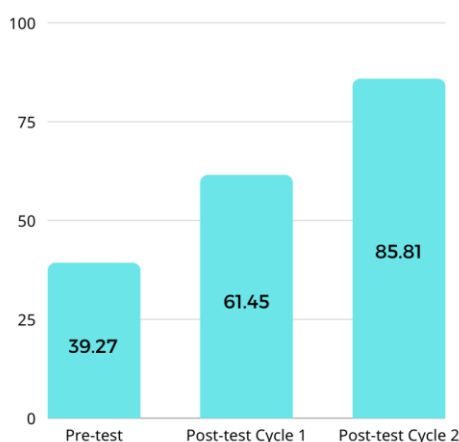


Figure 1. The mean score of students' pre-test and post-tests

To assess the effectiveness of Kahoot! in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, a pre-test was administered before the intervention began. The mean pre-test score of 39.27 indicated a low level of initial vocabulary knowledge among the students (median = 40). Following Cycle 1, the post-test results revealed a positive increase in the average score (61.45, median = 60) compared to the pre-test. However, this increase still fell short of the university's minimum required score of 75 for vocabulary mastery, necessitating a second cycle. The post-test scores at the end of Cycle 2 demonstrated a significant improvement, with the mean score reaching 85.81 (median = 88) and exceeding the minimum criteria. Notably, all students achieved scores above 75, with the highest score reaching 96. These findings strongly suggest a substantial increase in student vocabulary acquisition following the implementation of Kahoot! as a learning activity.

#### *How Teachers See Kahoot! in the Classroom: Benefits and Challenges*

To gain a well-rounded perspective on the pedagogical utility of Kahoot! within the teaching and learning process, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of five university English language instructors. The questionnaire itself employed open-ended questions to encourage in-depth responses. These inquiries focused on the frequency of Kahoot! implementation within the instructors' curricula, the specific

learner groups for which it was deemed most appropriate, the intended pedagogical purposes behind its use, student reactions to its incorporation into the classroom environment, and, most importantly, the perceived advantages and disadvantages encountered by the instructors during its implementation.

An analysis of Kahoot! utilization frequency revealed teacher variability. Three instructors reported infrequent use, averaging one to two sessions per month. One teacher elaborated on a tiered approach based on student age and level:

*"Teens with devices benefit from revision, practice, or introducing grammar/vocabulary (max twice per month). Younger or lower-level students (6-7 years) may use it once per course (3 months). Overall, Kahoot! is used monthly or less."*

Conversely, two instructors reported weekly usage (once or twice). All teachers employed Kahoot! for vocabulary and grammar review across various student levels. For vocabulary, one teacher focused on meaning, form, and spelling. Another used Kahoot! for grammar review or pre-assessment before introducing new rules. Kahoot! also served as a tool for practicing speed reading and covering non-coursebook topics like Halloween.

#### *The advantages of Kahoot! Application*

All teachers reported positive student reactions to Kahoot!. Younger learners, in particular, displayed excitement when the Kahoot! theme appeared on screen. One teacher highlighted Kahoot!'s potential for both individual learning and collaborative learning. Another teacher valued its convenience and ease of use, allowing educators to create or use existing quizzes, thus saving preparation time. The variety of game modes facilitated assigning practice at home. Notably, students could choose nicknames, potentially contributing to a sense of anonymity that fostered comfort in answering incorrectly. Teachers also found the multiple-choice format suitable for lower-level learners, promoting engagement through participation. Implementing Kahoot! fostered a friendly competitive environment, with students striving for high scores and recognition on the leaderboard. The classroom atmosphere became lively and engaging with cheers and excitement. In conclusion, teachers reported that Kahoot! enhances student engagement, creates a joyful learning environment, and promotes both individual and collaborative practice. Additionally, its user-friendliness was viewed as beneficial for teacher workload management.

#### *The disadvantages of Kahoot! application*

Internet dependence emerged as a key drawback. Teachers reported difficulties with slow connections impacting student performance and final scores. Device availability also presented a challenge, as not all students possessed them. Additionally, despite Kahoot!'s filtering system, one teacher noted students circumventing it by writing inappropriate usernames backward. Finally, time constraints posed a potential issue. Teachers who stopped to explain correct answers risked exceeding allotted lesson time.

## Discussion

Conducted within a Vietnamese university English language class, this research investigated the effectiveness of Kahoot! in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among EFL undergraduates. The study employed a two-cycle design, demonstrating significant improvement in learner performance as evidenced by a rise in average test scores from 39.27 to 61.45 and subsequently to 85.81. These findings suggest that incorporating Kahoot! into vocabulary instruction can demonstrably improve EFL undergraduate students' vocabulary achievement.

Beyond the observed improvement in vocabulary acquisition, Kahoot! garnered positive feedback from educators. Its ability to enhance student engagement and participation aligns with research highlighting the importance of interaction, cooperation, and enjoyment for successful learning (Dellos, 2015; Tivaraju et al., 2017). Kahoot! fosters a positive attitude towards English learning by making vocabulary practice engaging. Furthermore, the study's findings regarding Kahoot!'s ability to promote individual and collaborative learning through its diverse modes resonate with previous work by Rofiyarti & Sari (2017) and Mansur & Fadhilawati (2019). Educators can use Kahoot! for both in-class instruction and assigning practice activities for students to complete at home. Notably, the option for students to choose nicknames and potentially remain anonymous can boost confidence, particularly for those hesitant about making mistakes. Despite these benefits, teachers also acknowledged some drawbacks. These included unreliable internet connections, device accessibility limitations, inappropriate usernames, and potential time constraints when implementing Kahoot! activities. As Manurung (2021) points out, technical issues are common challenges associated with internet-based platforms.

The current study's findings resonate with prior research conducted within EFL university contexts. Similar positive impacts on vocabulary learning and performance were observed in the study by Boulaid and Moubtassime (2019). These findings align with Aljaloud et al. (2015) who highlight Kahoot!'s ability to promote interactivity, enhance academic performance, and boost student engagement, alongside potential practical classroom challenges. Nikou & Economides (2018) further contribute by confirming Kahoot!'s effectiveness in fostering motivation, positive attitude, and learning outcomes in EFL classrooms. In conclusion, this research adds to the growing body of evidence supporting Kahoot! as a valuable tool for significant vocabulary improvement in EFL undergraduate learners. While some drawbacks exist, such as those outlined in the present study and by Manurung (2021), Kahoot! demonstrably offers numerous benefits for both educators and learners.

## Conclusion

This research investigates the effectiveness of Kahoot! in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among EFL university students in Vietnam. The study employed a two-cycle design, with post-test scores demonstrating a significant increase in student vocabulary learning. All participants achieved success criteria by the end of cycle 2. To gain a holistic understanding and inform future applications, teacher perspectives on Kahoot!'s advantages

and disadvantages were also collected. The findings suggest that Kahoot! possesses pedagogical value, facilitating both teaching and learning. It plays a crucial role in boosting vocabulary performance, participation, and student engagement. However, alongside these positive aspects, consideration must be given to potential drawbacks, such as technical difficulties, time management constraints, and inappropriate student nicknames.

This study offers valuable insights for educators seeking to improve their teaching practice. Implementing Kahoot! to facilitate vocabulary learning resulted in increased student enthusiasm and a stronger desire for frequent Kahoot! activities. The classroom atmosphere became more vibrant, marked by joyful participation and a commitment to independent vocabulary review fueled by the desire to achieve high scores. These observations suggest that Kahoot! can not only enhance learning outcomes but also motivate students and foster a more engaging learning environment.

## Recommendations

It is important to acknowledge that the research focused specifically on Information Technology students, and the outcomes may differ for students with other majors. Additionally, the sample size was relatively small, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the participant pool to include students from diverse majors. Furthermore, the investigation could delve deeper into the broader applications of Kahoot! This might include exploring its potential as an assessment tool or its effectiveness in enhancing other language skills beyond vocabulary acquisition. In light of the encouraging outcomes yielded by this investigation, Kahoot! merits continued exploration to comprehensively unveil its capacity to enhance the pedagogical process.

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## English Language Students' Perception of Using Grammarly in Academic Writing Subject

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**Abstract:** The rationale of the current research was to investigate English Language (EL) students' perception on their using Grammarly in Academic Writing Subject at a private university in The Mekong Delta of Vietnam. This study also desires to find out and explore the strong as well as weak aspects of Grammarly application. The mixed-method design was applied in this research. The participants of the paper were 50 EL students attended in Academic Writing Subject which was one of the compulsory courses in their university curriculum. The study employed the 15-item questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale and a semi-structured interview for data collection. The findings showed that students' perceptions on using Grammarly in their course were positive. The results also showed some strengths and weaknesses of this Grammarly application. Several challenges were discussed to recommend possible solutions to better EL students' academic writing. Implications for practical applications of Grammarly in Academic Writing Subject were addressed in this study to enhance EL students' academic writing performance.

**Keywords:** EL Students' Perception, Grammarly, Academic Writing Subject

**Citation:** Huynh, N.T. (2024). English Language Students' Perception of Using Grammarly in Academic Writing Subject. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 799-809), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Among the four skills in English such as Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing, the last one is considered to be essential and significant in acquiring a language (Gloria & Mbato, 2023). Ravana et al. (2023) claim that writing can be used as a medium to offer creative as well as reflective insights, a deep understanding of a complicated issue or matter. In the environment of academic institutions, EL students have to master writing skills for a numerous professional and educational reasons (Harahap, 2023). With the development of technology, EL students can employ an online tool to improve the performance of their compositions like Grammarly. Fahmi and Cahyono (2021) highly recommend this application thanks to its ease, popularity and effectiveness for EL students.

For such purposes, it is worth an investigation that is guided by the two questions below.

1. What are EL students' perceptions on the use of Grammarly in Academic Writing Subject?

2. How do students perceive the benefits and shortcomings of utilizing Grammarly in Academic Writing Subject?

## Literature Review

### Perception

Based on the definition suggested in the Cambridge Online Dictionary, Bedir (2019) describes perception as people's belief as well as perspective about the world. More specifically, Agung et al. (2020) adds some more ideas to the definition. According to them, perception is seen as a result of the fact that people's viewpoints can be adjusted after they experience certain things in life. Therefore, people frequently obtain different perceptions on something new (Nasution et al., 2020). They believe that such a process starts with the use of people's five senses to receive the input. The input is organized and analyzed as so to form an interpretation of what it sensed. In this study, perception is understood as EL students' belief and opinions toward their using Grammarly in the course Academic Writing, which is a compulsory subject in their university curriculum.

#### *Writing and Academic Writing*

Writing is defined as people's ability to express ideas in their mind under the form of written works which others can read and understand (Handayani & Mantra, 2022). According to Zulaiha and Triana (2023), writing is significant in communication; moreover, it is described as an English productive skill.

Academic writing is considered to be challenging for students (Handayani & Mantra, 2022), and required in formal educational settings (Budiana, 2023). Bower et al. (2023) highly evaluates academic writing which is beneficial to conduct students' assessments. That is because this type of writing empowers students to prove their skill and knowledge acquisition.

#### *The effectiveness of Grammarly application in academic writing*

Prasetya and Raharjo (2023) admit that Grammarly grows in popularity among EL students in learning writing. Fitria (2021) identifies this application as a tool to analyze any composition along with offer feedback in terms of grammar, writing style, spelling, and punctuation as well, which are important elements in writing. In order to enhance writing skills in an effective way, Grammarly can be used as a valuable tool to detect grammatical mistakes (Thi & Nikolov, 2022). Besides providing immediate feedback, Grammarly can adopt the EL students' writing style, thus its response will be more specific (Perdana et al., 2021).

EL students find this application meaningful for their study when it assists them in avoiding errors (Ardhy et al., 2023). Similarly, Huang et al. (2020) discover that EL students' academic writing performance is developed by using Grammarly. Raheem et al. (2023) this tool also focuses on bettering students' grammar as well as writing style. According to these authors, grammatical mistakes and inconsistent writing style may prevent them from

producing their brilliant ideas. Therefore, Grammarly is considered to bridge this gap and aid them in expressing what they really want.

### Conceptual Framework

The framework was adapted from the research by Rejeki (2023). Based the conceptual framework below, the author conducted this research related to students' perceived knowledge of using Grammarly in terms of Grammarly application and its features. Such knowledge is examined by investigating how EL students accept, understand and evaluate this writing tool.

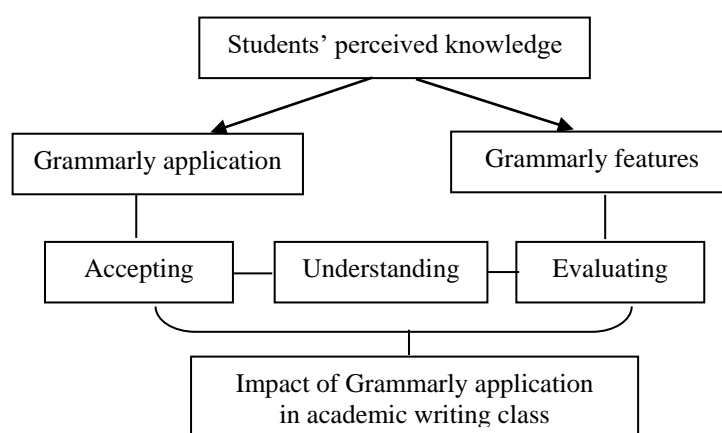


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants are English majored students in a private university in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. These 50 English Language students who attended in Academic Writing Subject which is one of the compulsory courses in their university curriculum. All of them completed Academic Writing Course and already took the final exam. The 50 students first completed the questionnaires, and then 10 out of them were randomly selected for semi-structured interviews.

### Research instruments

This study employed 2 instruments: a 15-item questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. These 15 questions are classified into three aspects such as accepting of Grammarly application, understanding of Grammarly application, and evaluating of Grammarly application. For each aspect, there are five questions. The questionnaire adapted by O'Neill & Russell (2019) consists of three aspects of students' perceived knowledge on the use of Grammarly application in Academic writing subject. These questions are based on the 5-point

Likert scale, ranging between strongly disagree (one) and strongly agree (five).

Table 1. The three aspects related to EL students' perception of using Grammarly in academic writing

Aspects	Indicators	Number of Questions
Accepting	The reasons for using Grammarly	5
Understanding	The use of Grammarly	5
Evaluating	The strengths and weaknesses of Grammarly	5
<b>Total</b>		15

Besides, interviews consists of three questions including (1) *What are two reasons that you want to use Grammarly for your academic writing?*, (2) *What can you learn from using Grammarly for your academic writing?*, and (3) *What do you think about feedback and suggestion from Grammarly for your academic writing?* These open-ended questions are used in the form of semi-structured interviews.

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.897	15

Figure 2. Value of reliability

To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, the questionnaire, during the procedure of collecting quantitative data. The alpha value for Cronbach is determined to be .897. This value is sufficient for the reasearch to be conducted.

## Results

### Results from the questionnaires

Table 2: Mean score of EL students' perception of using Grammarly in academic writing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
Students' perception on the use of Grammarly in Academic writing subject	50	1.80	5.00	3.83	0.61

Table 2 presents the findings of the questionnaire with 15 items. It shows that EL students' perception on the use of Grammarly in academic writing is quite high (M=3.83, SD=0.61).

Table 3: Mean scores of the three aspects related to EL students' perception on the use of Grammarly in academic writing subject

Aspects	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
EL students' accepting the use of Grammarly	50	1.40	5.00	3.80	.73

www.icres.net	April 27-30, 2024	Antalya, Turkey		www.istes.org		
EL students' understanding the use of Grammarly	50	2.00	5.00	3.76	.63	
EL students' evaluating the use of Grammarly	50	1.80	5.00	3.95	.64	

The mean agreement degrees of EL students towards this application are quite high ranging between 3.76 and 3.95 as indicated in Table 3.

*EL students' accepting their using Grammarly in academic writing*

Table 4: Mean scores of EL students' accepting their using Grammarly in academic writing

Aspects	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
1. I use Grammarly to complement the lecturer's feedback.	50	1	5	3.86	.97
2. I use Grammarly because of the recommendation from the writing lecturer.	50	1	5	2.70	1.06
3. Grammarly feedback helps me become confident in handing in my assignment.	50	1	5	4.20	.95
4. I am motivated when the lecture appreciates my academic writing performance using Grammarly.	50	1	5	3.98	1.00
5. Grammarly can minimize the writing errors in my academic writing.	50	1	5	4.24	.89

According to the results, the participants accept that Grammarly can help them minimize errors in their composition, which gets the highest value (M=4.24, SD=.89). The lowest value among the five ones is their acceptance on the writing teachers' recommendation for this application (M=2.70, SD=1.06). The participants are likely to have no idea about this. The other three values are positive (from M=3.86 to M=4.20). In short, they accept to use this application as a writing tool to assist them in improving the quality of their composition in academic writing.

*EL students' understanding the use of Grammarly in academic writing*

Table 5: Mean scores of EL students' understanding the use of Grammarly in academic writing

Aspects	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
6. I think it was essential to receive grammatical feedback for my assignment.	50	1	5	3.78	1.06
7. The grammatical feedback focused on	50	2	5	4.12	.75

main errors of my writing.						
8. Sometimes, I ignore some suggestions from Grammarly.	50	1	5	3.56	1.15	
9. Such clear explanations were very easy to understand the errors.	50	2	5	3.80	.78	
10. My language skill was developed thanks to its feedback since I was able to understand the grammatical rules more.	50	1	5	3.52	.97	

The result in Table 5 shows that the participants understand how Grammarly offers feedback on their writing with the highest value ( $M=4.12$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ). Although item number 10 is the lowest, it still remains high ( $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=.97$ ). It can be interpreted that the participants comprehend grammatical rules based on its feedback. The rest of the items are fairly positive (between  $M=3.78$  and  $M=3.80$ ). To sum up, the use of Grammarly can be understood by these EL students in learning Academic subject.

*EL students' evaluating their using Grammarly in academic writing*

Table 6: Mean scores of EL students' evaluating their using Grammarly in academic writing

Aspects	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
11. I received lots of valuable suggestions about how to better my knowledge of grammar by using Grammarly.	50	1	5	3.92	.97
12. I prefer feedback from lecturers rather than Grammarly.	50	1	5	3.82	1.00
13. Grammarly encourages me to do independent proofreading.	50	1	5	4.14	.99
14. I found some feedback from Grammarly that needed to be more accurate.	50	2	5	4.00	.86
15. Grammarly gives me a performance score that calculates the accuracy level of my writing on the base of word count as well as number and types of writing problems checked.	50	2	5	3.88	.92

As Table 6 describes, EL students' evaluation toward the encouragement of Grammarly in independent proofreading obtains the highest degree ( $M=4.14$ ,  $SD=.99$ ). In other words, thanks to its function, the students are able to improve their writing skill themselves. In addition to feedback from this tool, the participants admit

that they need correction from their teachers as well, which receives the lowest value ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ). In spite of the lowest among the five items, it still remains positive. The other items are relatively high (from  $M=3.88$  to  $M=4.00$ ). In short, the participants evaluate the importance of Grammarly for their writing improvement.

### *Results from the interviews*

#### *EL students' accepting their using Grammarly in academic writing*

For this aspect, 50 participants are asked to speak out two reasons for their using this writing in academic writing subject. 6 out of 10 EL students think that this application is quite easy to use.

*"I think the first reason for using Grammarly should be its ease. With some simple steps, I can have a correct essay with suggestions on spelling, and grammar."*

(Student 1, interview extract)

Interestingly, there are 3 responses related to students' confidence after Grammarly check their composition. They can even learn from their mistakes.

*"When I use Grammarly to check my writing before submission, I feel fairly confident with my teacher."*

(Student 3, interview extract)

Specifically, student 5 accepts its effectiveness in learning academic writing.

*"I can learn from its suggestions and feedback. I know and understand my mistakes."*

(Student 5, interview extract)

Most of the participants show their acceptance toward this tool thanks to its usefulness in such a complicated kind of writing in university.

#### *EL students' understanding their using Grammarly in academic writing*

To find out the participants' understanding the use of Grammarly, they need to express their opinions on what they can learn from using Grammarly for your academic writing. 8 out of ten EL students claim that they can avoid making grammatical mistakes after a period of time using it.

*"It's useful for me because after reading its suggestions I can understand and remember my mistakes."*

(Student 7, interview extract)

Besides grammar, some of them use this application as a tool to correct their spelling and punctuation errors.

*"Thanks to this website, I can check my spelling, grammar and punctuation. I think my writing improves a lot."*

(Student 6, interview extract)



When the students pay attention to their mistakes after using Grammarly, they can avoid making the same one next time.

*“Once my writing is corrected by this tool, I will not make these errors again. That’s why my writing is better now.”*

(Student 10, interview extract)

According to the responses to this question, the participants are able to understand how Grammarly can be used to enhance their writing skill with three elements of a language such as spelling, grammar and punctuation.

### *EL students’ evaluating their using Grammarly in academic writing*

The last question requires the participants to evaluate whether Grammarly is really effective and necessary to use in bettering the quality of their composition. 8 out of 10 agree that, at the present, Grammarly is suitable for their learning academic writing.

*“I think that Grammarly can help me improve my skill because it is effective to me.”*

(Student 10, interview extract)

There are 2 students think that sometimes this tool provides incorrect feedback and inappropriate suggestions.

*“Although Grammarly is helpful, I am not sometimes convinced when I recognize some errors of this tool. Therefore, I need my teachers’ correction besides Grammarly.”*

(Student 4, interview extract)

After a period of time using this writing tool, the participants have the ability to evaluate its effectiveness. Besides the benefits, Grammarly still has some shortcomings. They can distinguish correct grammatical rules from inappropriate suggestions.

## **Discussion**

This research is conducted related to English language students’ perceived knowledge of using Grammarly in terms of its application as well as its features. Such knowledge is examined by investing students’ accepting, understanding and evaluating toward Grammarly.

In terms of their acceptance toward this writing tool, the result of the current study shares some similarities with the research by Raheem et al. (2023). Both find out that students’ performance can be improved with better grammar and writing style. Some students believe that, in the present time, this application can be considered as one of the most useful tool for their writing skill. It is accepted as essential assistance in the process of enhancing their academic performance.

Regarding to students’ understanding the use of Grammarly, the current research also aligns with the study by

Thi & Nikolov (2022) in discovering that students can use it to detect grammatical mistakes. The most convenient of this application is that feedback and suggestions can be delivered immediately as soon as students' writing is uploaded. Thanks to such useful suggestions, EL students are able to edit their composition. In addition, using Grammarly to check their papers before the submission can help gain their confidence. They understand that this writing tool can aid them in creating academic work with fewer mistakes.

Once EK students accept as well as understand the use of Grammarly in academic writing, they obtain the ability to evaluate it. Both Fitria (2021) and this study praise its usefulness in offering immediate feedback including spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The sole difference between this research and related studies is that EL students admit Grammarly has some limitation with inappropriate suggestions. In other words, students can distinguish useful feedback for their composition from the one that is not suitable in their writing.

## Conclusion

Grammarly has shown its excellent functions toward English language students' needs to enhance and better their academic writing performance. Thanks to its immediate feedback as well as suggestions in terms of spelling, grammatical rules, punctuation, and writing style, students themselves are able to learn and correct mistakes in their papers. As a result, they can produce better language in their composition. An interesting point of the interviews is that these students show their ability in discovering inappropriate suggestions from this application. They even can distinguish between good grammatical rules and some feedback that need to be more correct. Hence, these students desire their writing teachers to not only offer feedback on their papers but also provide explanations on inappropriate suggestions from Grammarly so that they can obtain comprehensive knowledge in their course of academic writing.

## Limitations & Recommendations

Although the current research shows the usefulness of Grammarly, it still has some limitations. The participants are encouraged to use this tool after class without the teachers' control. Thus, they do not know how much time and how often the students use Grammarly to detect their writing issues. In addition, the number of participants is quite small, which may prevent the result of the current study from discovering more findings related to the detailed benefits as well as shortcomings of Grammarly. The writing teachers should control the participants' using this application in and after class. In addition, there should be a pre-test and a post-test in order to measure their progress in the process of learning academic writing subject. Thus, analysis and explanation can be given clearly with more details.

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## Students' Perception of Using Wordwall Application to Enhance Vocabulary Memorization

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to investigate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' perception of using Wordwall application in vocabulary memorization at a private university in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. This study also explores the strengths and weaknesses of Wordwall application. The mixed-method design was used in this study. The participants of the study were 75 students from different levels of English proficiency. The SPSS 25 program was used to examine the data. The study employed a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and a semi-structured interview for data collection. The findings showed that students' perceptions of using Wordwall for their memorizing vocabulary were positive. The results also showed some strengths and weaknesses of this Wordwall application. Some challenges were discussed to recommend possible solutions for EFL students' vocabulary memorization. Implications for practical applications of Wordwall to memorize vocabulary were addressed in this study to enhance EFL students' ability to memorize vocabulary.

**Keywords:** EL Students' Perception, Wordwall, Vocabulary memorization

**Citation:** Do, T., C. & Huynh, N., T. (2024). Students' Perception of Using Wordwall Application to Enhance Vocabulary Memorization. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 810-820), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Vocabulary is a crucial aspect of language teaching and learning as it helps humans understand and articulate their thoughts (Bandjarjani & Efrata, 2023). Vocabulary must be acquired to be used correctly and effectively (Amaliyah & Rahayu, 2023). Teachers play a key role in students' vocabulary learning as they can analyze difficulties that students have in learning (Rahayu & Bhaskoro, 2022 as cited in Amaliyah & Rahayu, 2023).

Gradually, teachers have started to apply gamification which is the integration of games into teaching and learning. Educational game websites such as Quizlet, Kahoot!, Quizzes, or WordWall are gamification in education, these applications are well-known for their games and fun activities. However, Wordwall is among the most efficient websites that can simplify the process of creating educational activities. It provides over 15

activities on its website, and the designs and functions are intriguing to students which enables their learning to be more efficient and interesting (Swari, 2023). These game activities are clear and straightforward enabling students to test their knowledge and reinforce their understanding of vocabulary. Furthermore, students can have access to the quizzes anytime and anywhere, they can create their games with the vocabulary of their own or their friends'. Teachers can track their students' progress to see how well their students are with real-time leaderboards and points (Swari, 2023).

To examine the effectiveness of Wordwall in enhancing students' vocabulary memorization, two research questions below are used in this study:

1. What are university students' perceptions of using Wordwall application to enhance vocabulary memorization?
2. How do students perceive the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing Wordwall application to enhance vocabulary memorization?

## Literature Review

### Importance of vocabulary memorization

Vocabulary can be recognized as words that include lexical items or phrases (Jaikrishnan & Ismail, 2021). However, new words and phrases can be difficult to memorize (Jaikrishnan & Ismail, 2021; Gaybulloyevna, 2022). Thus, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of memorizing vocabulary as it is an essential skill in vocabulary acquisition (Gaybulloyevna, 2022). Such a significant skill is the very first stage according to Bloom's taxonomy. This skill can help students build a strong foundation in vocabulary, providing better comprehension and critical thinking (Siddiq, 2022). Moreover, Siddiq (2022) states that students' vocabulary knowledge can greatly aid other language skills, especially in their language creation (Quy & Huyen, 2021).

Vocabulary is regarded to be the most important skill during language acquisition that every student must acquire alongside grammar (Khasanovna, 2022; Agazzi, 2022; Gaybulloyevna, 2022; Zarfsaz & Yeganehpour, 2021). Even if an individual has a strong grasp of grammar, they need vocabulary to comprehend and communicate effectively (Aji, et al., 2023). Vocabulary is the fundamental factor of language proficiency for students to obtain others' ideas and express their own (Rashid, et al., 2022), helping them to be more convincing.

### *Gamification and the effectiveness of gamification in language learning*

Gamification is the integration of game elements into real-world contexts (Shakhnoza, 2023; Armand & Indriani, 2022) such as language acquisition. Students usually see boring and un-motivating language learning lessons (Sari & Ningsih, 2022) but gamification can turn it into an immersive and enjoyable experience (Shakhnoza, 2023). Gamification can take different forms based on the context and the objective of the lesson



(Azar & Tan, 2020; Turunen, 2023) as it can be carried out by mobile devices or even real-world activities. Gamification games are created with objectives, obstacles, and perks, which enhance students' motivation to learn and obtain achievements (Shakhnoza, 2023).

A normal way of learning a language is by doing tests that take teachers a long time to grade, so the process can be an endurance test for both teachers and students. However, gamification can take out this long process with educational games that can instantly evaluate, give points to students, and provide feedback that can improve students' acquisition process (Shakhnoza, 2023). Armand and Indriani (2022) argue that not only is gamification efficient, but it is also the best innovative method for learning languages.

### *The use of Wordwall platform in vocabulary memorization*

There are no obstacles when someone wants to access Wordwall (Swari, 2023). Wordwall application is designed to aid students in learning a language with a variety of templates such as quizzes, puzzles, matching tasks, and so on (Rodríguez-Escobar et al., 2023). Such a great tool is considered to be a new and educationally entertaining application that provides a lot of vocabulary-building activities (Swari, 2023). Çil (2021) describes Wordwall as a source of distinctive as well as interactive tasks for students' vocabulary development. Thus, students can utilize Wordwall application as a medium for their language learning (Anjani et al., 2023). Similarly, Umar et al. (2023) admit that Wordwall can assist students in understanding vocabulary as well as its definition.

### *Theoretical framework*

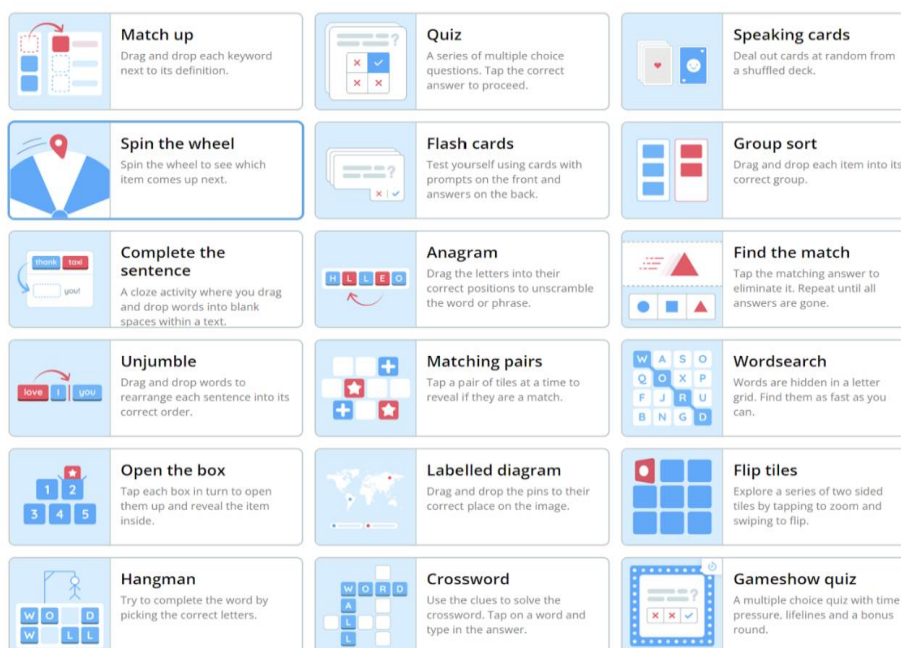


Figure 12. Templates of Wordwall application



According to TAM by Davis (1989) (Technology Acceptance Model), the three elements including PEOU (perceived ease of use), PU (perceived usefulness), and BI (behavioral intention to use) are applied to investigate students' perception of using Wordwall website in vocabulary memorization. In this research, PEOU refers to the degree to which students can use this tool with effortlessness, and PU involves the degree to which students believe Wordwall could aid them in better vocabulary memorization. As shown in the figure, PU and BI are both influenced directly by PEOU.

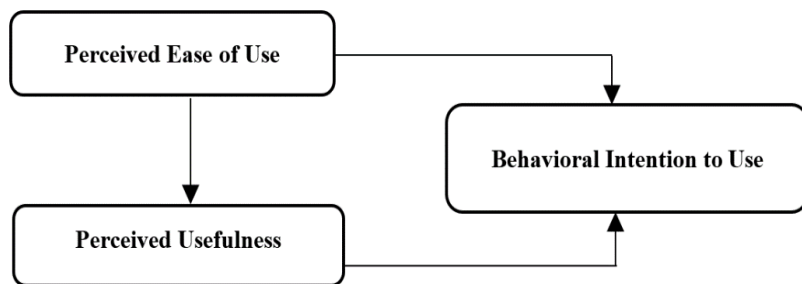


Figure 2. Aspects of acceptance questionnaire adapted from TAM model by Davis (1989)

**Method**

**Participants**

The participants of this research are students at a private university in Vietnam. The total number of participants is 75 students. All of them are asked to fill out the questionnaire. 10 out of 75 students are chosen randomly to take part in the interviews. The participants have experienced using Wordwall to enhance their vocabulary in the process of learning English.

*Research instrument*

Two instruments, a 14-item questionnaire, and interviews, are employed in this study. Items in this questionnaire are adapted from the research by Almarashdeh et al. (2011), there are five questions for each aspect PEOU and PU, and there are four questions for the aspect BI. These questions are based on the 5-point Likert scale, ranging between strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5).

The interviews include three questions related to the three aspects of the TAM such as (1) *In your opinion, is Wordwall easy for you to use? Why or why not?*, (2) *In your opinion, is Wordwall useful for you to learn vocabulary? Why or why not?*, (3) *In your opinion, will you use Wordwall to learn vocabulary in the future? Why or why not?* These questions are open-ended and the interviews are designed as semi-structured ones. To guarantee the reliability of the questionnaire during the procedure of collecting quantitative data, the value for Cronbach’s alpha is measured with sufficiency for the data collection with the value of .970.

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.970	14

Figure 3 Results of Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire

## Results

### Results from the questionnaires

Table 1. Mean score of students' acceptance of using Wordwall platform in vocabulary memorization

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
Students' acceptance of using Wordwall platform in learning vocabulary	75	1.71	5.00	4.15	.86

Table 2. Mean score of the three aspects of students' acceptance of using Wordwall platform in vocabulary memorization

Aspects	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
Students' perceived ease of use of using Wordwall	75	1.00	5.00	4.23	.89
Students' perceived usefulness Wordwall	75	1.80	5.00	4.15	.89
Students' behavioral intention to use Wordwall in the future	75	1.75	5.00	4.05	.94

The results from the 14 questions are shown in Table 1. It can be seen that students' acceptance of Wordwall platform is considerably positive ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .86$ ). Mean score of the three aspects in Table 2 shows that students' perception of Wordwall platform is at a quite high value (from 4.05 to 4.22).

Table 3. Students' perceived usefulness of using Wordwall platform in vocabulary memorization

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
1. Wordwall allows me to understand vocabulary lessons more quickly.	75	1	5	4.29	.99
2. Wordwall enhances my effectiveness in learning vocabulary.	75	1	5	4.27	1.01
3. Wordwall increases my interest in learning vocabulary.	75	1	5	4.09	1.05

4. Wordwall helps me reinforce my vocabulary lessons.	75	1	5	4.25	.93
5. Wordwall has a variety of templates which motivate my vocabulary memorization.	75	1	5	4.24	.97

Table 3 shows that students' vocabulary retention and understanding improved when using Wordwall platform which has the highest value ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .99$ ). Students agree that using Wordwall can boost their interest in studying vocabulary although it has the lowest value in the table ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). This indicates that students are more excited when using Wordwall platform in their study. The other values are fairly high (From  $M = 4.25$  to  $M = 4.27$ ). In conclusion, nearly all of the students agree that Wordwall platform is useful for their vocabulary learning.

Table 4. Students' perceived ease of using Wordwall platform in vocabulary memorization

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
6. My interaction with Wordwall is clear and understandable.	75	1	5	4.11	1.10
7. Searching vocabulary exercises from Wordwall is easy.	75	1	5	4.08	.98
8. I find Wordwall easy to use.	75	1	5	4.25	.97
9. Wordwall is easily accessible.	75	1	5	4.15	1.04
10. Templates of Wordwall are understandable.	75	1	5	4.19	.96

According to Table 4, students find that Wordwall platform is easy to use and has the highest value ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). Students find that there are no difficulties in searching for vocabulary exercises from Wordwall even though this value is the lowest among the five values ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = .98$ ). Other positive values (from  $M = 4.11$  to  $M = 4.19$ ) indicate that students can easily get access to Wordwall and find its design understandable. In short, students' perception of the ease of use of Wordwall is highly positive.

Table 5. Students' perceived behavioral intention to use Wordwall platform in vocabulary memorization

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
11. I would recommend Wordwall to my friends.	75	1	5	4.15	1.06
12. I intend to increase my use of Wordwall in the future.	75	2	5	4.07	.99
13. I would use Wordwall to practice more	75	2	5	4.08	.97

vocabulary exercises outside the classroom.

14. I plan to use Wordwall in the next three months.	75	1	5	3.91	1.09
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According to the statistics from Table 5, students are likely to recommend Wordwall to their friends which has the highest value among the four values ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ). Furthermore, a majority of the students intend to use Wordwall in the next three months which has the lowest value in the table ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = .99$ ). The other two values are considerably high ( $M = 4.07$  and  $M = 4.08$ ) showing that students will use Wordwall in their studying, especially for vocabulary memorization. To conclude, students' behavioral intention to use Wordwall for vocabulary memorization is positive.

#### *Results from the interviews*

##### *Students' Perceived Usefulness of Using Wordwall Platform in Vocabulary Memorization*

Ten out of ten students find Wordwall useful for vocabulary memorization, which provides students with lots of diversified templates in its platform.

*"Very useful as it helps me learn vocabulary easier"*

*(Student 5, interview extract)*

Four out of ten students admit finding Wordwall useful because it provides various templates and exercises for them to choose from.

*"It has many exercises, doing them help me memorize better"*

*(Student 1, interview extract)*

*"We can choose exercises from many different exercises, which improve our memorization"*

*(Student 3, interview extract)*

*"Extremely useful, it has various exercises"*

*(Student 7, interview extract)*

*"Totally useful, a range of vocabulary can be played in different forms of exercises"*

*(student 8, interview extract)*

##### *Students' Perceived Ease of Use of Wordwall Platform in Vocabulary Memorization*

Ten out of ten students agree that Wordwall is easy to access as it only needs a link to enter. Saving students' time when they want to memorize their vocabulary knowledge.

*"I find it easy to use as we can play right away just by clicking the link"*

*(Student 1, interview extract)*

*"Wordwall is fairly easy as you can access the games from the link"*

*(Student 9, interview extract)*

Interestingly, one of the students also states that Wordwall is easier than other apps.

*"It is easier than Quizizz because you don't have to name or enter a code"*

*(Student 7, interview extract)*

### *Students' Behavioral Intention to Use Wordwall Platform in Vocabulary Memorization*

Ten out of ten students intend to use Wordwall for their study in the future. A big part of this intention is because of the new experiences that Wordwall gives students.

*"I will definitely use it because it is easy, good, and it is quite new"*

*(Student 3, interview extract)*

Some of the students plan to use Wordwall as it helps them to enhance their study quality.

*"I will learn Wordwall with other platforms to increase my interest when learning vocabulary"*

*(Student 1, interview extract)*

One of them wants to learn Wordwall for their own purposes.

*"I will use Wordwall for learning single words, but not for learning phrases and idioms"*

*(Student 2, interview extract)*

## **Discussion**

The target of this study is to examine how students accept the use of Wordwall platform in their vocabulary learning in their perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and behavioral intention in the future. The interesting results from the questionnaire and interviews show that students are excited to use Wordwall platform for vocabulary learning. According to Swari (2023) study results, which are matched with the results of this study, Wordwall helps students' vocabulary learning become more intriguing and productive. Furthermore, the findings regarding ease of use in the study conducted by Swari (2023) are similar to the results obtained in our study, accessibility of Wordwall has no challenges in any case for students and teachers as Wordwall is just one click away from using it. This study agrees with the study by Anjani et al. (2023) that Wordwall can be used as a tool that helps students to find enthusiasm in their vocabulary learning. In terms of perceived usefulness, the study from Umar et al. (2023) and Rodríguez-Escobar et al. (2023) are consistent with the findings that Wordwall exercises aid students' vocabulary memorization. Accordingly, the TAM model shows that students' perceived ease of use aspect has a considerable influence on students' perceived usefulness which leads to the behavioral intention of students to use Wordwall platform soon. The results from the interviews show that 100% of the students will use Wordwall in the near future with 20% of them will use it with other educational games. In conclusion, Wordwall is an educational game that teachers can make use of it to enhance students' vocabulary learning experience and knowledge.

## **Conclusion, Limitations & Recommendation**

Based on the results, students' perception of using Wordwall in vocabulary memorization is positively high. The results in this study share a major of similarities with other researchers' results which can conclude that Wordwall is a useful tool for vocabulary acquisition and teaching languages. This study also points out the importance of vocabulary, especially vocabulary memorization skills. However, the number of participants is the first limitation of this study as the results from 75 participants can accurately decide whether or not

Wordwall is the best platform for studying vocabulary. The second limitation is that the participants were not exposed to Wordwall long enough to confirm the credibility of this study. The participants' answers could be more accurate if they were given more time using Wordwall to study. It is recommended that teachers should be a part of this study with the students so that the results can be more credible.

## Acknowledgments

Sincere gratitude to those who participate in the research. Without their contributions, the study cannot be finished as expected.

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## Prefixes of Present Tense Between Arabic & Amharic Languages: A Descriptive Analytical Comparative Study

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**Abstract:** This research seeks to identify the characteristics of verbs in Arabic and Amharic languages to find out the similarities between the two languages at the level of present tense verbs and its indicator prefixes. It also contributes to revealing the relationship and similarities between them. The research followed the comparative descriptive approach. The limit of the research is represented in the Amharic language and its relation to the Arabic language. This research includes three topics, the first topic: the relationship between Arabic and Amharic language, the second chapter: verbs in the Arabic and Amharic languages, and the third and final topic: the Prefixes of present tense in the Arabic and Amharic languages. The research concluded that the Arabic and Amharic languages are similar in many characteristics, as they belong to the family of Semitic languages, in addition to other factors that led to direct contact between them. As for the present tense verbs, the two languages are identical in three prefixes, which are /Alif/(A), /Taa/ (T) and /Yaa/ (Y), and they differ slightly in the prefix of the first person plural (We), in Arabic it is the letter /Noon/ (N), while Amharic uses two letters, /Alif/ (A) and /Noon/(N).

**Keywords:** Letters of present tense (hurūf 'al muḍāra'a), Prefixes of present tense, Arabic language, Amharic language, Semitic languages

**Citation:** Bouabdallah, L. & Hassen, U. (2024). Prefixes of Present Tense Between Arabic & Amharic Languages: A Descriptive Analytical Comparative Study.. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 821-837), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Language comparison is one of the most important linguistic areas that focuses on studying linguistic relations between two languages or dialects from the same family, as well as the phenomena of linguistic influence and impact between languages. Languages have been divided into families based on their similarities and differences, and the occurrence of isolation among individuals of the same language due to geographical, political, social, or other reasons resulted in variations in the dialects of the same language.

Comparing languages at their different levels is one of the most important studies in linguistic research. It aims to understand the common phenomena between languages that belong to the same language family, such as the Arabic and Amharic languages, or what was known in the past as the Abyssinian language. Both languages belong to the Semitic language family, which originated from the Afro-Asiatic language family. This family includes several languages that were widespread in Asia and Africa since ancient times, such as Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Amharic.

Many linguists and researchers have been involved in studying Semitic languages of the most important and oldest civilizations in history. Studies have focused on uncovering the historical and linguistic relationships between the languages in this family, as they possess common and similar linguistic characteristics.

One of the linguistic archaeological issues they noticed is that the Amharic language has preserved elements of ancient Semitic linguistic features that are lost in other Semitic languages, especially in terms of style. (Wolfson, 1929, p.129). It can be said that the Arabic language is the closest Semitic language to the original Semitic language because it lived with the illiteracy of the Arabs, preserved from change and substitution. (Dhadha, 1990, p.25) This may have been the reason for their similarity in several elements, especially in terms of the morphological level, like in verb conjugation and the prefixes of the present tense.

This research aims to demonstrate the fact that the relationship between the Arabic and Amharic languages originated due to their common origin. The relationship between the two languages is linked to the common features that both have inherited from the mother Semitic language. This relationship has resulted in similarities in phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic structures.

The desire to compare between the Arabic and Amharic languages on the level of prefixes of present tense arose due to the fact that Amharic is the native language of one of the researchers, and on the other hand, since it was known that both languages belong to the same linguistic family, referring to what Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi (d. 745 AH) mentioned in his book “*Jalā’u ’al-ġabaš ‘an Lisāni ’al-habaš*” regarding the nature of the relationship between the two languages and the points of agreement between them, including the prefixes of present tense. This motivated the researchers to explore the similarities between the two languages (Arabic and Amharic) in order to confirm and analyze them using modern linguistic and methodological approaches.

In addition, Amharic language is given less attention from linguists in the field of comparative studies, particularly compared to Semitic languages, and specifically to the Arabic language.

#### **Problem of the research:**

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the similarities between the Arabic and Amharic languages in terms of characteristics, verb tense classification, and verb conjugation?

- Where does the similarity between Arabic and Amharic lie in terms of prefixes of present tense specifically regarding the syntactic and morphological aspects?

- Does the phonological aspect of Arabic have an influence on the pronunciation of prefixes of present tense in Amharic language?

- *The importance of the research:*

The importance of this research lies in its novelty, as it addresses a new topic that has not been previously studied. It compares the prefixes of present tense in the Arabic and Amharic languages, which is a new addition to the study of Semitic languages in general and Amharic grammar in particular. These letters have not been classified as prefixes of present tense, despite their temporal and morphological functions.

Additionally, the research is not limited to linguistic aspects, but extends to historical, cultural, and civilizational aspects spotting the relationships between the Arab and Ethiopian society, and touches on deeper issues that determine the reasons for direct interaction between the two languages.

Furthermore, this type of comparative research is important in terms of contrast, as it shows the similarities and differences between the two languages in terms of their phonetics. This contributes to enriching the applied linguistic aspects, particularly in facilitating language teaching strategies for both languages.

*Research Objectives:*

Through the raised questions, we can summarize the research objectives as follows:

- To reveal the relationship and similarities between the Arabic and Amharic languages.
- To identify morphological features of the verb in both Arabic and Amharic.
- To understand the similarities in verb conjugation in general and the prefixes of present tense in particular.
- To examine the pronunciation of prefixes of present tense in some Arabic dialects and their influence on the pronunciation of these letters in Amharic.

### **Research methodology:**

The nature of the current research demands the descriptive and analytical approach to track the prefixes of present tense between Arabic and Amharic language. This also requires the comparative method that emerges from the core of comparative linguistic orient.

### **Research Plan:**

The research includes an introduction, three sections, and a conclusion. The first section discusses the

relationship between the Arabic language and Amharic language. The second section will focus on verbs in the Arabic and Amharic languages. The third section will discuss the prefixes of the present tense in the Arabic and Amharic languages. The fourth and final section will address the pronunciation of prefixes present tense letters in Arabic dialects and the Amharic language.

### **Literature Review:**

As mentioned earlier there are no specific studies that have addressed the topic. However, there are relevant studies:

**1.** The study by researcher Omar El-Sayed Abdel-Fattah Amer, titled *Verbs in the Amharic Language: A Morphological Study* (2005):

This study is the first to address the topic of verbs in the Amharic language in Arabic. The researcher attempted to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of verb study, contrary to previous studies. This was achieved by presenting verb forms in terms of abstraction and augmentation, as well as verb forms that respond to the abstract verb in the Amharic language. Additionally, the study examined the verb augmentations, prefixes, and their various morphological meanings using a descriptive analytical approach.

The study revealed that the majority of Amharic verbs follow a standardized manner, with a few exceptions. It also illustrated that verbs in Amharic behave to express various inflectional meanings, such as indicating tense, direction, condition, person, gender, and number.

**2.** A comparative study between Amharic and Arabic languages at the verb level by Maymoona Kebed (2018): This research is a comparative study between the Arabic and Amharic languages at the verb level that aims to explore the similarities and differences between the two languages using the historical, descriptive, and comparative approaches. The researcher's results reveal that both languages agree that the verb revolves around an action, with the Amharic language differing in terms of verb indicators. Regarding word order, the verb is positioned at the end of the sentence in Amharic, except in certain cases in poetry. The study also demonstrates the resemblance between the two languages in terms of verb tense and the classification of verbs into transitive and non-transitive.

The current research is related to the previous two studies about the verb, but the difference lies in the fact that this research focuses on the present tense markers and the similarities between the two languages in this morphological study. On the other hand, the two previous studies have focused on highlighting the similarities and differences in verb structures in Arabic and Amharic, identifying the characteristics of the verb in terms of morphology and syntax. Meanwhile, the current research focuses on the similarity between the two languages in the usage of prefixes of present tense, as well as relating these markers with their pronunciation in various Arabic dialects that have brought the similarities closer.

**Difficulty of the research:**

The difficulty of this research lies in finding sources and references that discuss the verb conjugations in the Amharic language. Therefore, the researchers conducted an interview with a specialist professor in both the Arabic and Amharic languages at Addis Ababa University.

The second difficulty was in searching for previous studies that included a comparison between the Arabic and Amharic languages, specifically on the level of the verb.

**I. The relationship between the Amharic and Arabic languages:****A. The origin and history of Arabic language:***1. The origin of the Arabic language:*

Arabic is attributed to the Arabs who existed in their lands before they were known by this name among their neighbors. They had an Arabic language that they spoke, which evolved over time. (Scientist, 2004, p.127) Abdul Ghaffar Hamed Hilal mentions that there are different opinions about who first spoke the language, with three main opinions:

1.1. It is said that it originated from the tongue of Ya'rub bin Qahtan, who was the first to speak it, and then it spread to the rest of the Arabs.

1.2. The second opinion is that the Prophet Ismail was the first to speak the Arabic language after forgetting his father Ibrahim's Hebrew language.

1.3. The third opinion is that Arabic was the language of the Arabs who perished before Islam, such as the 'Ad and Thamud, and this is the most accurate opinion. (Hilal, 2004, p.138-139)

It is known that there were ancient and modern Arab tribes. In ancient times, there were Arab tribes and kingdoms that were attributed to them, such as the 'Ad and Thamud. 'Ad inhabited the region of Al-Ahqāf in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, while Thamud resided in Al-Hijr in the north of the peninsula, between Al-Hijāz and Al-Sham. (Hilal, 2004, p.127).

*2. The development and spread of the Arabic language:*

The Arabic language carries within its reasons for its spread. It is the language in which the Quran was revealed, and it is beyond the ability of the Arabs with their words, style, and structures to produce anything like it. The Quran also mentions the existence of other languages, stating: And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. (Al-Rūm Chapter: 22)

The Arabic language is one of the oldest languages in the world, with a history of over fifteen centuries (some argue that it is seventeen centuries old), and it is still alive and spoken by hundreds of millions of people. (Al-

Awdat, 2015, p.2). Ahmed Dhadha says, The Arabic language is the closest Semitic language to the original Semitic language, as it remained unaffected by changes and substitutions in the Arabic illiterate society. (Dhadha, 1990, p.25) The term Semitic is derived from Sam, the son of Noah. The scientific usage of the term Semitic dates back to 1781, when the German linguist Schlözer suggested that the peoples who established civilizations in West Asia are linguistically and historically connected, as well as somewhat connected in terms of ancestry. (Dhadha, 1990, p.8).

The unified Arabic language spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula with the spread of Islam. Just as Islam united the Arabian Peninsula as one community, the languages of this peninsula were unified under the language of the Quraysh tribe. This language became the common language among the tribes of the peninsula and its inhabitants.

The reason for its widespread use, more than any other language, is its association with the Quran and its status as the language of worship for all Muslims. Therefore, the Arabic language surpassed all other languages spoken by Muslims and became the common literary language in most cases.

A'bdelghaffar Hamed Hilal states that, historical facts indicate the sovereignty of the Quraysh tribe and their dialect existed before Islam. Islam came and found the general language represented in most of the Quraishi linguistics, so it was revealed in this language. This was consistent with the common linguistic reality in the Arab environment at that time.

## **B. The Amharic Language: Its Origin, Development, and Spread:**

### **1. Origin and History of the Amharic Language:**

Ethiopia is a multilingual country, with the number of national languages ranging from 70 to 80, divided into three language families. The Amharic language is at the forefront of these languages, as it is the official language of Ethiopia. (Abdel-Fattah, p.1).

The Amharic language is derived from the ancient language of Ge'ez, which is the language of Ancient Ethiopia, attributed to the Ag'az tribe or Ge'ez, who came from the southwestern Arabian Peninsula. They formed the Kingdom of Axum, and this language has preserved its existence in the current Tigray region. (Hamed, p.120, Wolfson, p.254).

Amharic is the oldest Semitic language in the land of Abyssinia (Wolfson, p.254), and it belongs to the South Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Some Greek words had infiltrated into the Ge'ez language before the spread of Christianity in the land of Abyssinia, along with some words from Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic. However, all these elements did not have an influence on the origin of the language (previous reference, p.261). The Ge'ez language continued to be used until a later period as the main literary means of expression in



Ethiopia, after it was introduced by Christianity in the year 340 AD (Gesese, p.33).

## *2. Development of Amharic language and its spread:*

Amharic remained the language of conversation, while Geez was used for authorship. However, when missionaries started heading towards the land of the Abyssinians, they translated religious books into Amharic to establish a connection between all the factions in the country. As a result, Amharic flourished and replaced Geez in writing and authorship in both religious and worldly affairs.

The Amharic language is originally the dialect of the Amhara tribes (referring to the Amhara region). Its popularity expanded after the Amhara dynasty took power, replacing the Ge'ez language in communication. It flourished and is now the official language in Ethiopia. Historians believe that the Amhara tribe is one of the Arab tribes that migrated to this region from southern Arabia. Its original homeland was Hadramout and Sheh'r, and it is one of the clans of the Muhra tribe found there. It is the official language in Ethiopia, despite the presence of numerous languages, and many Ethiopian inhabitants speak it as it is the official language. It is the language of education in schools and serves as a means of communication among the people. Ge'ez is now unknown even among religious leaders and scholars of the Ethiopian culture (Wolfson, p.266). In modern times, Amharic is the most widely spoken language in Ethiopia and is spoken by the majority of Ethiopians.

## **C. Similarities between the Arabic and Amharic languages:**

As indicated previously both languages belong to the Semitic branch; therefore, they share many words, grammatical and morphological rules, with the presence of other factors that have brought the two languages closer together, such as geographical proximity, Arab migrations, and the emergence of Islamic kingdoms in Abyssinia.

Some of the most important similarities between the two languages are:

### **1. Phonological aspect:**

Most of the sounds of Arabic letters are similar to the sounds of Amharic letters. Like the guttural letters, Abd El-Ghaffar Hamed Hilal believes that the guttural letters - especially the /ha/ and the /'ayn/ - exist in their correct pronunciation in Arabic, Hebrew, and Amharic, and the disappearance of some sounds; such as: that in some Semitic languages that have originated. (Hilal, p.92).

### *2. Derivation:*

The majority of the vocabulary in these two languages originates from a trilateral root (with some bilateral roots

as well). Vocabularies are composed of roots, from which words are derived and generated by adding suffixes and prefixes. (Dhadha, p.21).

### *3. Verbs:*

Both languages agree that the verb revolves around an action, and they also agree in classification of the tenses of the verbs (will be explained later in the coming section), and the origin of verbs in both languages is the past form.

The Amharic language takes the conjugated form of the verb from the third person singular as a model for the verb conjugations, as is the case in most Semitic languages, due to its simplicity and abstraction. (Abdel-Fattah, p.90)

### *4. Classification of sentences:*

There are two types of sentences in Semitic languages: nominal and verbal. In a nominal sentence, the predicate is represented at the beginning of the sentence and the rest of the sentence functions as the subject. In a verbal sentence, the verb is placed at the beginning followed by the subject. (Hilal, 2004, p.95).

### *5. Irregular Plural formation:*

Arabic and Amharic are Semitic languages that use irregular plural in addition to regular plural, and this plural is formed through internal changes. (Previous reference, p.95)

### *6. Masculine and Feminine:*

In Semitic languages, nouns and adjectives are divided into masculine and feminine genders (Hilal, 2004, p.96). They both lack a fixed rule for distinguishing between masculine and feminine genders like the original semitic languages (Wolfson, 1929, p.262).

### *7. Similarities in words:*

Arabic and Amharic languages share many words that have influenced each other. Some Arabic words have entered the Amharic language and other Ethiopian languages due to factors such as migration. Some words have not changed at all, such as the word horse (فرس/ፈረስ), eye (عين/ዕይን), and house (بيت/ቤት). Other words deviate slightly from Arabic, such as the word devil (سيطان/ሰይጥን) which is /saytan/ in Amharic and /šaytan/ in Arabic. There are also common words between the two languages without any indications of one preceding the other in usage (Hameddeen, 2007, p.251-252).

### *8. Morphology:*

Arabic and Amharic are morphological languages, meaning they are inflected languages that change their words and combine roots and affixes with links between the different parts of their structure.

## **II. Characteristics and Classifications of the Verb in Arabic and Amharic:**

This topic discusses the most important characteristics of verbs in Arabic and Amharic languages, including the classification of verbs and their different conjugations. It also highlights the similarities between the two languages in terms of verbs.

### **A. Definition of the verb in Arabic and Amharic languages:**

The verb is one of the components of speech found in all languages of the world, and the verb in the Arabic language is an important element in making the sentence. Ancient grammarians have paid attention to the issue of the verb in their grammatical discussions, and modern scholars have also focused on the same topic in their modern grammatical and linguistic studies.

In Amharic language, the verb is the foundation of the sentence and is necessary. Its presence in the sentence allows us to know what happened, when it happened, and clarifies the extent of the comprehensiveness of the meaning of speech or the sentence.

#### *1. Definition of the verb in the Arabic language:*

According to Sibawayh verbs are taken from the words that indicate actions and it is structured for the past, for the future, and for what is happening continuously. As for the structure for the past, present and future it includes verbs like went, heard, stayed, and praised. As for the structure for what has not yet occurred, it includes sentences like “Go”, “Kill”, “Strike”, and for the continuous happening, it includes sentences like “He kills”, “He goes”, “He strikes”, “He is killed”, “He is struck”. And likewise, for the structure of happening continuously, if it is something continuous. (Sibawayh, 1988, 1/12)

Al-Zamaxšari says in Al-Mufaššal: The verb indicates the occurrence of an event in a certain time, and its characteristics include the acceptance of the particle /qad/, as in saying /qad fa‘ala/ (he did), /qad yaf‘alu/ (he might do) acceptance of will or shall, like /sayaf‘alu/, /sawfa yaf‘alu/ (he will do) the constraints , /lam yaf‘al/, its connection with pronouns as in /yaf‘alna/, /if‘ali/ (they do, you do), and the feminine tā’ like , /fa‘alat/ (she did), (Al-Zamaxšari, 1/ 319)

#### *2. Definition of the verb in Amharic:*

Tekle Mariam Fantaye defined the verb as an indicator of the occurrence of an action or the action of something by a human or irrational beings (Fantaye, P.45).

Blata Mersie defined the verb as: Something we want to talk about or write about, and it specifies the occurrence of an action or an event; therefore, we add the verb at the end of the sentence, and then the meaning of the sentence becomes complete, and the word we put at the end of the sentence is called /ankats/ verb, which indicates the type of the action (Wolde Qirqos, P.74).

*B. Types of verbs in the Arabic language:*

Sibawayh divides the verb tense into three categories: the past, future, and present continuous (Sibawayh, 1988, 1/12). According to this statement, the tenses are past, future, and present, which are the absolute tenses and any other tense is a branch of these tenses (Tawama, p.3).

This division is due to the inclusion of two different time frames in the present tense, which are the present and the future. The basis on which this division is built is not time itself, but rather the accomplishment of the event. Whatever has been accomplished is considered past, whatever has not been accomplished is considered present, and whatever is likely to be accomplished or not is considered imperative. (Sakhnini, p.22)

The original division of verbs based on tense is past, present, and future. However, linguists have modified this division to include past, present, and imperative, taking other factors into consideration. (See: Al-Fakhri, 106). Arabic expressions of time are characterized by high flexibility, providing speakers with various linguistic means to accurately express temporal meanings and variations in any discourse context.

The Arabic language relies on grammatical or contextual tense, without the need to provide all the corresponding forms for different expressions. (Boudjadi, p.1)

And from the division of the verb according to its meaning, it can be classified into active and passive forms. The verb in the active form has a subject (noun or pronoun), who is the doer of the action. The verb in the passive form has its subject removed and is replaced by another. (Qabawa, p.248-249)

And from the division of the verb according to meaning, there is also the /'al-fi'l 'al-mutasarrif/ transitive or declinable) and /'al-fi'l 'al-Jāmid/ (intransitive or indeclinable) verb. The transitive verb is one that accepts transformation to indicate meanings in different tenses, while the intransitive or modal verb is similar to a letter that has one form and does not accept transformation to indicate meanings in different tenses.

Verbs in Arabic language are also divided into infinitive and the intensified verb or abstract and complex verbs. The infinitive or abstract verb is one that all its letters are original without any prefix or suffix. The intensified or complex verb is one that has one or more additional letters (Qabawa, p.27).

*C. Types of verbs in Amharic:*

Most of the Amharic linguistics agree that verb tense in Amharic is divided into three main categories:

- Past tense, which indicates an event that occurred in the past, before the time of speaking. For example: መጣ [meta] - came.

- Present tense, which indicates an event happening during the time of speaking. For example: እየመጣ ነጋ [eyemeta new] - is coming.

- Future tense, which indicates an event that will happen in the future. For example: ይመጣል [yemetal] - will come. However, there is a debate about the extent to which the verbal system expresses these tense distinctions, in that the tense of the verb can be distinguished through inflectional means. This debate is not limited to the Amharic language only, but it arises in Semitic languages in general. Tsehay Tewolde states in this regard that tense is one of the most complex issues in the study of Semitic linguistics. (Tewolde, p.p.552-562).

Others believe that Amharic has grammatical distinctions for verb tenses, where the past is expressed through conjugational suffixes, and the present and future are expressed through conjugational prefixes as well as some suffixes.

Some (such as Hetzeron, Bender, and Isenberg) believe that the Amharic language has only two tenses, the past and the present, and that the present tense is also used to express the future. (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p.94)

*D. Verb conjugation in Arabic language:*

Verbs are conjugated in Arabic language by assigning them to different pronouns (explicit or implicit) or to explicit nouns. The verb cannot be used without being assigned to a subject. Verb conjugation involves deriving some forms from others, such as /kataba/ in the past tense, and /yaktubu/ in the present tense (indicative or subjunctive). It also involves deriving the doer (kātib) and the object (maktūb) from the verb. In all these cases, there is a slight or significant change in the structure of the word, and every change that occurs in the structure of the word is considered verb conjugation. (Al-Fakhri, 1996, p.p.34-35)

*E. Verb conjugation in Amharic language:*

The verb in the Amharic language is conjugated to express several conjugational meanings, indicating tense and aspect (completed or ongoing), mood (indicative, imperative, or potential), person, gender, and number. In doing so, it utilizes more than one formal conjugation method to convey these conjugational meanings. (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p.90)

When conjugating a verb, the root is usually fixed and does not change with different conjugation forms (Blata,

p. 118). For example, the verb ቆመ Qome (stood) remains the same in all conjugation forms: ቆመ Qome (he stood), ቆመች Qomech (she stood), ቆምን Qomn (We stood), ቆምኩ Qomku (I stood) .

#### *F. Similarities in verbs between the Arabic and Amharic languages:*

##### *1 - Constancy of the root verb:*

The root verb in both Arabic and Amharic languages often remains stable and does not change with different inflectional forms, while changes occur in prefixes and suffixes as in the previous example.

##### *2 - Assigning verbs to pronouns:*

The changes that occur to the verb when it is assigned to pronouns are similar in both languages. For example, in the past tense verb, no prefix enters before the verb. There are only suffixes added to the end of the verb and they change according to the pronoun.

For example, in the past tense verb (سَمِعْنَا) (we heard), the suffix “نا” is added to indicate the pronoun (we). Similarly, in Amharic language, the verb ሰማን [saman] which means (we heard) in Arabic, has the suffix "ን" added at the end to indicate the same pronoun (we).

In the present tense verb, there is a prefix before the verb, which is known as the letters or prefixes of present tense, and we will discuss them in the third section.

##### *3 - The verb tense:*

The verb tense is divided into three in both Arabic and Amharic languages, two of which are present and past tense, which they both agree on, while Amharic includes future tense and Arabic includes imperative tense. For example, the future tense verb in Amharic is ይመጣል [Yemetal] which means will come.

This does not mean that there are no forms for the future tense in the Arabic language, or forms for the imperative in the Amharic language.

Also, the present tense in both languages includes two different tenses, which are present and future.

##### *4 - Transitivity of the verbs:*

The Arabic language shares with the Amharic language the division of verbs into transitive and intransitive, such as አነበበ [Anebebe] meaning he read which is an intransitive verb, and አስነበበ [Asnebebe] meaning make

someone read which is an intransitive verb. However, Arabic differs from Amharic in dividing transitive verbs into three categories.

#### 5 - *Abstract verbs:*

The Arabic language agrees with the Amharic language on the existence of the abstract verb, which consists of all its original letters, and the verb more, in which one or more letters are added to its original letters. Examples of this in the Amharic language are: /heda/ ካደ which is a simple verb, and /argafagafa/ አርገፈገፈ meaning I drop, which is a complex verb with the letter A added.

#### 6 - *The implication of the present tense verb:*

The present tense verb indicates the occurrence of an event in the present or future in both Arabic and Amharic languages. This is dependent on the context and clues provided. For example, in Amharic, the sentence ሙሐመድ ዉሃ ይጠጣል [Muhammed weha yetetal] translates to Muhammed drinks water. If we add a clue like tomorrow (ነገ) to the sentence, the verb indicates the future tense, like ሙሐመድ ነገ ዉሃ ይጠጣል [Muhammed nageweha yetetal] meaning Muhammed will drink water.

### III. Prefixes of present tense in Arabic and Amharic Language:

The indicator letter of the present tense are: “Hamza”, “Nūn”, “Tā”, and “Yā” (أ ن ت ي), which are placed at the beginning of the present verb. Their addition in the beginning is compulsory and is actually part of its characterization. (Al-Qurni, 2002, p.6).

#### A. Prefixes of present tense for the first-person pronouns (singular and plural):

In Arabic, the present tense letter for the first-person singular, for both male and female, irrespective of whether the verb is trilateral, quadrilateral, intransitive, or transitive, is (أ) such as: أدرس (I study), أتحدث (I speak), أستنشق (I inhale). In Amharic, the present tense letter for the singular speaker, for both masculine and feminine, is “አ” derived from the letter “አ” A and it phonetically corresponds to the sound “’al-hamza”.

For example:

- አበላላሁ [Ebelalehu], meaning I eat.

- አሰማለሁ [Esemalehu], meaning I hear.

#### B. Prefixes of present tense for Second Person pronouns (singular, dual, plural):

The present tense letter used in the Arabic language for the second person singular masculine, second person



singular feminine, second person dual masculine and feminine, and the second person plural masculine and feminine is تَ (ta). It is followed by different suffixes to distinguish between singular and dual/plural forms, as well as masculine and feminine forms. Examples include تَدْرُسُ /tadrusu/ (you study), تَكْتُبِينَ /taktubīn/ (you write), تَرْتَمِنَانِ /tarsumān/ (you both draw), تَجْلِسُونَ /tajlisūn/ (you all sit), and تَشْرَبُونَ /tašrabna/ (you all drink).

In Amharic, there is also one present tense letter for addressing males, females, and plural, and there is no dual form - as we mentioned before. The present tense form for addressing someone is "ቱ" derived from the letter "ተ", which corresponds to the letter "ت" in Arabic. For example:

ቱብያለሽ You are eating for singular feminine. /*Tebeyalesh*/

You come for singular masculine ቱጠጥህ /*Temetaleh*/

ቱሰራላችሁ You all work for plural. /*Teseralachu*/

#### C. Prefixes of present tense for the third person pronouns (singular, dual, and plural):

In Arabic, the present tense indicator letter for the third person pronoun is the letter (ياء) /yā'/, except for the feminine singular and dual forms where the letter تاء (ta) is used as the present tense indicator letter. For example: هي تجلسُ /hiya tajlisu/ (she sits), هما تجلسانِ /humā tajlisān/ (they both sit), هو يجلسُ /huwa yajlisu/ (he sits), هم يجلسونِ /hum yajlisūn/ (they sit), هنَّ يجلسنَ /hunna yajlisna/ (they [feminine] sit), هما يجلسانِ /humā yajlisān/ (they [dual] sit).

Similarly, in the Amharic language, the present tense letter for the singular and plural forms of the absent pronoun is ዩ (yi), which corresponds to the Arabic letter ياء. For example: ዩሰራል (Yeseral) meaning he works, ዩሰራሉ (Yeseralu) meaning they work. However, for the feminine singular form, the present tense marker is ቱ (te), which corresponds to the Arabic letter تاء. For example, ቱጠጥሽ (Temetalech) meaning she comes.

It should be noted here that researchers did not mention the present tense markers for the dual and feminine plural due to the absence of dual and feminine plural forms in Amharic language. However, studies indicate that in Ge'ez, the original language of Amharic that we referred to earlier, there is a feminine plural in pronouns and verbs. And every language has its regular rules that it follows throughout its history, although days have an effect on it and introduce some changes on it (Hilal, 2004, p.3).

#### D. Prefixes of present tense that are pronounced with the short vowel "kasra" (i):

Abdul-Ghaffar Hilal states that the general rule among most Arabs is to read the letter of present tense with the short vowel "fatha" in all verbs except for the quadrilateral ones, where they are pronounced with the short vowel "ḍamma". However, there is what is called "talteela bahra", where the letter of present tense is pronounced with the short vowel "kasra" for verbs that have more than three letters. As for the trilateral verbs, if the verb is hollow, deficient, or duplicated, and the past tense is broken, then the language of the non-Hijazis breaks the 'al-muḍāri' except for the letter /yā' (Hilal, 1993, p.290). The practice of talteela has spread to other

tribes in the Hijaz, such as: Qays, Tamīm, 'Asd, Rabī'ah, and Huḍayl (Hilal, 1993, p.293).

Sibawayh says in this regard: This is a rule that in which the prefixes of present tense verbs are pronounced with the short vowel “kasra”. This is the case in the language of all Arabs except the people of Hijaz, and they say: /'anta ti'lamu dāka/ (you know), /'anā 'i'lamu dāka/ (I know), /hiya ti'lamu dāka/ (she knows), /nahnu ni'lamu dāka/ (we know). (Sibawayh, 4/110).

From this text, it becomes clear that there are three prefixes of the present tense that can be pronounced with the short vowel “Kasra”: the /hamza/ ('), the /tā'/, and the /nūn/. These prefixes are not pronounced with the short vowel kasra in all verb forms, but only in the present tense of the verbs whose second letter is pronounced with kasra in the past tense. (Al-Qarni, 2002, p.460).

Some researchers believe that the pronunciation of prefixes of present tense with the short vowel “kasra” is an ancient Semitic phenomenon found in Arabic, Syriac, and Amharic, and that the short vowel “fatha” in the prefixes of present tense is a coincidence in Old Arabic, as it does not exist in other Semitic languages (Hilal, 1993, p.295). The researchers confirm the existence of this phenomenon in the Amharic language, where the prefixes of present tense are pronounced with a “sukūn”, which is closer to the short vowel “kasra” than the “fatha”. Like

أَنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنْتَ تَعْلَمُ

## Conclusion:

This research concludes the following results:

- From a classification perspective, both the Arabic and Amharic languages belong to the Semitic language family, which is part of the Afro-Asiatic language family.
- Amharic is the descendant of the Ge'ez language, which was the ancient language of Ethiopia.
- Historical, political, and economic circumstances led to direct interaction between the two languages. The basis of this interaction was trade exchange, coexistence, migrations, and the spread of Islam.
- The Semitic languages in Ethiopia can be traced back to a common origin, which is the Ge'ez language. It was named after the Ajaza tribe or /Ge'ez/, which was one of the Arab tribes that migrated to the land of Ethiopia.

The Ge'ez language is considered the closest to the Arabic language among the Ethiopian languages, and the Amharic language ranks fourth.

- There is a similarity in the prefixes of present tense between the two languages. In Arabic, it is أَنْتَ [Anayta] and in Amharic, it is አንተ [Aniyat] with a slight difference in the plural first person present tense where Arabic uses the letter nūn (النون) while Amharic uses two letters, አን (ene) combined with ነን (yn).

- There are similarities between the two languages in several aspects, like: derivation, sentence structure,

phonetics, verb tense, and conjugation.

- In some Arabic dialects, the present tense indicator letter is pronounced with the short vowel “kasra” if the verb base has a kasra in the second letter (a vowel). This phonetic phenomenon has also had an influence on the Amharic language.

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## EFL Students' Perceptions on the Use of Liveworksheets in Self-study

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**Abstract:** In an era of rapid technological growth in education, both teachers and students alike must adapt to up-to-date learning and teaching paradigms. Liveworksheets is advantageous in offering students a compilation of interactive sheets that provide instant online feedback. Nevertheless, whether utilizing Liveworksheets in self-study is efficient has not been adequately investigated. Thus, this study seeks to examine EFL students' perspectives on using Liveworksheets for self-study by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The data was collected via a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with 117 university students at a private Vietnamese institution. The questionnaire was created utilizing the TAM Model as the foundational framework for examining students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study. The finding revealed that students' perceptions of using Liveworksheets in self-study were favorable in terms of perceived utility, perceived ease of use, attitude toward using technology, behavioral intent to utilize the system and satisfaction. Nonetheless, some identified obstacles can facilitate EFL students strengthening their self-study skills. This study also addresses several implications for practical uses of this platform in self-study, thereby sharpening students' self-study skills.

**Keywords:** education, Liveworksheets, perception, self-study

**Citation:** Ly, D.T. (2024). EFL Students' Perceptions on the Use of Liveworksheets in Self-study. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 838-849), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Teaching occurs both within and beyond the confines of school premises (Heng et al., 2023). In reality, self-regulated learning has played a vital role in the undergraduate curriculum, empowering students to assume responsibility for their education and develop indispensable proficiencies for life-long learning (Brandt, 2020). Moreover, self-study pursuits pertain to planning, supervision, and facilitation to aid and govern their autonomous learning (Diacopoulos et al., 2022). According to Roll (2021), self-study competency refers to a learning approach in which students independently engage in studying outside of the classroom, without direct supervision. Nevertheless, the administration of self-study endeavors poses unique obstacles and possible drawbacks (Van, 2020).

There has been a rapid development in information and communication technology (ICT) during the last twenty years, which has had a significant impact on teaching competency (Bastari et al., 2021). Also, web-based

learning applications are a direct outcome of rapid technology advancements, aiming to present students with a diverse range of real-life examples by integrating text, audio, images, videos, and animations (Barella & Linarsih, 2020). Incorporating voice and screen contact and mouse movement can contribute to an engaging learning environment (Fokides & Kefallinou, 2020).

The integration of audio and vocalization via screen touch and mouse manipulation can generate a captivating educational encounter (Fokides & Kefallinou, 2020). This can lead to the appearance of Liveworksheets as this digital tool assists educators in generating electronic worksheets that provide immediate feedback (Ransom & Manning, 2013). However, Liveworksheets has not gained significant popularity in language schools. There is a scarcity of research examining the students' perception of the efficacy of Liveworksheets, specifically in the Vietnamese context of self-studying. Hence, this exploration intends to analyze the students' viewpoints on the utilization of Liveworksheets for self-study.

1. How do students perceive the utilization of Liveworksheets for self-study?
2. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using Liveworksheets for self-study?

## Literature Review

### Self-study in education

Self-study aims to develop a comprehensive grasp of both the practice itself and its surrounding context (Hauge, 2021). In reality, self-study activities encompass a range of autonomous learning tasks such as conducting research, engaging in project work, completing reading assignments, utilizing online modules, and undertaking other self-paced learning activities (Bosch, 2017). Self-study can help enhance the practice level and promote academic discourse within the teacher education community, thereby contributing to the existing knowledge base (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015).

#### *The use of Liveworksheets in education*

Liveworksheets is a website that offers interactive online with self-correction (Valverde, 2022). This feature renders the site advantageous for educators and learners alike. Moreover, Sukono (2018) asserted that the use of technology requires instructors to be innovative and enhance their creativity. In addition, the integration of technology in education fosters an engaging and stimulating learning environment, eliminating the monotony typically associated with traditional methods.

Sukono (2018) emphasized the need to incorporate technology in various aspects of teaching, including lesson planning, content delivery, assignment distribution, and evaluation. Liveworksheets can be accessed online, allowing students to flexibly complete activities assigned by the teacher (Agustina & Cahyono, 2023; Valverde, 2022). Teachers can save time and paper by utilizing this application, which is also beneficial for students as it is motivating and interactive (Andriyani et al. 2020).

*Theoretical framework*

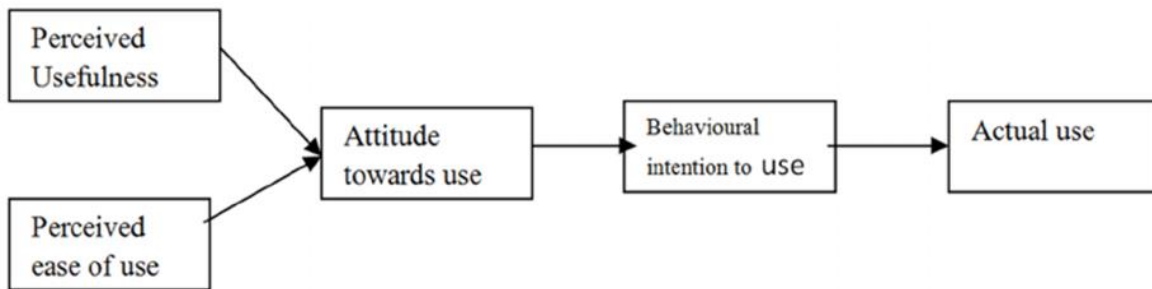


Figure 1. TAM model (Davis, 1989)

Figure 1 depicts the initial iteration of the TAM Model (Davis, 1989). This model is employed to demonstrate users' behavior in relation to technological applications (Chang et al., 2017). The present study utilized the TAM model to examine students' opinions of utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study, focusing on key criteria including usefulness, ease of use, and attitudes. Figure 1 also demonstrates that utility and ease of usage are essential in capturing students' interest and having a beneficial impact on users' inclination to utilize it. Consequently, positive attitudes might result in the intent to utilize and successful implementation.

**Methodology**

**Research design**

The paper intends to inspect EFL students' viewpoints of Liveworksheets utilization for self-learning. Hence, the use of a descriptive study methodology can facilitate the comprehensive depiction of real-time occurrences from the perspectives of multiple participants (Yin, 2003).

*Participants*

This paper attracted the participation of 290 EFL students, selected by convenience sampling, which aided in gathering data from those who were available for the research at that time. These are all freshmen with ages ranging from eighteen to twenty, in a Vietnamese private institution. In addition, the students possessed prior experience with the utilization of Liveworksheets for self-study for at least three months.

*Instruments*

This paper employed a mixed-methods strategy to address the study goals, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data (Fraenkel & Hyun, 2012).

In the first segment, a questionnaire was utilized to gather data on the perspectives of EFL students regarding the use of Liveworksheets for self-study. Modifications were made to the Jamoom questionnaire for quantitative



research (Davis, 1989). The survey comprised a total of 23 items, which were categorized into five primary categories: perceived utility, perceived simplicity-of-usage, viewpoint regarding utilizing technology, behavioral intent to utilize the system, and contentment. Students were instructed to evaluate their views based on a scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The next segment utilized qualitative data obtained via the interviews with unrestricted inquiries. This data can bring valuable insights into students' viewpoints regarding utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study purposes. The interview questions mostly focused on the aforementioned clusters, with the involvement of eight participants. There are six questions, including (1) Is Liveworksheets beneficial for self-study?, (2) Is Liveworksheets user-friendly for self-study?, and (3) Do you hold favorable opinions regarding the use of Liveworksheets for self-study?, (4) Will you enjoy the utilization of Liveworksheets for independent study in the future?, (5) What are the three primary benefits of utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study? (6) What are the three main drawbacks or problems of using Liveworksheets for self-study?

Several colleagues verified the survey's credibility prior to gathering data for research. The research revealed that Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.95, which provided ample evidence of the questionnaire's reliability. SPSS version 25 was utilized to conduct a statistical analysis of the quantitative data in order to ascertain the questionnaire's reliability.

## Results

### Results from the questionnaire

The 23-item survey is used to investigate students' perspectives regarding Liveworksheets for self-directed learning. An exploratory statistical analysis was performed to investigate students' perspectives regarding the utilization of Liveworksheets in self-directed study. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean score of students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study	117	3.00	5.00	4.63	0.60

Table 1 demonstrates the mean score of students' views of utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study was 4.63, with a standard deviation of 0.60. This indicates that the level of perception was very high.

An exploratory statistical analysis was conducted to examine the average scores of five groups consisting of perceived utility, perceived simplicity-of-usage, view regarding technology usage, behavioral intent to utilize the system, and contentment. Table 2 shows the outcomes of the examination.

Table 2: Mean scores of five clusters of students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study

Clusters	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
Perceived usefulness	117	3.00	5.00	4.46	.68
Perceived ease-of-use	117	3.00	5.00	4.39	.78
Attitude toward using technology	117	1.00	5.00	4.40	.76
Behavioral intention to use the system	117	2.00	5.00	4.51	.68
Satisfaction	117	2.00	5.00	4.51	.80

Table 2 demonstrates that the participants' average levels of agreement varied between 4.39 and 4.51, indicating a high degree of agreement.

*Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study in terms of "perceived utility".*

According to Table 2, the average score of students' perspectives about the perceived utility of Liveworksheets was highly favorable (M= 4.46, SD= .68).

Table 3: Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study with regard to perceived utility

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
1. Utilizing Liveworksheets in self-study will allow me to accomplish tasks more rapidly.	117	3.00	5.00	4.63	.60
2. Utilizing Liveworksheet will boost my self- study skills.	117	3.00	5.00	4.46	.68
3. Utilizing Liveworksheets in self-study will improve my scores.	117	1.00	5.00	4.39	.78
4. Utilizing Liveworksheets will enhance the efficiency of my self-study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.40	.76
5. Using Liveworksheets will facilitate self- study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.51	.68
6. Liveworksheets would be beneficial to self- study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.31	.80

Table 3 reveals that students obtained the maximum agreement score (M=4.63, SD=.60) regarding their belief that utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study would expedite task completion. Students' self-study abilities were subsequently believed to be enhanced by Liveworksheets (M=4.46, SD=.68). Following this, the students

( $M=4.39$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ) held the belief that utilizing Liveworksheets would aid in the enhancement of their scores. In addition, the students held the belief that the implementation of Liveworksheets would improve the effectiveness of my independent study ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=.76$ ). Then, the students came to the conclusion that Liveworksheets would aid in independent study ( $M=4.51$ ,  $SD=.68$ ). Eventually, the least amount of agreement among students was that Liveworksheets would be advantageous for self-regulated learning ( $M=4.31$ ,  $SD=.80$ ). Overall, the majority of students held the belief that employing Liveworksheets would facilitate their self-study. *Students' perceptions on utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study with regard to "perceived ease-of-use"*

The data from Table 2 indicates that students had a positive assessment of Liveworksheets use in self-study with regard to perceived ease of usage ( $M=4.39$ ,  $SD=.78$ ).

Table 4: Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study with regard to perceived simplicity-of-usage

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
7. I think learning to utilize Liveworksheets for self-studying is effortless.	117	2.00	5.00	4.38	.76
8. I find it effortless to utilize Liveworksheets to self-study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.33	.77
9. Engaging with Liveworksheets is simple and straightforward.	117	2.00	5.00	4.40	.76
10. Liveworksheets would be straightforward and easy to comprehend.	117	2.00	5.00	4.47	.71
11. Mastering the use of Liveworksheets would be an effortless task for me to accomplish.	117	1.00	5.00	4.36	.81
12. I find Liveworksheets effortless to utilize.	117	3.00	5.00	4.54	.64

The data shown in Table 4 indicates that students found it easy to learn how to use Liveworksheets for self-study ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=.76$ ). Subsequently, few students believed that utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study was remarkably easy ( $M=4.33$ ,  $SD=.77$ ), which gained the lowest level in agreement. Then, The students perceived engaging with Liveworksheets as uncomplicated and direct ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=.76$ ), while they viewed Liveworksheets to be straightforward and easily understandable ( $M=4.47$ ,  $SD=.71$ ). Subsequently, the pupils confidently stated that acquiring proficiency in Liveworksheets would be a straightforward endeavor for them to do ( $M=4.36$ ,  $SD=.81$ ). Ultimately, the students discovered that Liveworksheets was extremely easy to use ( $M=4.54$ ,  $SD=.64$ ), receiving the lowest level of agreement. In summary, most students found Liveworksheets to be user-friendly for self-study.

*Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study regarding "attitude toward using technology"*

As shown in Table 2, students displayed a favorable disposition towards utilizing Liveworksheets for self-directed learning ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=.76$ ).

Table 5. Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study in terms of view toward utilizing technology

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
13. Utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study is an excellent idea.	117	2.00	5.00	4.32	.73
14. Liveworksheets makes my study more engaging.	117	2.00	5.00	4.42	.69
15. Utilizing Liveworksheets in self-study is enjoyable,	117	2.00	5.00	4.37	.73
16. I enjoy utilizing Liveworksheets in self-study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.42	.75

Table 5 demonstrates that the least amount of respondents agreed that using Liveworksheets for independent study was a wise decision ( $M=4.32$ ,  $SD=.73$ ). Then, with the greatest degree of agreement, the participants claimed that using Liveworksheets for self-study was enjoyable ( $M=4.42$ ,  $SD=.75$ ) and that it made their study more engaging ( $M=4.42$ ,  $SD=.69$ ). The students then expressed a positive perception of using Liveworksheets for self-study ( $M=4.37$ ,  $SD=0.73$ ). In summary, most students had a favorable disposition towards utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study.

*Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study with regard to "behavioral intent to utilize the system"*

As shown in Table 2, the students exhibited a substantially positive behavioral intent to utilize the Liveworksheets ( $M=4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ).

Table 6: Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study with regard to behavioral intent to utilize the system

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
17. I plan to utilize Liveworksheets in the future for self-study.	117	1.00	5.00	4.18	.88
18. I anticipate employing Liveworksheets for self-study in the next three months.	117	1.00	5.00	4.26	.84
19. I intend to employ Liveworksheets for self-study in the next three months.	117	1.00	5.00	4.06	.95

The results in Table 6 denoted that many students ( $M=4.18$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ) expressed their intention to utilize Liveworksheets for future academic purposes. The highest level of accord was then received regarding the students' expectation of utilizing Liveworksheets for self-regulated learning within the subsequent three months ( $M=4.26$ ,  $SD=0.84$ ). A minimal degree of consensus ( $M=4.06$ ;  $SD=0.95$ ) was attained when students indicated their intention to utilize Liveworksheets for self-study in the following three months. All in all, the majority of pupils intend to utilize Liveworksheets in the future for self-study.

*Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study in terms of "satisfaction"*

Table 2 illustrates the high degree of satisfaction ( $M=4.51$ ,  $SD=.80$ ) among students' perceptions of using Liveworkshetes for self-study.

Table 7: Students' perspectives on utilizing Liveworksheet for self-study in terms of contentment

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	SD
20. I am content with Liveworksheet's effectiveness for self-study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.33	.80
21. I am content with the user-friendly interface of Liveworksheets for self-study.	117	1.00	5.00	4.38	.77
22. I am content with the features of Liveworksheets for self-study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.35	.78
23. I support utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study.	117	2.00	5.00	4.47	.68

The findings presented in Table 7 indicate that while students expressed satisfaction with the utility of Liveworksheets for self-study, it obtained the least amount of consensus ( $M=5.46$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ). Similarly, with the least degree of concurrence ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=.92$ ), the students reported being pleased with the straightforward nature of Liveworksheet for self-study. They subsequently expressed contentment with the self-study functionalities of Liveworksheets ( $M=4.35$ ,  $SD=.78$ ). The students then voted to support the self-study utilization of Liveworksheets ( $M=4.47$ ,  $SD=0.68$ ). In general, the simplicity of use of Liveworksheets for self-study was appreciated by the majority of students.

*Findings from the interviews*

To investigate EFL students' perspectives on Liveworksheets utilization for self-study, eight students were interviewed regarding perceptions of the system's utility, usability, attitude toward technology use, behavioral desire to utilize it, and contentment.

*Perceived utility*

From the interview analysis, eight students concurred that utilizing Liveworksheets is advantageous for self-study. A significant proportion of participants held the view that Liveworksheets could generate an interactive setting, augment information, and improve self-study abilities. The subsequent excerpt provides substantiation for this perspective.

“I find Liveworksheets is beneficial for self-study as it provides me with multiple interactive online exercises with automatic grading. I also enjoy using Liveworksheets because it offers me many types of exercise.” (Participant 1, Interview extract).

#### *Perceived ease-of-use*

The interview analysis reported that seven participants found it easy to employ Liveworksheet for self-studying. Most students held the belief that Liveworksheets has a straightforward interface, swift accessibility, and compatibility with diverse technological devices. Student 3 opined:

“Using Liveworksheets is not too complicated. I do believe that it is easy to use Liveworksheets since I only need to select the task by entering keywords and I can access the exercise quickly.”

Student 6, however, held a contrasting perspective.

“Liveworksheets is not easy to use as it offers many types of tasks, so it takes me plenty of time to select the suitable task for my level. Some exercises are too challenging for me.”

#### *Attitude toward using technology*

The results revealed that all students held a positive perception regarding utilizing Liveworksheet for self-regulated learning, as it could boost learners' interest, engagement, and understanding.

“I prefer to utilize Liveworksheets in self-study as it can help me study effectively. I can also practice doing more exercises and check my answers immediately.” (Participant 2, Interview extract).

#### *Behavioral intent to utilize the system*

From the interview data, eight participants expressed their intention to maintain using Liveworksheets for self-study due to the significant advantages it offers, including knowledge expansion and revision.

“I intend to support the utilization of Liveworksheets in self-studying in the future because it's both useful and convenient for studying at home. The more I practice doing exercises via Liveworksheets, the more knowledge I have.” (Participant 7, Interview extract)

#### *Satisfaction*

Eight students expressed contrary viewpoints when asked to enumerate three advantages of Liveworksheets for self-study. The consensus among all students was that Liveworksheet could facilitate user-friendliness,

immediate feedback, and interactive learning.

“Liveworksheets is not only engaging but also convenient for me self-study. I can boost my knowledge thanks to it.” (Participant 4, Interview extract)

“I can do exercises many times so that I can identify my mistakes from the feedback and learn from it.” (Participant 6, Interview extract)

Concerning challenges, the perspectives of the eight students diverged. The three most frequently cited drawbacks are technological reliance, distraction from advertisements, and absence of interaction.

“The advertisements on Liveworksheets distract me from focusing on doing exercises.” (Participant 3, Interview extract)

“Learners cannot interact with each other when using Liveworksheets. Sometimes, they may not comprehend the given answer key.” (Participant 8, Interview extract)

## Discussion and Conclusion

This research examines students' viewpoints regarding the use of Liveworksheets for self-study, categorized as follows: attitude regarding technology usage, behavioral intent to utilize the system, contentment, perceived utility, and perceived simplicity of usage.

As shown in Table 6, a significant proportion of students indicated in Table 6 that they intended to utilize Liveworksheets for studying purposes in the future ( $M=4.18$ ,  $SD=.88$ ). At the pinnacle of consensus ( $M=4.26$ ,  $SD=0.84$ ), the students then anticipated using Liveworksheets for self-study within the following three months. In conclusion, the students who stated their intention to utilize Liveworksheets for self-study within the following three months obtained the least amount of agreement ( $M=4.06$ ;  $SD=0.95$ ). In general, the majority of students express the desire to utilize Liveworksheets for future self-study.

As for the perception of efficacy, the findings from both the survey and interviews suggested that most students supposed that using Liveworksheets for self-study was beneficial. This is because employing Liveworksheets for self-study is a more efficacious approach to involving students in comparison to conventional sheets. As a result, pupils were capable of improving their scholastic achievements. This outcome aligns with the findings reported by Andriyani et al. (2020).

Similarly, in terms of perceived usability, surveys, and interviews showed that students thought Liveworksheets were easy to use for self-study as it allows students to access online, which is in line with the study of Agustina and Cahyono (2023); Valverde (2022). Hence, most of the students were satisfied and they intend to utilize Liveworksheets for self-study in the future.

The results from the investigation demonstrated that the majority of students recognized the significance of



Liveworksheets in self-study across five primary dimensions, encompassing attitude regarding technology usage, behavioral intent to utilize the system, contentment, perceived utility, and perceived simplicity of usage.

A significant proportion of participants hold the belief that incorporating Liveworksheets into self-study is advantageous as it can enhance users' interest, engagement, and knowledge acquisition. Concerning the perceived simplicity of usage, the majority of students firmly believed that they would find it effortless to use Liveworksheets for self-study. However, they encountered significant difficulty in choosing appropriate tasks. With respect to their disposition towards utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study, the majority of students hold a favorable view; thus, they ardently advocate for its use. Regarding the attitude towards using Liveworksheets, the majority of students exhibit a favorable disposition towards utilizing Liveworksheets for self-study, thereby expressing significant endorsement for its use. Furthermore, the advantages of Liveworksheets surpass the disadvantages; therefore, it is advisable for teachers to offer guidance on efficient self-study using this platform.

### **Limitations & Recommendations**

Some pedagogical implications can be deduced from the findings. First of all, self-study should be encouraged with Liveworksheets so that students may increase their knowledge and scores. Secondly, several students indicated that they found it difficult to choose the type of exercise that was suitable for their level. Hence, it is imperative that teachers guide locating appropriate assignments and utilizing Liveworksheets for effective self-study. Eventually, school administrators had better provide both instructors and students with training on how to use this platform effectively for lifelong learning.

Nevertheless, this paper has several limitations. First, the study was conducted using a limited sample size obtained from a private Vietnamese university. Hence, future research can be conducted on a more extensive sample size with more diverse levels at different schools. Furthermore, due to the time constraint, this investigation solely concentrates on the students' perspectives regarding self-directed learning. Hence, it is recommended to undertake a study to investigate the alignment between teachers' and students' beliefs regarding Liveworksheets in self-study. Moreover, there has been a scarcity of research completed on Liveworksheets. Therefore, it is imperative for researchers to undertake further studies utilizing Liveworksheets to examine its impacts on education.


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# Navigating the Future of Metaverse Education: A Comparative Study of VR and Non-VR Learning Environments

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**Abstract:** Despite the rapid advancement of virtual reality (VR) and its integration into educational settings, the adoption of metaverse learning platforms often encounters challenges. These include technical limitations and a lack of understanding of how these platforms impact learning effectiveness and user engagement. Previous studies have revealed mixed outcomes regarding the effectiveness of VR in education, with many platforms failing to meet user expectations in terms of usability and learning outcomes. This uncertainty hampers the broader adoption of immersive learning technologies. Thus, this study aims to investigate what factors contribute most significantly to the effectiveness and user adoption of metaverse learning platforms. Specifically, it examines how perceived usefulness and efficiency influence learners' intentions to use these platforms. Utilizing a Technology Adoption Model specifically adapted for VR in the metaverse, the study conducted a comprehensive survey assessing various constructs such as immersive quality, intuitiveness of the user interface, and functionality of interactive elements in food science education. Linear regression analysis was employed to analyze the data, revealing that perceived usefulness (USE) and perceived efficiency (PERF2) are significant predictors of learners' intent to use the platform, explaining 62.6% of the variance in intent scores. The findings suggest that enhancing the practical utility and optimizing the efficiency of metaverse learning platforms are crucial for improving their adoption and effectiveness. Based on these insights, recommendations for platform developers include focusing on real-world applicability and connectivity with lecture content, improving technical performance, and enhancing user support mechanisms within the platform.

**Keywords:** Metaverse learning platforms, Virtual Reality education, Food education, Learning engagement

**Citation:** Geng, P. & Shen, D. (2024). Navigating the Future of Metaverse Education: A Comparative Study of VR and Non-VR Learning Environments. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 850-862), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Traditional educational frameworks often struggle to maintain student engagement and information retention. Bloom et al. (1956) emphasized the need for methodologies that go beyond rote learning to foster higher

cognitive skills. Ebbinghaus (2013) highlighted the inefficiencies of conventional methods with his forgetting curve, which shows significant loss of learned information shortly after instruction. The field of food education faces similar problem. For example, the procedural knowledge acquisition in food processing has traditionally relied on methods such as flow charts and videos, which often fall short in effectively conveying the intricate, sequential nature of food production processes. Consequently, there is a pressing need for innovative solutions that offer students a more engaging and dynamic environment to visualize and comprehend new knowledge. The integration of advanced technologies like the metaverse in food education offers vast potential for educational enhancement. The metaverse is a collective virtual shared space created by the convergence of virtually enhanced physical and digital reality (Mystakidis, S., 2002). Empirical evidence robustly supports the positive impact of immersive environments on education. Pringle et al. (2022) demonstrated how Extended Reality (XR) environments are effectively utilized in forensic science education, providing asynchronous, repeatable, and diverse learning strategies that remain unaffected by external disruptions such as weather or equipment failure. Similarly, Moro et al. (2017) explored the effectiveness of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in health sciences, highlighting enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes, despite potential adverse effects like disorientation. Chen & Yao (2022) examined the strategic use of immersive media in marketing, offering insights that can be extrapolated to educational settings to understand how telepresence and narrative influence user engagement and learning outcomes.

However, while the metaverse and similar technologies can offer transformative potential for educational environments, there are challenges regarding their efficacy and integration. Dwivedi et al. (2022) discussed the complexities involved in adopting such technologies, which necessitate bridging technological and pedagogical gaps. Checa and Bustillo (2020) provided a critical review of immersive Virtual Reality serious games (VR-SGs), noting that only 30% of studies demonstrated clear enhancements in learning and training compared with traditional methods. This highlights that while VR-SGs can offer novel and isolated learning experiences where students apply and exercise knowledge in new contexts, they often lack integration with broader pedagogical frameworks and do not consistently outperform conventional learning methods. Additionally, the cost of implementing such technologies, particularly sophisticated setups like caves, continues to be a significant barrier, reinforcing the resourcing concerns noted by Maddox & Fitzpatrick (2019). Considering the opportunities and challenges brought by the immersive technologies, this study aims to investigate how education metaverse, especially those accessed via head-mounted VR devices, could be effectively employed to learn food production processes. Meanwhile, the study also investigates whether students prefer using immersive VR or its less immersive counterparts, such as mobile-based learning. To maximize effectiveness, the custom-designed educational metaverse for this study is built with the following features underpinned by theoretical foundations.

### **AI-driven customization in educational metaverse**

Educational metaverse embedded with artificial intelligence (AI) could tailor learning experiences to individual needs, significantly enhancing effectiveness. Hwang & Chien (2022) elaborated on the role of smart non-player

characters (NPCs) that act as peers, tutors, or tutees, adding layers of interaction that mimic real-world educational dynamics and promote social presence. Following this, Sun et al. (2022) illustrated the metaverse's potential in digital medicine, where complex information was made intuitive through collaborative virtual environments, suggesting similar benefits for education in fostering social collaboration and enhancing the learning experience.

### *Game-based learning*

Incorporating game-based elements into immersive learning can significantly enhance the educational experience. Mochizuki et al. (2021) described a game-based model that involves clear rules, defined roles, game mechanics, and problem-solving within a narrative context, which mirrors real-life challenges and encourages active learning and critical thinking. Games also frequently use narrative concepts. Green (2021) explored the use of narrative techniques to promote sustained attention and deeper cognitive engagement. Building upon this, Callaghan et al. (2018) proposed extending the Activity Theory-based Model of Serious Games to integrate game traces and analytics, enhancing engagement through elements like backstory, tutorials, simulations, strategic gameplay, and interactive feedback mechanisms.

### *Authentic Learning through Real-World Simulation*

By engaging students in tasks that mimic real-world challenges, the learning environments provide diverse experiences that mirror the complexity of actual scenarios faced in professional and daily life. Farrell (2020) highlighted the importance of incorporating realistic tasks that offer immediate feedback, require critical reflection, and end with performance assessments. This approach ensures that students are not just passive recipients of information but active participants in a learning process that values practical application over theoretical knowledge.

## **Method**

### **Metaverse platform design**

The study involved an immersive simulation of a corn processing plant using the Classlet Virtual Reality (VR) platform, where participants interacted with 15 distinct avatars or objects representing various stages of the corn wet milling process. This setup facilitated a series of interactive tasks, such as managing steeping conditions, selecting optimal storage for corn, understanding the output materials in each step, and arranging the connection of different equipment to produce desirable final products. Participants engaged with the content through multiple-choice questions, image analysis, grab and drop tasks, video explanations, and text dialogues.

Some avatars within the Classlet platform were integrated by ChatGPT to enhance interactivity, utilizing proprietary prompt templates that managed scenario handling, contextual awareness, and personality traits. This

integration ensured that each avatar's interactions were tightly controlled through customized keywords, limiting their dialogue to relevant topics within the corn processing simulation. This setup provided a focused and relevant educational experience, ensuring that the avatars consistently delivered content pertinent to the learning objectives of the corn wet milling process.

### *Experimental design*

In this experimental study, 33 food engineering students aged 17-19, including 12 males and 21 females, recruited. Twenty-three participants were weekly gamers, while the rest played less frequently. The participants were randomly assigned to either a VR or non-VR group, allowing for a comparison of VR's effectiveness against the less immersive mobile learning methods. Both the VR and non-VR groups received the same educational content but differed in interaction: VR users navigated the virtual space with headsets and controllers, supported by a team for technical assistance, while non-VR participants used iPads with minimal support, reflecting the differing needs of each technology. The two groups were situated in separate rooms to independently engage with the same educational content, ensuring a controlled environment for evaluation. After the learning activity, students completed a Google Form designed to evaluate their experience. This form was based on Fussell & Truong's Technology Adoption Model (Fussell & Truong, 2023), which we adapted specifically with the focus on both pedagogical effectiveness and technological integration in the metaverse. The Google Form survey incorporates various constructs measured on a 5-point Likert scale, covering key aspects such as the immersive quality of the technology (TECH1), the intuitiveness of the user interface (TECH2), and the functionality of interactive elements (TECH3). Additionally, it assesses attitudes towards learning in the metaverse (AT1, AT2), ease of use (EASE1, EASE2), enjoyment (ENJ1, ENJ2), and perceived productivity (PERF1, PERF2). The survey also explores the practical utility (USE), intent to use (INTENT1, INTENT2), independent usability (BEH1, BEH2), and potential health impacts (HEALTH).

### *Data analysis*

Our study's statistical analysis commenced with Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency, ensuring the reliability of the survey instruments. Descriptive statistics provided insights into the central tendencies and variability of responses. We used the Shapiro-Wilk test to assess normality, addressing non-normal distributions with non-parametric methods. For comparative analysis, we performed Independent Samples T-Test and utilized Spearman's correlation to explore relationships among variables. Finally, linear regression was employed to identify key predictors of learning intent, substantiating the model's efficacy with an F-statistic.

## **Results**

### **Quantitative results**

In assessing the reliability of the scale used in our study, we employed Cronbach's  $\alpha$  to estimate internal

consistency. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.914, indicating excellent reliability of the scale. Descriptive statistics (see Table 1) revealed notable variability across key independent variables, with the highest mean scores observed for ENJ1 (4.182) and AT1 (4.091), indicating strong enjoyment and positive attitudes towards the technology. Conversely, the lowest mean score was recorded for HEALTH (3.303), reflecting potential concerns or differing perceptions regarding health impacts. The intent to use the technology, a critical measure, showed an average score of 3.909 for INTENT1 and 3.848 for INTENT2. The Shapiro-Wilk tests confirmed non-normal distributions for all variables (all  $p < .01$ ), emphasizing the application of non-parametric statistical methods in our analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of independent variables

	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value of Shapiro-Wilk
TECH1	33	0	3.606	0.788	< .001
TECH2	33	0	3.485	0.834	< .001
TECH3	33	0	3.455	0.869	0.001
AT1	33	0	4.091	0.678	< .001
AT2	33	0	4.061	0.747	< .001
EASE1	33	0	3.879	0.960	< .001
EASE2	33	0	3.879	0.740	< .001
ENJ1	33	0	4.182	0.683	< .001
ENJ2	33	0	3.848	0.667	< .001
PERF1	33	0	3.909	0.879	< .001
PERF2	33	0	4.091	0.723	< .001
USE	33	0	3.970	0.847	< .001
INTENT1	33	0	3.909	0.678	< .001
INTENT2	33	0	3.848	0.795	< .001
BEH1	33	0	3.515	0.906	< .001
BEH2	33	0	4.000	0.707	< .001
HEALTH	33	0	3.303	1.132	0.005

In an Independent Samples T-Test (see Table 2) conducted to compare the experience of users between Virtual Reality (VR) and iOS devices, a significant difference was found in the intuitive nature of the user interface (TECH2), with a p-value of 0.028. Users of VR headsets reported the user interface to be more intuitive and easier to navigate compared to those using iOS devices. Other than that, no significant difference was observed between VR and non-VR groups.

Table 2. Independent samples T-test of VR and non-VR groups

Construct	Construct details	p-value
TECH1	The resource provides a highly immersive virtual experience.	0.100



TECH2	The user interface of the resource is intuitive and easy to navigate.	0.028
TECH3	Interactive elements within the resource function smoothly and as intended with no significant issues.	0.755
AT1	Using metaverse for learning is a good idea.	0.602
AT2	I feel positively toward using metaverse for learning.	0.437
EASE1	Learning to use metaverse for learning will be easy for me.	0.384
EASE2	It will be easy to gain skills for my subjects using metaverse.	0.256
ENJ1	Using metaverse for learning would be enjoyable.	0.718
ENJ2	I enjoy using immersive simulation technology such as metaverse.	0.345
PERF1	Using metaverse for learning is more productive than other e-learning methods like videos or slides.	0.348
PERF2	Using metaverse for learning will improve my knowledge or skills more efficiently than traditional methods like videos or slides.	0.106
USE	Learning using metaverse will be useful for gaining knowledge in the real world.	0.373
INTENT1	If made available, I am willing to use metaverse for learning.	0.329
INTENT2	If made available, I intend to use metaverse for learning.	0.231
BEH1	I could use metaverse for learning if no one was around to tell me what to do.	0.477
BEH2	I could use metaverse for learning if I had only a virtual instructor guiding me.	0.318
HEALTH	Using metaverse may negatively affect my physical health.	0.360

Spearman's correlation analysis highlighted several significant relationships. Notably, intent to use the metaverse for learning (INTENT1) was most strongly correlated with EASE1 (ease of learning), ENJ1 (enjoyment of use), and PERF1 (productivity over other methods), with coefficients of 0.726, 0.689, and 0.763, respectively, all with p-values < .001. INTENT2 (intention to use if available) also showed strong correlations with these variables, underscoring the influence of ease, enjoyment, and perceived productivity on learner's intent. Regarding USE, which represents the perceived usefulness of the metaverse, there were significant correlations with EASE2 (ease of skill acquisition) and ENJ2 (enjoyment of immersive simulation), with coefficients of 0.713 and 0.612 respectively, indicating that usefulness is closely linked to the ease and enjoyment associated with the technology. PERF2 (efficiency over traditional methods) also showed significant positive correlations with AT2 (positive attitudes towards metaverse learning) and EASE2, with coefficients of 0.673 and 0.681 respectively, suggesting that the perceived efficiency of the metaverse is related to favorable attitudes and ease of skill acquisition. Interestingly, HEALTH, the concern about potential negative health effects, showed a very weak negative correlation with INTENT2 ( $\rho = -0.057$ ), indicating it has minimal influence on the intent to use the metaverse for learning purposes.

Table 3. Spearman's correlation among the studied variables

Variable	BEH1	BEH2	TECH1	TECH2	TECH3	AT1	AT2	EASE1	EASE2	ENJ1	ENJ2	PERF1	PERF2	USE	INTENT1	INTENT2	HEALTH
BEH1	—																

BEH2	.133	—															
TECH1	-.015	.392*	—														
TECH2	.592***	.352*	.387*	—													
TECH3	.223	.382*	.228	.558***	—												
AT1	.396*	.251	.396*	.229	.25	—											
AT2	.377*	.58***	.565***	.532***	.298	.597***	—										
EASE1	.312	.313	.286	.408*	.354*	.524**	.584***	—									
EASE2	.487**	.275	.514**	.558***	.299	.613***	.756***	.662***	—								
ENJ1	.186	.378*	.393*	.17	.233	.827***	.633***	.511**	.481**	—							
ENJ2	.259	.604***	.67***	.489**	.323	.545**	.791***	.67***	.681***	.558***	—						
PERF1	.251	.495**	.495**	.479**	.434*	.513**	.681***	.633***	.786***	.486**	.731***	—					
PERF2	.217	.493**	.368*	.534**	.315	.483**	.673***	.607***	.593***	.588***	.678***	.72***	—				
USE	.400*	.407*	.374*	.522**	.394*	.467**	.782***	.672***	.713***	.461**	.612***	.522**	.606***	—			
INTENT1	.292	.446**	.477**	.39*	.389*	.682***	.628***	.726***	.679***	.689***	.763***	.659***	.724***	.666***	—		
INTENT2	.25	.312	.412*	.326	.341	.477**	.507**	.507**	.556***	.33	.512**	.445**	.556***	.714***	.735***	—	
HEALTH	.553***	-.053	-.142	.185	.215	.086	-.112	.03	.126	-.094	-.143	.074	.01	-.057	.007	.026	—

Note: \* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

Prior to the regression analysis, assumption tests were conducted to validate the appropriateness of the model. The residuals plot and Q-Q plot indicated that the data met the key assumptions of homoscedasticity and normality, supporting the use of linear regression techniques. The linear regression analysis (see Table 4) reveals that perceived usefulness (USE) and perceived efficiency (PERF2) are significant predictors of the average intent to use the metaverse for learning, explaining 62.6% of the variance in intent scores. With USE yielding a coefficient of 0.484 ( $p < .001$ ) and PERF2 a coefficient of 0.270 ( $p = 0.047$ ), the model shows that these variables significantly influence learner intent. The overall model's predictive power is confirmed by an F-statistic of 27.816 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating a robust fit to the data.

Table 4. Linear regression analysis

Model Summary - Avg INTENT					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.685	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.806	0.650	0.626	0.419	
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p

H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	9.755	2	4.877	27.816	< .001
	Residual	5.260	30	0.175		
	Total	15.015	32			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.879	0.119		32.528	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	0.854	0.440		1.942	0.062
	USE	0.484	0.111	0.599	4.360	< .001
	PERF2	0.270	0.130	0.285	2.073	0.047

*Qualitative results*

The open-ended positive comments were grouped into categories as below:

*Engagement and interest* (Count: 16 mentions): This category highlights how the learning method captures and holds the learner's attention, making the educational process more enjoyable and memorable.

- "It's a more interesting way for learning than playing a video in the lesson."
- "Fun enjoyable and interesting."
- "Interesting, more realistic on knowledge."

*Interactivity and practicality* (Count: 12 mentions): Feedback in this group focuses on the interactive elements of the learning method that allow for practical engagement and enhanced understanding of the content.

- "Interactive, immersive, interesting."
- "I can memorize things by memorizing the location. More interesting than attending lectures. Not sleepy."
- "Better demonstration and practical on what we learned."

*Novelty of learning experience* (Count: 7 mentions): Users appreciate the newness of the approach, which diverges from traditional learning methods, offering a fresh perspective and experience.

- "Quite new."
- "New and interesting."
- "New approach to learning corn processing."

The feedback on the learning method's weaknesses were grouped into three primary themes:

*Technical issues* (Count: 10 mentions): These concerns reflect the functional aspects of the learning platform that affect usability, such as system compatibility and performance issues.

- "System not supporting android system."
- "The video is not too smooth."
- "The game could have a better optimization with multiple users."

*Physical discomfort* (Count: 10 mentions): Users report experiencing physical discomfort while using the learning platform, which can range from dizziness to headaches, potentially limiting prolonged use.

- "Some people might feel dizzy."
- "Headache for some student."
- "Heavy headset."

*User experience* (Count: 11 mentions): Feedback indicates that the user experience could be hindered by the learning platform's design and content issues, which could impact the effectiveness of the learning process.

- "Difficult to understand what the next step is."
- "Guideline not very clear, expensive, can't be used for long time."
- "Some people may treat it as a game instead of learning platform."

## Discussion

### Engagement and predictive factors for learning efficacy

Our study reveals that immersive learning interfaces significantly enhance user engagement, evidenced by high scores for enjoyment (ENJ1 at 4.182) and positive attitudes (AT1 at 4.091). This finding is supported by Kang et al. (2021), who emphasized the positive impact of immersive environments on engagement. Additionally, interactive features and real-world applications are shown to enhance learning efficacy, as indicated by strong correlations for EASE1, ENJ1, and PERF1 with INTENT1 (coefficients of 0.726, 0.689, 0.763). These features' effectiveness in enhancing learning retention and understanding is further highlighted by significant correlations of USE with EASE2 and ENJ2, supported by literature from Kye et al. (2021) and Sun et al. (2022).

Perceived usefulness and efficiency are demonstrated to be strong predictors of learning intent, with regression analysis showing that USE and PERF2 account for 62.6% of the variance in intent scores. This underscores the importance of these factors in influencing user adoption and engagement, as validated by Maddox & Fitzpatrick (2019). Such insights confirm the critical role of perceived benefits in fostering a positive user response towards immersive learning technologies.

While the benefits of immersive learning interfaces and interactive features are well-documented, contradicting evidence suggests that these systems are not without flaws. Some users reported feelings of being "Overwhelming at times, hard to focus," indicating that high sensory input may lower user concentration and engagement, particularly for those sensitive to intensive stimuli. Furthermore, comments such as "Engaging but not always informative" and "Interactions feel forced and do not aid understanding" reveal a gap between user

enjoyment and actual educational value. These contradictions highlight that while the platforms are engaging, they do not consistently translate to effective learning or understanding, pointing to a need for improved alignment of interactive elements with educational goals.

#### *Technical robustness and user experience*

Our study uncovered a surprising outcome regarding the intuitiveness of different technological interfaces. Despite the novelty of Virtual Reality (VR) for many participants, VR interfaces were reported to be significantly more intuitive than those of iOS devices, as evidenced by a notable difference in user feedback ( $p = 0.028$ ). This challenges the conventional wisdom that familiarity enhances ease of use and suggests that VR may better align with human cognitive processes for spatial and experiential learning. The immersive nature of VR, allowing for naturalistic interactions in 3D environments, may be instrumental in this perceived intuitiveness. Similar findings were highlighted by Callaghan et al. (2018), who suggested that immersive technologies could pioneer new standards for intuitive design, potentially transforming user interface expectations across digital platforms.

Despite VR's advantages in intuitiveness, technical challenges remain a significant detriment to user experience. Our analysis identified frequent issues such as system incompatibility and optimization problems (10 mentions), which critically undermine usability and learning efficacy. Another major concern affecting the adoption and enjoyment of immersive technologies is physical discomfort. Reports of dizziness and headaches were common, with these issues potentially restricting prolonged engagement with VR systems (10 mentions).

Interestingly, our findings reveal no significant health differences between VR and non-VR users, despite reported physical discomfort, as evidenced by non-significant HEALTH  $p$ -values (greater than 0.05). Additionally, none of the three technological variables we studied were significant predictors in our model, challenging assumptions that more immersive VR technology inherently leads to greater discomfort or enhanced user experience. This underscores the complexity of user experiences within immersive environments and emphasizes the need to consider both physiological and psychological factors, as well as the direct impacts of technology features, in the design and implementation of these systems.

#### *Customization, personalization, and gamified learning in immersive environments*

Our study has successfully demonstrated the efficacy of immersive learning methodologies, particularly through the application of customizable gamified environments. By integrating smart non-player characters (NPCs) and gamification elements such as quests and role-playing, we have not only enhanced user engagement but also significantly improved educational outcomes. The implementation of these advanced educational tools in our immersive learning platform has been empirically validated to predict learning intent effectively.

The predictive power of our immersive learning model is substantiated by robust statistical evidence. Our

regression analysis indicates that the combined factors of perceived usefulness (USE) and perceived efficiency (PERF2) account for 62.6% of the variance in learners' intent to use the platform. This substantial percentage underscores the effectiveness of our educational approach, aligning closely with the theoretical frameworks proposed by Maddox & Fitzpatrick (2019), who emphasized the importance of perceived benefits in technology adoption within educational settings. The success of our immersive platform in achieving these results not only supports the literature on the impact of gamification and customization in education as noted by Hwang & Chien (2022) and Mochizuki et al. (2021) but also provides a practical blueprint for the future development of educational technologies.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illuminates the dual-edged nature of immersive learning platforms in food science education. While they clearly enhance engagement and learning intent through their interactive and gamified features, they also present challenges that can detract from their effectiveness. The issues of technical robustness, such as system incompatibility and performance problems, along with the physical discomfort reported by users, underscore the need for further refinement in these technologies. Despite these hurdles, the high intuitiveness of VR interfaces and the successful integration of customization and gamification confirm the potential of immersive technologies to transform educational experiences. Going forward, addressing the identified technical and user experience challenges will be crucial in harnessing the full potential of immersive learning platforms to create not only engaging but also educationally effective environments. This study paves the way for future research to explore how these platforms can be optimized to balance enjoyment and educational value, ensuring that they fulfill their promise in the educational landscape.

## Recommendations

Based on the regression analysis, which highlights the significant predictors of user intent to engage with metaverse learning platforms, the following targeted recommendations can be formulated to enhance both the adoption and effectiveness of these technologies:

### *Emphasize perceived usefulness:*

- **Align metaverse content with lecture material:** By doing so, the metaverse serves as an extension of the theoretical concepts taught, allowing students to apply and experiment with these concepts in a controlled, immersive setting, thereby solidifying the students' understanding and reinforcing the utility of the metaverse as an integral component of their educational journey.
- **Enhance realism in the metaverse:** By incorporating detailed simulations of industrial equipment, realistic ingredient handling, and accurate processing protocols, students can gain hands-on experience that parallels actual operations. This heightened realism not only bolsters the students' engagement but also reinforces the relevance of their virtual experiences to future professional endeavors.

### *Enhance Perceived Efficiency:*

- Optimize platform performance: Focus on technical improvements that enhance the platform's performance, such as reducing load times, improving resolution, and ensuring smoother interaction to prevent disruptions in the learning process.
- Simplify user interaction: Redesign user interfaces to be more intuitive and reduce the learning curve, making it easier for new users to start learning effectively right away.

## **Acknowledgements**

This project was funded by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Teaching Development Grant Project Number: 1.13.XX.49SZ) and FITE-IICA project (Project number: 3.13.XX.89VR). The author Daniel Shen owns stock in Classlet. Despite this, all measures were taken to ensure the objectivity and unbiased nature of the study. There are no other competing interests to declare.

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## The Degree to Which Students at Shoubak University College Practice the Elements of Digital Citizenship Related to Education

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Scopus: 5613151100. Researcher ID: D-8705-2017.

**Abstract:** The study aimed to identify the degree to which students at Shobak University College practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education. The researcher used the descriptive survey method through the electronic questionnaire instrument. The study sample consisted of 163 students from al-Shobak University College who were selected using the available sample method. The results of the study showed that the degree The practice of the students of Shobak University College in the elements of digital citizenship related to education was high, with an average score of (4.24). In light of the results of the study, the researcher recommended those concerned with developing study plans in university colleges to continue developing courses related to the digital society and the ethics of using technology, in addition to holding lectures and educational awareness programs for students about effective practices to achieve the concept of true digital citizenship related to education.

**Keywords:** Degree of Practices, Elements of Digital Citizenship Related to Education, Students of Shobak University College.

**Citation:** AL-Mahasneh, O.M.K. (2024). The degree to which students at Shoubak University College practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 863-870), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Scientific and technological developments have contributed to the emergence of the concept of digital citizenship, and the concept of digital citizenship refers to the correct and sound practices and procedures that individuals in digital societies take when dealing and using digital devices. Al-Qayed (2014) defined digital citizenship as the sum of rules, regulations, standards, customs, ideas, and principles followed in the optimal and proper use of technology, which is guidance and protection, guidance towards the benefits of modern technologies, and protection from their dangers. It can be defined as the correct behavior of individuals in the use of technology, whether in the electronic exchange of information, full electronic participation in society, or buying and selling goods via the Internet. And he knows Ribble (2021) Digital citizenship is a series of skills Which all technology users need to work effectively in a digital worldContinuing to develop.

Figure 1 shows the elements of digital citizenship divided by the researcher Michael Ribble (Ribble, 2015). And Believes Ribble That all students should know these nine elements, which he identified in his famous book Digital Citizenship in Schools: Nine Elements All Students Should Know.

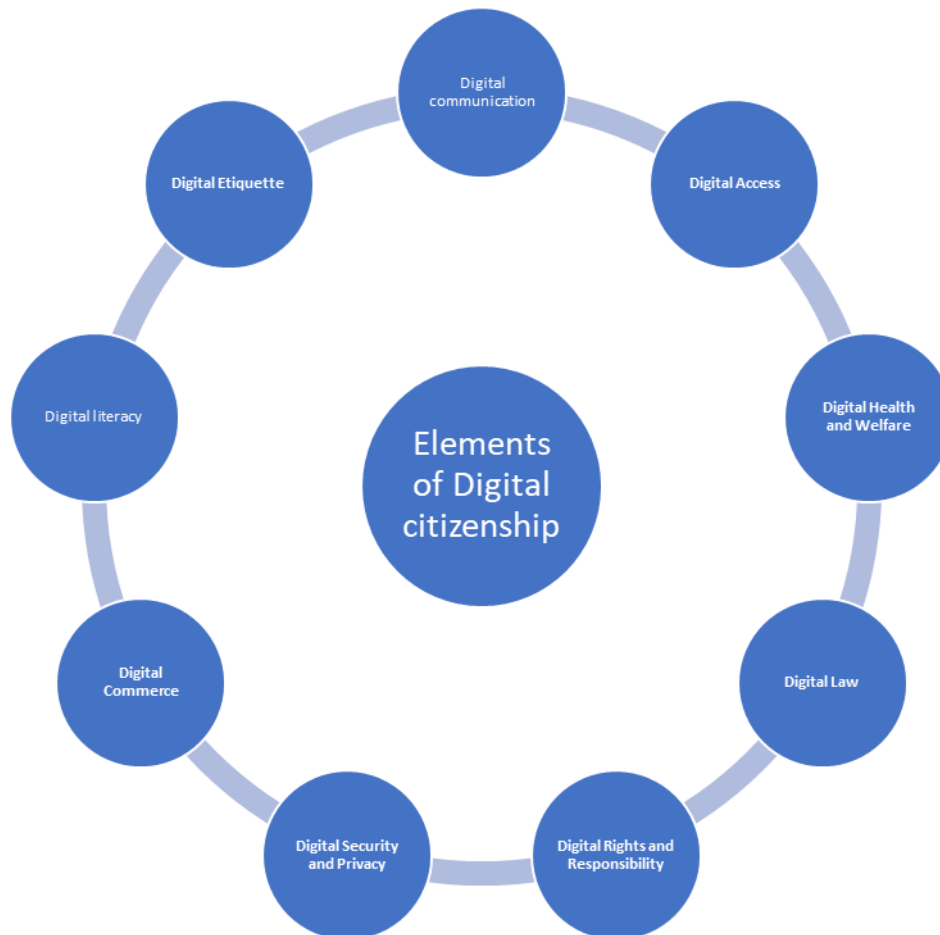


Figure 1. Elements of Digital Citizenship

The following is an explanation of the elements of digital citizenship identified by the researcher Michael Ribble as shown in Figure 1:

1. Digital access: This element refers to providing the Internet and modern devices to all individuals in society to facilitate the use of information and communications technology.
2. Digital commerce: This element refers to the ability of individuals in society to carry out buying and selling operations electronically in a documented and correct manner.
3. Digital communication: This element refers to the ability of individuals in society to use ICT to communicate and exchange information with each other and others.
4. Digital literacy: This element refers to providing all individuals in society with the skills to deal with technology and modern devices.
5. Digital etiquette: This element refers to the practice of individuals in society to use information and communications technology in society with respect, politeness, and within ethical rules of conduct.
6. Digital law: This element refers to regulations, laws and legislation that govern the use of technology.

7. Digital rights and responsibilities: This element refers to the rights and responsibilities of technology users.
8. Digital security: This item refers to preventive measures that all technology users must take to ensure their safety and the security of their networks. Purchase anti-virus software.
9. The health and luxury digital: This element refers to individuals' awareness of using technology so that it does not affect them mentally, physically, or psychologically.

After reviewing the theoretical literature and previous studies related to the subject of the study, the researcher found only studies related to the subject of the study. Al-Khamis (2023) conducted a study entitled the level of practice of digital citizenship by higher education students in the State of Kuwait in light of some variables. The descriptive approach was used through a questionnaire tool, and the sample consisted of (482) male and female students who responded to the tool electronically. The results revealed that higher education students practice digital citizenship in the education and education axis at a high level, in the axis of protecting oneself and protecting others at a medium level, as well as in the axis of self-respect and respect for others at a medium level.

Ataa, Al-Hadrami, and Al-Ajami carried out (2021) A study that aimed to know the degree of practicing digital citizenship skills among students of the College of Arts and Human Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman, and students of the Sabar College of Education in the Republic of Yemen. The researchers used the descriptive approach through the questionnaire tool. The study sample consisted of 385, and the results of the study revealed that the degree of practicing skills Digital citizenship among students of the College of Arts and Humanities at Al Sharqiya University in the Sultanate of Oman, and students of the College of Education at Sabr at the University of Lahj in the Republic of Yemen, achieved a high overall score, as well as in the six areas: digital law, digital behavior, digital security, digital rights and responsibilities, digital health and safety, and digital communication. . While it ranked moderately in the areas of: digital access, digital culture, and digital commerce.

Al-Omari 2020 conducted a study aimed at knowing the degree of awareness of Jordanian university students about the concept of digital citizenship and its relationship to its axes. The researcher used the descriptive approach. The study sample consisted of 282 male and female students in universities in three regions, North, Central, and South. The results of the study showed that the degree of awareness of the concept Digital citizenship was high among students, and the results also showed that there is a high correlation between the degree of awareness of the concept of digital citizenship and the axes of digital citizenship.

Al-Rashed 2020 conducted a study aimed at finding out the extent to which students in Jordanian public universities possess digital citizenship skills. The researcher used the descriptive approach. The study sample consisted of 5,200 male and female students, and the results of the study showed the degree to which students at Jordanian public universities possess digital citizenship skills came at a high level, Digital safety and responsibility skills It came with a degree Medium.

Some previous studies addressed the issue of the degree to which university students practice digital citizenship, such as the study of Al-Khamis (2023), and the study of Ataa, Al-Hadrami, and Al-Ajami (2021), and some studies focused on examining the degree of awareness of the concept of digital citizenship, such as the study of Al-Omari (2020), and some studies on the degree of possession of digital citizenship by university students, such as the study of Al-Rashed (2020). The current study differs from previous studies in that it attempted to address the degree to which Shobak University College students practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education.

### The study problem and its questions

Scientific and technological developments have contributed to the emergence of the concept of a digital society and the occurrence of a massive revolution in the field of information and communications technology. The Corona pandemic has also imposed on educational systems that university college students use educational technology innovations in the educational process. Therefore, students must possess the skills to deal with digital content and practice the elements of digital citizenship related to it. Education, hence this study came to answer the main question:

The main question: To what degree do Shobak University College students practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education?

### Methodology

The researcher used the descriptive survey method through the electronic questionnaire tool after ensuring its validity and reliability. The study population consisted of students from Shobak University College, numbering (500) male and female students. The study sample consisted of (162) male and female students who were selected using the available sampling method. The researcher used the means. Mathematical calculations were used to determine the degree to which students at Shobak University College practiced the elements of digital citizenship related to education, and the criterion shown in Table 1 was adopted to judge the degree of use.

Table 1. degree of practice

n	Range of meaning	Practice of degree
1	1-2.33	low
2	2.34-3.66	middle
3	3.67-5	high

### Results and Discussion

To answer the study question: To what degree do Shobak University College students practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education? The arithmetic means and degree of practice were found for each item of

the digital citizenship component related to education and the overall arithmetic mean for each item as shown in Tables 2 and 3:

Table No. 2. Computational settings and the degree to which Shobak University College students practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education

n	Elements of digital citizenship	Mean	Rank	Degree of practice
	Digital communication	4.35	1	high
	Digital Health and Welfare	4.31	3	high
	Digital Law	4.25	5	high
	Digital Rights and Responsibility	4.34	2	high
	Digital Security and Privacy	4.30	4	high
	Digital literacy	4.12	6	high
	Digital Etiquette	4.02	7	high
Total		4.24		high

It is clear from Table 2 that the degree of practice of the students of Shobak University College in the elements of digital citizenship related to education was high in all elements of digital citizenship, and Table 3 shows the computational circles. And the degree to which students at Shobak University College practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education.

Table 3 Arithmetic circles and the degree to which students at Shobak University College practice the elements of digital citizenship related to education

n	Elements of digital citizenship/items	Mean	Degree of practice
	Digital communication		
1.1	I make conscious and responsible use of digital communication technologies	4.33	high
1.2	I think carefully about what is sent and written via digital communication technologies	4.39	high
1.3	I monitor children's communication and communication with others using digital technologies	4.28	high
1.4	I use digital communication technologies such as social media to engage in activities and share ideas	4.41	high
	With others		
average		4.35	high
	Digital Health and Welfare		high
2.1	I am aware of the physical risks associated with using technology for	4.52	high

n	Elements of digital citizenship/items	Mean	Degree of practice
	prolonged periods		
2.2	I am aware of the phenomenon of addiction to technology and reducing its effects	4.31	high
2.3	Adhere to the correct posture while using the computer	4.23	high
2.4	Make sure the computer screen and workplace are properly lit to reduce eye strain	4.16	high
2.5	Get some rest and do some physical exercise while working continuously on the computer	4.27	high
2.6	Balance the positive and negative aspects of mental and physical health when using technology	4.37	high
	average	4.31	high
	Digital Security and Privacy		
3.1	Interested in purchasing antivirus software for the smart devices I use	4.60	high
3.2	I avoid talking and playing with strangers through the spider web	4.45	high
3.3	I download the latest spyware protection software for the smart devices I use	4.23	high
3.4	Use a spam filter and do not open suspicious message attachments while using smart devices	4.11	high
3.5	I am aware of the risks of hacking and fraud while using smart devices	4.15	high
	average	4.30	high
	Digital Rights and Responsibility		high
4.1	I am aware of my right to own the rights to my workers' property and to allow my production to be published free of charge over the network for everyone	4.26	high
4.2	Use online resources ethically	4.43	high
4.3	Indicate the source of digital content when making use of it	4.37	high
4.4	I avoid hurting others with irresponsible behavior and words when communicating digitally	4.15	high
4.5	Report irresponsible behavior such as threats, blackmail, and harassment	4.29	high
4.6	Work on enriching digital content with important digital products and works	4.54	high
	average	4.34	high
	Digital Law		high
5.1	Avoid sharing copyrighted digital content with others	4.19	high
5.2	Refer to the source of the digital content when using it	4.18	high
5.3	Respect others on the Internet and do not offend them or infringe on their	4.10	high



n	Elements of digital citizenship/items	Mean	Degree of practice
	rights		
5.4	I avoid sharing immoral digital content	4.35	high
5.5	I am aware of the danger of hacking into the systems and computers of individuals or organizations	4.41	high
	average	4.25	high
	Digital literacy		high
6.1	I verify the accuracy and validity of the information and evaluate various sources on the Internet	4.17	high
6.2	I share the correct information on social media sites	4.07	high
	average	4.12	high
	Digital Etiquette		high
7.1	I adhere to the etiquette of dialogue and conversation during digital communication.	3.90	high
7.2	Avoid hostility when communicating digitally	3.86	high
7.3	I use digital media with proper language	4.20	high
7.8	I avoid sending personal information through digital communication	4.15	high
	average	4.02	high

Tables 2 and 3 showed that the degree to which students of Shobak University College practiced the elements of digital citizenship related to education was high, and the researcher justifies this result by:

The presence of courses in students' study plans that are concerned with educating students about the nature of the digital society and the ethics of computer use.

The shift to using information and communications technology in education as a result of the Corona pandemic has made students aware and aware of their roles in the digital society.

The media focus on the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of personal information and the dangers of electronic commerce has a major role in educating members of society, including university college students.

The result of the current study is consistent with the results of studies Thursday (2023) and the study of Ataa, Al-Hadrami, and Al-Ajami (2021), Al-Omari (2020) and Al-Rashed (2020).

## Recommendations

The researcher recommends that those concerned with preparing study plans in university colleges need to continuously update and develop courses concerned with the ethics of computer use and digital society, in addition to educating students about the skills of using information and communications technology in the educational process.

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## Impacts of Humor as a Communication Strategy for Teachers in the EFL Classrooms

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**Abstract:** This research investigates the impacts of humor as a communication strategy for teachers in the context of university English learning. The study employs a mixed-methods approach utilizing questionnaires and interviews. The primary aim is to explore the effects of incorporating humor into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. A questionnaire survey was administered to 139 students, supplemented by interviews with six participants. Findings reveal that humor plays a significant role in enhancing student engagement, relaxation, and motivation, while also aiding teacher enthusiasm and classroom atmosphere. However, limitations include the exclusive focus on one institution, small sample size, and reliance primarily on quantitative methods. Future research directions include longitudinal studies to assess sustained impacts, cross-cultural investigations, and mixed-methods approaches to delve into nuances. These findings contribute to understanding how humor can enhance teaching, learning, and overall educational experiences.

**Keywords:** Humor, Impacts of humor, Communication strategy, Language Teaching

**Citation:** Mai, T.C.T. (2024). Impacts of Humor as a Communication Strategy for Teachers in the EFL Classrooms. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 871-881), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In recent years, humor has emerged as an effective tool in education and L2 learning in particular (Latiff & Daud, 2013), altering the manner in which EFL instructors impart knowledge and instruct. Using humor and laughter helps establish a cheerful and welcoming environment for language learning, capture and maintain students' interest, improve memory of the material, encourage a positive outlook on errors, and encourage both critical and creative thinking in the classroom. In language education, humor lowers stress, enhances classroom atmosphere, boosts enjoyment, and promotes student-teacher relationships (Azizinezhad, M., & Hashemi, M., 2011). According to Ziyaeemehr, Kumar, and Abdullah (2011), incorporating humor into the classroom environment enhances instructional efficacy, fosters a welcoming atmosphere, boosts student motivation, and aids in the clarification of course material.

The rationale behind the researchers' emphasis in this paper on the perceptions of Vietnamese EFL learners regarding the use of humor by instructors in the classroom is the paucity of research conducted on the

Vietnamese EFL context (Pham & Le, 2021). The purpose of this paper is to examine the perspectives of Vietnamese EFL students regarding the use of humor by instructors in the EFL classroom. The document provides an elucidation of the benefits of humor by multiple researchers, a definition of humor, a summary of prior research on the use of humor in L2 learning and instruction, and a conclusion that presents the results of a research study and establishes a connection between those results and those of previously conducted studies.

## Literature Review

### Definition of Humor

Definitions of humor have been offered by a number of scholars. Humor, as described by Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006), is anything that the teacher and/or pupils find funny or entertaining. According to Faulkner (2011), humor is any purposeful or inadvertent physical gesture or spoken word that causes pupils to laugh, giggle, smile, or exhibit other comparable behaviors.

#### *Types of humor*

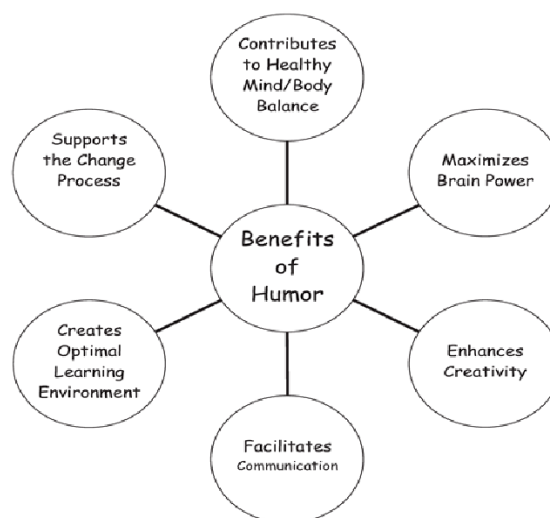
According to Ziyaemehr & Kumar (2014), comedy can be classified as either nonverbal, vocal, or a combination of the two. Verbal humor includes puns, humorous tales or examples, riddles, wordplay, comic irony, exaggeration, and jokes about specific topics. Nonverbal comedy encompasses various expressions on the face, gestures, and hilarious facial expressions. Satire, monologues, parodies, impersonations, and skits are examples of combined verbal and nonverbal humor. Turkish EFL teachers should be aware of these various categories of humor if they want to create a supportive learning atmosphere for their pupils. As superficial as it may seem, comics, cartoons, and clever jokes are not the only things that fall under the category of humor. It can take many different forms, such as word games, theater, puzzles, and puns. Accordingly, the current study emphasizes that Turkish EFL teachers should become more proficient in comedy by getting to know a variety of humor genres.

#### *Benefits of humor*

A number of advantages are associated with humor for EFL learners. Students benefit instructionally from humor because it improves their retention of learning materials, comprehension, and acquisition of the second language (Ziyaemehr, Kumar, & Abdullah, 2011). According to Ravichand (2013), the utilization of humor has the potential to alleviate boredom, reduce tension, and stimulate interest in students. This is attributed to its ability to unwind and reduce tension, humanize the teacher's persona, and increase student interest and enjoyment. The application of humor may be perceived as a beneficial instrument that can foster the sociolinguistic and sociocultural proficiency of pupils (Ziyaemehr et al., 2011). Munoz (2005) emphasizes the following: (a) humor facilitates vocabulary development; (b) humor assists students in differentiating figurative from literal meaning; (c) humor aids in the enhancement of students' visual memory; and (d) humor enhances

students' capacity to resolve linguistic issues. According to Thuy, P. T., & Thao, L. T. (2022), ELF students highly appreciated the benefits of humor in EFL classrooms, particularly in terms of lowering boredom, enhancing teacher-student relationship, lowering tiredness, encouraging students' happiness, raising students' awareness, and resolving conflicts. When teaching in the classroom, language teachers can use humor as a useful teaching tool. Humor can foster a more positive learning atmosphere for kids, making them feel safe and at ease. As a result, they are more likely to engage with the teacher and their peers (Aboudan, 2009; Ocon, 2015; Poirier & Wilhelm, 2014). The use of humor in the classroom can increase student interest in the lesson, foster better relationships between the teacher and the students, and make the teacher more approachable. In terms of instruction, it improves L2 understanding and learning as well as learning materials retention (Munoz, 2005 & Ziyaeemehr et al., 2011).

According to Morrison (2008), incorporating humor into the classroom setting offers several advantages, including the establishment of an ideal learning environment, facilitation of communication, support for the change process, promotion of mental and physical well-being, optimization of cognitive abilities, and enhancement of creativity. Integrating humor into English teaching offers a range of benefits. Firstly, it contributes to fostering a balanced state of mind and body among students, promoting overall well-being. Moreover, humor maximizes brainpower by engaging learners in an enjoyable and memorable manner, making the learning process more efficient and effective. It also plays a pivotal role in supporting the change process, as humor can help alleviate apprehension or resistance to new concepts or language structures. Creating an optimal learning environment is another advantage, as humor cultivates a relaxed atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and taking risks with language. Furthermore, humor facilitates communication by breaking down barriers and fostering connections between students and between students and the teacher. Lastly, it enhances creativity by encouraging students to think outside the box and explore language in unconventional ways, leading to deeper understanding and proficiency. Overall, integrating humor into English teaching is not only enjoyable but also immensely beneficial for student engagement and language acquisition.



Benefits of Humor in Classroom (Morrison, 2008)

### *Related studies*

Azizinezhad & Hashemi (2011) investigated humour as a pedagogical tool for language learners. This paper demonstrates the effect(s) of humor and laughter on establishing a laid-back and open environment for language learning, grabbing and maintaining students' attention, improving retention of the material, encouraging a positive attitude toward errors, and promoting both critical and creative thinking in the language classroom. In language classrooms, humor helps to lessen the tension, create a more enjoyable environment, and enhances relationships between students and teachers.

Ziyaeemehr & Kumar (2013) conducted a study about the role of verbal humor in second language education. According to research, incorporating verbal humor into L2 classes might help students have easier access to resources for L2 language and cultural knowledge that are interwoven with lighthearted conversations. Furthermore, the results imply that in order to use humor to engage students and convey more nuanced parts of the L2, L2 instructors need to possess particular sociolinguistic and sociolinguistic humor competency.

A study on Turkish EFL learners' opinions on teachers' use of humor in the classroom was done by Hişmanoğlu (2018). According to the study's interpretation, humor in the classroom had good benefits (e.g., made students feel more relaxed and created a more pleasant and conducive learning atmosphere). Overall, the findings demonstrated the value of humor in EFL classes and the strong consensus among students on the beneficial effects of humor in instruction.

Bakar & Mallan (2023) investigated how students perceive the teacher's use of humour and how it enhances learning in the classroom. The purpose of this exploratory study is to discover more about how students perceive their teachers' use of humor in relation to teaching and learning in a higher education setting. It specifically seeks to investigate students' perceptions of how humor improves learning in the classroom. Ten undergraduate students from a research-intensive university in New Zealand who were taught by award-winning professors participated in one-on-one, in-depth interviews that provided the data. Students gave numerous examples of how humor facilitated their learning process. Among these included using humor to make connections between the material and the students' ability to focus, recall, and comprehend it. A good rapport and an optimistic outlook on education and the instructor were also mentioned as factors that improved the learning environment. According to our research, students thought that instructional humor was a useful strategy for improving both their emotional and cognitive learning.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The study was conducted with the participation of 139 EFL learners getting English preparatory education at a private university in Vietnam. The age of the students ranged from 18 to 20. The study involved 139

participants, with a breakdown across different demographic properties. In terms of academic majors, Economics majors constituted the largest group at 37.4%, followed by Engineering majors at 29.5%. Participants studying Languages made up 15.1% of the sample, while other majors comprised 18.0%. Regarding gender, females represented 52.5% of the total participants, whereas males accounted for 47.5%. These demographic properties provide insight into the composition of the study's participants, reflecting a diverse range of academic backgrounds and gender representation.

Table 1. Demographic properties of the participants

Variables		N	Percentage
Major	Economics	52	37.4
	Engineering	41	29.5
	Languages	21	15.1
	Others	25	18.0
Gender	F	73	52.5
	M	66	47.5
Total		139	100

*Instrument and data collection*

139 students enrolled in an English preparatory program were given a questionnaire derived from Morrison (2008), Askildson (2005), and Pham (2014) to gather information about their opinions regarding the use of humor by teachers in EFL classes. There were two sections to the questionnaire. Teachers were requested to fill out demographic information, including age and gender, in the first section. Twenty items on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) about Vietnamese EFL learners' opinions about teachers employing humor in the EFL classroom were included in the second section.

The questionnaire's reliability was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, which showed a reasonable level of reliability ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). At a private university in Vietnam, 139 EFL students enrolled in an English preparatory program were given the questionnaire.

Table 2. Reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.880	.889	20



## Results

### Results from the questionnaire

Results from the questionnaire unveiled crucial insights regarding the perception of humor in English Language Teaching (ELT) among students enrolled in English preparatory programs. The findings underscored a noteworthy consensus on the positive impact of humor across various dimensions of language learning and classroom dynamics.

Participants overwhelmingly concurred that humor plays a vital role in foreign language learning (item 1,  $M=4.65$ ;  $SD=0.63$ ), facilitating enhanced learning experiences when integrated into instructional practices (item 2,  $M=4.45$ ;  $SD=0.69$ ).

They acknowledged humor as an essential trait in effective language educators (item 3,  $M=4.38$ ;  $SD=0.87$ ), contributing to a more relaxed and conducive learning environment (item 8,  $M=4.41$ ;  $SD=0.77$ ).

Moreover, students reported feeling emotionally connected to their instructors through the use of humor (item 17,  $M=4.28$ ;  $SD=0.87$ ), which fostered a deeper engagement with the language learning process.

Humor was perceived as a catalyst for cultural understanding and language acquisition, with participants expressing a heightened interest in learning when exposed to native humor (item 18,  $M=4.18$ ;  $SD=0.84$ ).

Additionally, humor was found to enhance concentration during lessons (item 9,  $M=4.14$ ;  $SD=0.88$ ), further reinforcing its positive influence on academic performance.

Some participants expressed uncertainty regarding their preference for English humor in the classroom (item 16,  $M=3.84$ ;  $SD=1.00$ ) and the perception of student-initiated humor as disruptive to the learning environment (item 6,  $M=3.59$ ;  $SD=1.24$ ).

Similarly, there was indecision regarding the desirability of incorporating Turkish humor into English classes (item 15,  $M=3.55$ ;  $SD=1.20$ ) and the difficulty of comprehending English humor in the classroom (item 14,  $M=3.10$ ;  $SD=1.16$ ).

Furthermore, while participants recognized the importance of humor, there was some disagreement regarding its compatibility with a serious learning environment (item 4,  $M=3.06$ ;  $SD=1.35$ ).

Overall, the comprehensive analysis of the questionnaire data underscores the significance of humor in the EFL classroom, with students exhibiting a predominantly positive attitude towards its beneficial effects on language learning and classroom dynamics. Despite areas of uncertainty and disagreement, the findings highlight the pivotal role of humor as a pedagogical tool in enhancing language acquisition and fostering a conducive learning environment.

Table 3. Results from the questionnaire

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1. Humor is crucial when learning a foreign language.	4.39	.881	139
2. When my foreign language instructor uses humor, I learn more effectively.	4.40	.890	139
3. A sense of humor is a valuable quality in an educator.	4.04	.988	139

4. While humor is valuable, learning necessitates a somber work atmosphere with little room for humor.	3.64	1.077	139
5. My class is not learning if we are joking and laughing.	2.68	1.346	139
6. In Vietnamese education, a student who starts making jokes during class is typically seen as interfering with the learning process.	2.15	1.367	139
7. The humor in the foreign language piques my curiosity about learning it.	4.40	.831	139
8. In my language classroom, humor helps me feel less nervous and more at ease.	4.53	.792	139
9. I find that humor in the classroom helps me focus more intently on the material.	4.22	.917	139
10. Using humor in the classroom wastes valuable instructional time.	1.97	1.251	139
11. I will assume a teacher is not professional if they utilize humor frequently.	2.14	1.292	139
12. It is distracting to employ humor in a class.	2.10	1.175	139
13. Since humor cannot be measured, its applicability to language learning is debatable.	3.06	1.250	139
14. I have trouble understanding classroom humor in English.	2.32	1.205	139
15. I want my English teacher to incorporate Vietnamese humor into our lessons.	3.71	1.170	139
16. I want to see English humor used in my English class by my teacher.	3.84	1.072	139
17. I feel more connected to my teacher when they employ humor.	4.53	.854	139
18. Being exposed to the native humor of a foreign language and culture helps me learn more about it.	4.22	.909	139
19. Humor often makes the learning environment more comfortable and favorable, which helps me learn a foreign language.	4.32	.957	139
20. I prefer teachers who use humor in class over those who don't.	4.34	.921	139

#### *Results from the interview*

The interview emphasizes the importance of laughter and relaxation for students during school time, which correlates with questionnaire items indicating that humor in the classroom makes students feel more relaxed (item 8) and helps them concentrate better on the lesson (item 9).

*‘I feel relaxed and comfortable during the school time when I study with a teacher who usually makes jokes in the classroom. I have a lot of fun enjoying the jokes with the teacher and friends.’*

It also mentions that students enjoy hearing humor from teachers as it makes them feel safer and closer to their teachers, aligning with questionnaire items where students agreed that humor in the classroom increases their interest in learning (item 7) and makes them feel closer to their teachers (item 17).

*‘When the teacher uses his/her humor in the classroom, I feel safer and closer to him/her.’*

*Therefore, I feel comfortable asking questions related to the lesson. If the teacher is so serious, I don't dare to talk to him/her.'*

The interview discusses how humor helps teachers maintain enthusiasm and motivation in teaching, which corresponds with questionnaire items indicating that humor is important for teachers to maintain motivation (item 3) and relieve the heavy atmosphere of the class (item 17).

*'I feel motivated to learn English in the classroom with the teacher who is humorous.'*

It also highlights humor as a communication strategy to engage students and make learning more interesting, which is consistent with questionnaire items indicating that humor generally improves students' ability to learn a foreign language (item 19) and enhances their interest in learning (item 7).

*'I love learning grammar knowledge from riddles or jokes because the lesson is more interesting compared to the traditional learning materials like tasks or exercises.'*

## Discussion

In pedagogy, humor is a fundamental instrument that teachers can use to motivate their pupils and improve their learning in class. Humor has been seen as a classroom learning and teaching catalyst by educational experts for years (Rochmawati, 2011). Interpreting the results of this study, one might conclude that the use of humor in the classroom had beneficial impacts (e.g., improving the atmosphere for learning, helping students feel more at ease). This finding confirmed earlier research by Munoz (2005) and Ziyaemehr et al. (2011).

Previous research by Antilla (2008) and Zebila (2012) revealed the detrimental consequences of comedy in the classroom (e.g., humor being a waste of valuable learning time in the classroom, and using humor during a lesson being distracting). The present study, however, revealed the beneficial benefits of humor in the classroom (e.g., the use of humor raising students' enthusiasm in learning a foreign language, humor making students feel more comfortable in the classroom and humor helping students to better concentrate on the lesson).

The incorporation of humor in the English language classroom has been found to have multifaceted benefits for both students and teachers. Studies such as Azizinezhad & Hashemi (2011), Ziyaemehr & Kumar (2013), Hişmanoğlu (2018), and Bakar & Mallan (2023) collectively demonstrate the positive impact of humor on student learning experiences. These findings align with the results of our study, which revealed that students perceive humor as contributing to a more positive and conducive learning environment. Students across different cultural contexts consistently reported positive attitudes towards their English learning when humor was integrated into classroom instruction. Furthermore, humor was found to enhance teacher-student relationships, improve student engagement and motivation, and foster a relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating humor into English language teaching practices and suggest that humor can serve as a valuable pedagogical tool for enhancing the overall learning experience. As such, it is recommended that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors cultivate their own sense of humor and strategically integrate humor into their teaching practices to optimize student

engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Kim, 2012; Saraçaloğlu & Sayar, 2015; Mohammed, 2015; Alavinia, 2016). Moreover, these studies highlight the need for further research to explore the specific mechanisms through which humor influences language learning processes and outcomes, as well as the potential cultural variations in the perception and use of humor in the language classroom.

While there are similarities between the results you provided and the findings from the other studies, there may also be differences in terms of the specific contexts, methodologies, and nuances of how humor is perceived and utilized in the English language classroom. However, the overarching message across all these studies is that humor has a positive impact on student learning experiences and outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to explore the impact of teachers' use of humor in the classroom on student learning. The findings revealed that students in the research setting held positive attitudes towards their English learning, attributing this to the recognition of the benefits associated with humor in the EFL classroom. These advantages include enhancing the teacher-student relationship and resolving conflicts. Consequently, it is suggested that EFL instructors incorporate humor into their lessons and cultivate their own sense of humor. Furthermore, the results indicate that humor not only boosts teachers' enthusiasm and creates a positive classroom atmosphere but also significantly enhances student engagement, relaxation, and motivation. Both the interviews and questionnaires underscore the significant role of humor in fostering a conducive learning environment, revitalizing students' energy and motivation, and alleviating stress and fatigue for both students and teachers. The interviews particularly highlight the importance of laughter in improving the learning environment, aligning with the questionnaire findings that demonstrate widespread agreement regarding the positive impact of humor on classroom instruction.

## **Limitations**

While the study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of humor in English teaching among participants from one private university, several limitations should be considered. The exclusive focus on students from a single institution limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations, while the small sample size of 139 participants may reduce statistical power and limit subgroup analyses. Additionally, the selection of only six participants for interviews may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within the sample. Relying primarily on quantitative methods supplemented by qualitative insights may restrict the breadth of perspectives explored, and potential social desirability bias in responses could impact the validity of results. Furthermore, the study lacks control for confounding variables, which could affect the interpretation of findings. Addressing these limitations in future research could enhance the comprehensiveness and validity of investigations into the role of humor in educational settings.

## Recommendations

Future research directions stemming from the combined findings of the questionnaire and interview could include longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of humor in the classroom on various outcomes, cross-cultural investigations to explore cultural differences in perceptions and experiences of humor in education, development and evaluation of teacher training programs focused on humor integration, mixed-methods research to delve into the mechanisms and nuances of humor's effects, examinations of individual differences in humor styles and preferences among students and teachers, exploration of humor's role in digital learning environments, investigations into the effects of humor on special populations and across different subject areas, all aimed at advancing our understanding of how humor can enhance teaching, learning, and overall educational experiences.

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## EFL Students' Perceptions of Using a Social Constructivist Approach-Based Platform: A Case Study

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**Abstract:** The integration of technological advancements into the educational settings of many nations is regarded as a key factor for augmenting pedagogical practices and learning outcomes. Consequently, educational policymakers have made substantial investments in establishing and maintaining Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure within institutional environments. Recently, a novel educational platform named EDUNEXT has just been developed and implemented across many subjects at a private Vietnamese University. Hence, the present research endeavors to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the platform, involving 30 EFL students. Data were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews with participants and subsequently analyzed utilizing the SWOT method. In addition to discovering EDUNEXT's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities as well as threats through students' perceptions, the findings expect not only to provide a comprehensive perspective for users, educational institutions, and planning and curriculum developers at the research site to enhance the EDUNEXT platform but also serve as a reference for those intending to establish such ICT platforms in their educational institutions.

**Keywords:** EDUNEXT platform; students' perceptions; higher education; SWOT

**Citation:** Pham, M., N., A. (2024). Efl Students' Perceptions of Using a Social Constructivist Approach-Based Platform: A Case Study. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 882-895), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

While the 21st century requires learners to be technologically competent and self-directed in response to technological advances, educators have difficulty preparing the younger generation to keep up with this need. Many studies have been carried out with the aim of better understanding the process of applying constructivism in learning and teaching over the years. The underlying idea in the 21st-century constructivist teaching mode is that learning is a student-centered environment where knowledge and meaning are socially constructed (Xu and Shi, 2018). Currently, one of the key goals of education in the era is to prepare well-equipped, competitive individuals with higher awareness (Bedir, 2019).

Although applying constructivism to teaching and learning is not new in many parts of the world, its practical



application seems vague in Vietnam, especially in online learning which has been taking place in Vietnam for nearly 2 years now due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic. Therefore, Mr. Cao Van Viet, who is one of the key leaders in the EdTech industry and specializes in using technology to create educational products at FPT Corporation, has built the EDUNEXT platform.

The platform was inherited and developed from CodeLearn (the largest programming teaching solution, attracting more than 300,000 users in 25 countries and territories around the world). The core aim of the Edunext platform requires learners to communicate and interact to gain more knowledge in an online learning environment. Specifically, the platform allows the creation of virtual "group lessons" that can be used to supplement classroom instruction. A wide range of functions such as cross-assessment, expert detection, integrated learning linkage, and suggestions to support teachers and students to interact and discuss in a variety of ways in terms of social constructive learning.

The application of constructivist methods in teaching and learning through Edunext in a private university in Vietnam is completely new. The philosophy of the university is to bring and flourish the spirit of learners' autonomy. Therefore, applying social constructivist theory is regarded as a critical method in the process of knowledge acquisition.

Furthermore, this teaching method is expected to bring outstanding results when using technology, especially the Edunext platform which assists students in overcoming traditional learning limitations (one-way transmission/teacher-centered, less interactive learning style) and promoting students' positivity, self-discipline, self-study, and creativity. Although this method seems to meet the requirements theoretically, it is questionable whether it is appropriate and effective or not. Only individuals who have been experiencing it will be able to provide the most impartial comments. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore students' perceptions of Edunext's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

1. What are EFL students' perceptions on the adoption of Edunext in constructivist approach-based courses through the SWOT?

This research is expected to make several contributions. First, lecturers and students would have an opportunity to look back on their teaching styles and learning styles when experiencing social constructivist classrooms on the Edunext platform. Second, the technicians and software developers would make use of the findings to improve the Edunext platform with more innovative features. Finally, the board of curriculum development would have an insightful view of whether or not this method can be effective for all subjects and all majors.

## Literature Review

### Constructivism

Piaget (1973) postulated that constructivism is the discovery or reconstruction of knowledge by rediscovery.

Piaget said that what children can understand and cannot understand will depend on different stages, different ages and how children develop their cognitive abilities. Moreover, Piaget stated that the learning process does not passively take place, it is built step by step through active participation and that learners must remain active at all stages of development. Even though Piaget's theory captures what children think about at various developmental stages and describes how this commonality changes over time—it tends to ignore the role of context, uses, and media, as well as the importance of individual preferences or styles in human learning and development. That's when Papert's "constructionism" comes in handy.

Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky believed that "learning is an essential and universal part of a culturally ordered development process., is a special function of human psychology." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). To put it another way, social learning tends to come before development. According to Vygotsky, "Any function in a child's cultural development emerges on two levels or twice. It manifests itself first on a social level, and then on a psychological level. It first appeared as a psychological category among adults, and later as a psychological category among children " (Vygotsky in Wertsch, 1985, p. 60). This indicates that education must address not only children's cultural acquisition but also their particular motivation as a result of the encoding process. The basic purpose of education, according to Vygotsky's philosophy, is to develop intellect and rationality beyond conditions.

In summary, constructivism is a synthesis of numerous division theories, i.e., the identification of behavioral and cognitive principles. It is understood as "constructing" to learn about the object that the constructivist desires to understand. Besides, constructivism also means founding, creating, and training to meet one's own needs between the existing and the new. If in the past, teachers were the ones to guide and give materials to students to learn passively, now students will rely on existing materials and knowledge to find ways to approach new knowledge in their way. Therefore, this helps students be more self-directed in learning and know how to change their learning methods most effectively, helping to promote creativity and gain experience for themselves. Students are no longer too dependent on teachers or learning methods. Besides, constructivist teaching is not teaching in the form of announcements, given that learners have to actively explore, learn, and discover problems in the learning process.

### *EduNext Platform*

EduNext, a learning platform under the ownership of FPT Education in Vietnam, provides students with a tailored learning experience. Its objective is to facilitate learning aligned with students' abilities and skills, aiding in the discovery and enhancement of their natural talents through efficient learning methods rooted in the social constructivist theory.

Accessible on various devices, EduNext serves as a facilitating tool for learning, engaging students with constructive questions to foster discussion and idea sharing. There are some core features of the platform as it looks like a discussion forum where students are required to answer the questions raised by their instructors;

then students can grade their classmates' responses by star voting, simultaneously the instructors can also post their answers so their students can understand them correctly. To promote the interactive exchange of students in knowledge acquisition, types of chats such as chat, group chat, and chat with class are added to the features of the platform.

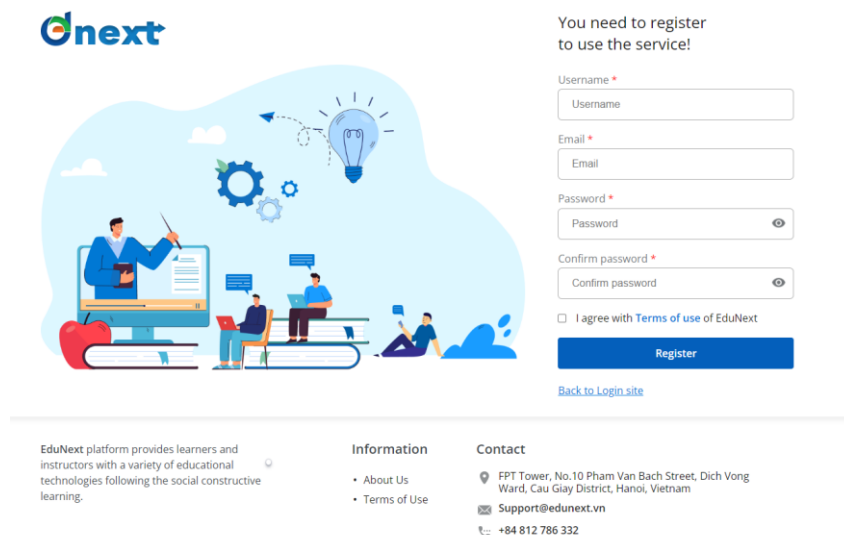


Figure 1. The EduNext's interface

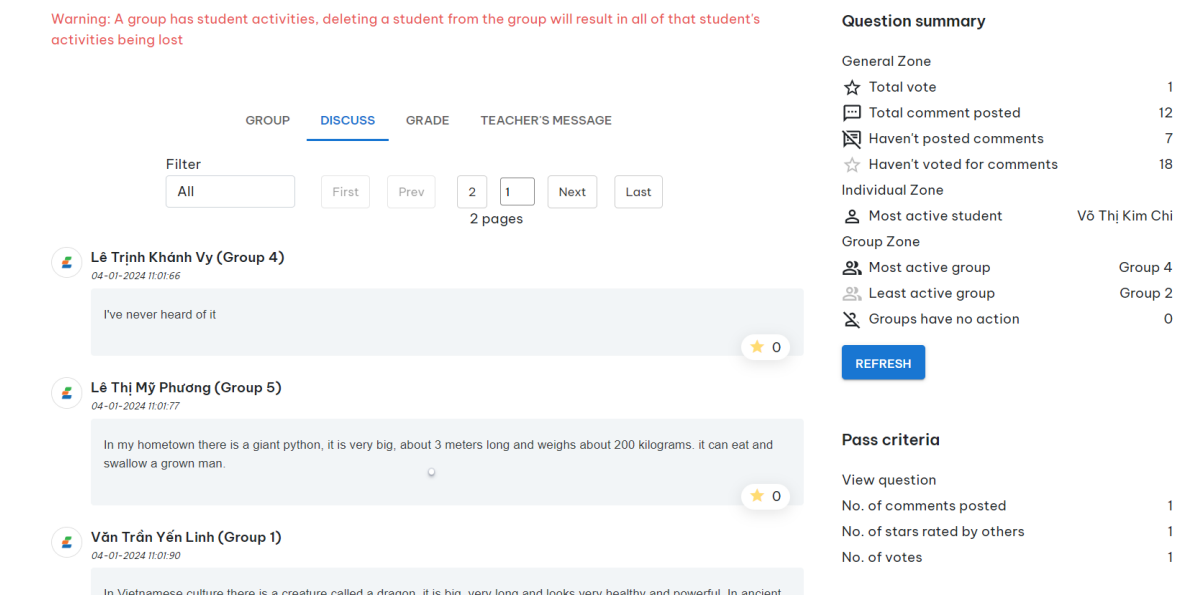


Figure 2. Space to participate in answering social construction questions and voting stars on EduNext

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a framework for assessing an organization's (or a project's) Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, which aids in project planning and execution success. A SWOT analysis evaluates

internal and external factors, as well as current and potential future opportunities. SWOT analysis is intended to assist organizations or individuals in having a realistic view of their data, strengths, weaknesses, and initiatives because they require accurate analysis based on the current context rather than arguments or beliefs. This framework has found extensive application in the education context for strategic planning and decision-making as in e-learning settings (Zhu & Justice Mugenyi, 2015). In the current study, the SWOT framework provided a holistic view of Edunext's strengths, identifying its various opportunities for English learning; and providing a clear understanding of its weaknesses to uncover potential threats that users will face in the future. This will assist educators design strategies to effectively manage and remove these threats through students' perspectives.

#### *Previous studies*

Gijbels et al. (2006) conducted research titled "New Learning Environments and Constructivism: The Students' Perspective". The purpose of this study is to examine whether or not students in a new learning environment (NLE) have the same perceptions as students in a traditional lecture-based setting. They utilized the Tenenbaum et al's (2001) questionnaire to assess students' views of the existence of constructivist practices and concepts in their learning settings. There were 229 students in this study who were enrolled in a new learning environments-based curriculum and 188 students who were enrolled in a lecture-based curriculum. The results revealed that students in the NLE consider it to be more constructivist than students in a traditional lecture-based setting. In Vijaka Kumari S.N research report about the constructivist approach to teacher education: An integrative model for reflective teaching, that "reflective teaching" is a common feature of all programs, regardless of discipline, and is considered an important part of changing attitudes and perceptions in learning and teacher career development, in addition to teaching experience. The event, recalling the event, and studying and reacting to the event by observation, recording, video, or SWOT analysis are all part of the reflective teaching process. Therefore, the author performed research on the impact of several science teaching techniques on the science accomplishment abilities and attitudes of six standard students with varying levels of knowledge, understanding, application, and retention goals. ANOVA was used to undertake a detailed analysis of the study and to determine the relative effectiveness of Teacher Demonstration, Guided Discovery, and Cooperative Learning Methods of Teaching Science. The 'Verbal Interactive Classification System (VICS) was used to encode the data. Students' achievement, abilities, and attitudes are positively impacted by all three strategies. However, the cooperative learning method of teaching science was significantly more effective than the other two methods in terms of learning outcomes and objectives. As a result, to improve student-teacher teaching skills, the Reflective Teaching Training Model (RTTM) and the Integrated Model for Reflective Teaching (IMRT) should be employed.

In a study called "Evaluation of the effectiveness of a constructivist teacher education program applications" carried out by Bay (2008), it was found that constructivist program applications are more effective in the attitudes of students towards constructivist approach and success. Ekici (2009), in his study "Science Teaching Tendency of Pre-service Teachers of Science and Technology Course", states that when interview and experimental findings of pre-service teachers are compared, it is seen that they haven't fully embraced

constructivism. According to another study called "The Evaluation of Relevancy of Applications in Teacher Training Programs with Constructivist Approach through Pre-Service Teachers' Opinions" by Ouz (2009), there is some effort to employ learning-teaching process within a constructivist framework, however, it is suggested that this is not in a sufficient level. In this regard, in teacher training programs, revealing to what extent learning environments provided to students have the characteristics of constructivism and to what extent pre-service teachers are trained in this approach and the evaluation of the learning-teaching process in terms of the constructivist approach can make a contribution to train qualified teachers. From the above studies, it can be seen that the process of learning and teaching in content knowledge courses includes some parts of the qualities of a constructivist learning environment. The constructivist learning approach is not restricted to the learning environments in which active participation of students is provided, at the same time, it's the environment in which how to construct knowledge also is gained, the qualities of a constructivist learning environment should take place in theoretical courses beside applied ones.

The same with the interest in applying constructivism in practice, Mvududu (2012) conducted a research paper "Constructivism in Practice: The Case for English Language Learners". The study is empirical research and included participants such as inclusive classes, especially English Language Learners. Research showed that while constructivism led to improved academic performance such as making it easier for learners to make connections between old and new knowledge, or deepening their understanding of concepts, it provided many new challenges. First, English Language Learners (ELL) pose a specific challenge to teachers because they represent this kind of wide selection of academic abilities, English language abilities, and academic backgrounds. Additionally, cultural differences may influence the students' power to be successful in the classroom. Second, an inclusive classroom is a class filled with students of different linguistic backgrounds. Students in an inclusive environment will have to use their English skills more regularly. This can help learners to absorb, understand, and reflect on the language better. Thirdly, many ELL students are less inclined to speak up and be involved in a classroom of native English-speaking students, or many ELL students might not be receiving the services, the interest, or the help they require in an inclusive classroom. However, it gives English language learners some opportunities such as instance confidence in their new English language abilities while still maintaining their cultural identity and celebrating their background, their language, and their abilities. At the same time, independent study, autonomy, and self-directed learning can be hugely helpful at a relevant pace assisting students to work on their learning, find material that's in their mind, and invest in their learning.

In Vietnam, Duong and Luong (2021) discussed constructivist teaching, the nature of constructivist teaching, and constructivist teaching methods for teaching costume pattern design to students at Nguyen Huu Canh Technical and Economics Intermediate School in Ho Chi Minh City to practice and improve problem-solving abilities. The problem-solving skills of 33 students in Fashion Design class 17.1 (using constructivist teaching techniques) and 35 students in Fashion Design class 17.2 were investigated using qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (presentation method and re-enactment dialogue). The results of this study showed that students achieved good results in the evaluation criteria of problem-solving skills (including analyzing the problem, proposing solutions, implementing plans, and evaluating solutions) from 51,4 percent to 68,6 percent

in class 17.1. In comparison, none or just 3% to 9.1% of students in the Fashion Design class 17.2 received high ratings in these categories. Using constructivist teaching methods (group teaching, case-based teaching, and project-based learning) in teaching the subject of costume pattern design at the intermediate level at the Technical and Technical Intermediate School, Nguyen Huu Canh has developed students' problem-solving skills: they identify problems, propose solutions, implement solutions, and evaluate them to adjust.

## Method

### Research design

Using a qualitative approach to gather data to gain insights on students' perceptions of the adoption of Edunext in constructivist approach-based courses. A semi-structured interview was used to provide more depth and context to the data. The strengths of using an interview process are establishing rapport and honing in the details of the interview (Creswell, 2015; Jacobs & Furgerson, 2012; Rudestam & Newton, 2015); getting the participants involved in the process can yield positive results and large amounts of rich data (Creswell, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). Besides, a purposeful sampling method was employed in the current study as it may prove to be effective when only limited numbers of people can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of the research design and aims and objectives (John Dudovskiy, 2018). SWOT analysis was employed in this study to answer the research questions.

### *Participants*

Using purposive sampling, 30 students who experienced at least a constructivist approach-based course on the Edunext platform were selected from different majors such as Hotel Management, Business, Information Technology, English Language,

### *Data collection procedures*

First, interviewers contacted 30 participants to invite them to become a part of the study via social networking. Flexible interviews are created that are based on the participants' time arrangement. All the students who agreed to be interviewed must complete a consent form through a QR code. Before starting the interviews, the researcher presented the purpose and the significance of the study so that the interviewees understood the importance of their answers and valuable contributions to the study. The duration of each interview is 15 to 20 minutes including two main parts. The first part is about participants' personal information like their names, students' code, their email address, and their majors. The rest is that participants are asked about their perceptions of the features of the Edunext. The participants were interviewed individually and in Vietnamese via Google Meet so that the accuracy of information was ensured as well as the participants could not duplicate each other. Moreover, not to miss any information the interviewees provided, all interviews were recorded; the interviewers also listened thoroughly and focused on what the interviewees said to formulate the relevant

follow-up questions. Finally, every interview's content is recorded transcribed, and analyzed by SWOT analysis.

### *Validity and reliability*

#### *Validity*

Validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings (Le Compe et al 1982). The concept of validity is described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies. This concept is not single, fixed, or universal, but "rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects"(Winter, 2000, p.1). In the current study, to ensure the validity of the study, the author had a pilot interview with 4 students who experienced constructivist classrooms on Edunext platform before starting the interview to collect data. the author started with the initial research questions, shaped the questions during the pilot interview, and continued to revise them until the data collection interview. the author recorded all interviews in order to write down exactly what participants provided. Moreover, the author explored the participants' views instead of imposing their views on the research situation. Moreover, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) postulated that a minimum of 15 participants is enough for a qualitative study to reach saturation, in the current study 30 students were sampled purposely for the interview.

#### *Reliability*

Reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability, and repeatability of the informant's accounts as well as the investigators' ability to collect and record information accurately (Selltiz et al 1976:182). In this study, before beginning the official interviews, the researcher conducted pilot interviews with four students made the interview questions in this research have a high level of consistency and stability. Interviews are used entirely in Vietnamese, after gathering sufficient data, the researcher began translating the data into English. In the process of translating the data from Vietnamese to English, her colleague was invited to double-check the transcript. Furthermore, the transcripts were sent back to all participants for double-checking.

## **Findings**

### **Edunext's Strengths**

Based on the answers of the participants from the interviews, a SWOT analysis of the Edunext platform from the students' lenses was carried out. The results of students' perceptions are presented below.

#### *Perceived easy to use*

All participants agreed that Edunext was easy to use, they find it easy to sign in and log in to the platform.



Additionally, when comparing Edunext with other applications such as Google Classroom, and Coursera, Edunext impressed them most because of its user-friendly interface and the "chat box" feature which also helped them easily communicate with each other. "Students can use the chat box to communicate directly with one another. It's more user-friendly than Google's classroom software." S1; "After using many online educational platforms such as Coursera, Google Classroom, and Zoom, Edunext has always been my choice when studying online." S8.

#### *Perceived of usefulness*

Half of the participants appreciated it as useful and convenient in reviewing old lessons or consulting others' ideas. Moreover, Edunext was also a place where shy, introverted learners could convey their thoughts to others. "Students can consult everyone's answers and opinions on Edunext." S2; "Edunext helps students review the lesson one more time, when studying in groups, everyone can comment on each other to easily see which answer is best." S10; "If there are some people who are afraid to answer directly, they can upload their answers to Edunext so that the lecturer can understand their opinions as well when they comment, they can read other people's comments to summarize the lesson and learn for themselves."

#### *Edunext's weaknesses*

##### *Interface*

Although all interviewees agreed that Edunext was simple for users, 17 interviewees also revealed that Edunext's interface was boring, which made them uninterested in learning. "The interface is a bit boring, and not eye-catching, therefore it doesn't attract students." S10; Some students thought that EduNext still lacked some exciting elements to stimulate students' interest, such as humanlike icons, pictures, mind-maps, and lecturer-student interactions. "The utilization of Edunext is easy for GenZ, we need something more challenging and have a compelling look. (S30).

##### *Ethical Concerns*

Many of the respondents expressed their concerns about copying the responses from others. Some of the students took use of getting and sharing ideas to copy their peers' answers, which affected their thinking ability and learning quality. "I accidentally discovered my friends' answer is the same as mine." S29, "I usually copy the answers from the internet and paste them on the Edunext." S20.

##### *Limiting applying for all subjects*

10 out of 30 students agreed that Edunext was inappropriate for subjects that require a lot of practice, specifically students majoring in graphic design and IT believed that EduNext was currently not very useful because the majors were more practice-oriented. "When lecturers teach on next, students cannot practice regularly through coding exercises as at school." S28. "Studying on Edunext is mainly related to theory, but for

my major, it needs more practical exercises.” S16

### *Edunext's opportunities*

#### *Advancement*

21 out of 30 interviewees agreed having explored the platform's strengths and weaknesses offered the opportunity for Edunext to enhance and upgrade. For instance, some learners felt that the interface of this platform should be improved, as well as a few functions such as voice, and document storage need to be added, or the privacy feature should be paid more attention when learners interact with one another through chat boxes. “If Edunext updates with other features, this software has a chance to develop more.” S15. “If Edunext updates with more features and improves the interface, there will be a chance to be used more.” S13

#### *Experiencing a new learning environment*

26 out of 30 students interviewed postulated that Edunext provided them with a precious opportunity to be involved in digital classroom activities. Meanwhile, it allowed both students and teachers to access a novel learning environment where they could express their ideas and consult others'. "Answering questions on Edunext allows all of us to share our thoughts and opinions". S1; “I think students and lecturers will have the opportunity to experience a new learning method.” S2. Some participants admitted that introverts engaged more actively and confidently in constructive hours because no one knew their responses except the teachers. “Reserved students can publish responses freely without fear of others knowing their identities or worrying about the correct or incorrect answer.” S17

### **Edunext's threats**

#### **Fairness**

7 participants said that voting and security were threats when studying on Edunext, which led to unfairness and made students demotivated. “Voting on Edunext is a threat. If they are close friends and will vote for each other, the voting is not fair and it is not possible to properly assess the capacity of each of the students and the results may be bad.” S25. The problem of copying and cheating in responding to the raised questions was worth considering. “The threat of network transmission, and the possibility of being copied by others.” S13

#### **Teacher-student interaction**

Lecturers and students could not interact or settle problems face to face, hence 22 participants stated that the relationship and interaction between lecturers and students would not be closed. As a result of this threat, there was a lack of understanding between students and lecturers, this was also easy to cause boredom in teaching. “The relationship between students and lecturers may be jeopardized since the lecturer may not be able to observe all of the students' answers if the class has too many learners, due to sometimes, you may also be unsure if the response is correct or incorrect.” S21

## Discussion

In this qualitative research, SWOT analysis was employed to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Edunext which was based on the constructivist approach. For strengths, Edunext is simple to use, the interview discovered that using EduNext is simpler for students when they are given adequate instruction, which is compatible with the prior studies of Mehta et al. (2019) and Tarhini et al. (2017). Additionally, the research site is a technology university and all students have been equipped with basic knowledge of computer skills as well as have a chance to access technology from the first year. Therefore, they find it easy to use Edunext. Similarly, Dandy George Dampson et al (2020) found students' lack of knowledge in the use of ICT was a huge barrier to the use of an online platform - LMS. Hence, to sustain the attractiveness of the users on using a new educational product. As a result, universities should consider making EduNext easy to use while modifying the system, and all users need to be trained to acquire knowledge and skills so that students are inspired to employ it. Moreover, students also recognized Edunext as a useful platform. This is in agreement with the findings by Tarhini et al. (2017). The Edunext platform was created to help learners participate in many learning activities, and freely give opinions in groups and the EduNext community without any restrictions. Associated with COI theory, Lemay et al. (2018) said the perceived usefulness, which can be considered performance expectancy of e-learning technology is impacted by the cognitive and social presence in the e-learning environment. The findings are similar to a study by Abbad (2021) which researched performance expectancy as the construct with the highest perceived level of acceptance among students' approval for the mediating tool, Moddle. For weaknesses, students recognized Edunext's interface as boring because it is still primarily text-based and lacks exciting elements. Therefore, it is necessary to update more humanlike icons, pictures, and mindmaps on EduNext; Therefore, it can become more vivid and exciting for students. Hilli and Åkerfeldt (2020) claimed that student student interactions in their classes, such as mind maps, quizzes, conversations, and peer 63 feedback, encourage social presence. In addition, this platform was only suitable for some subjects that concentrated on theory rather than practice and faced potential issues such as copying and pasting responses. For opportunities, interviewees believed that they would get the opportunity to engage in class activities to express their opinions, exchange information as well as approach a new learning environment. This research indicates that university students thought that their lecturers, and classmates strongly made their use of EduNext effectively. This is in line with previous research (Ain et al., 2016; Tarhini et al., 2017). Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the study of Høgheim and Reber (2015) which showed that online learning environments were associated with the opportunity for educators to adapt to education, which entailed tailoring education for every student. For threats, the first threat was that lecturers and students would be unable to communicate or resolve problems face to face, which would have an impact on students-teacher interaction/relationship and students-student interaction. Noteworthy, the lecturer-student interaction feature needs to be drastically improved, thereby increasing student interaction with lecturers since according to Papert (1991), what matters is how people interact with one another, which promotes self-directed learning and aids in the production of new knowledge for students. Thus, interaction is important in teaching and learning, face-to-face dialogue between lecturers and students will help them develop their strengths and even break the

ice. Moreover, Edunext scores based on the number of star votes it receives. Star-voting would not always indicate a student's ability because students can vote for their close friends regardless of quality. Besides voting, security was also a threat that made students feel unpleasant when utilizing this platform because everyone can read the messages, and there are very few people using the messaging feature on Edunext. Noteworthy, the lecturer-student interaction feature needs to be drastically improved, thereby increasing student interaction with lecturers. Likewise, the study by Hilli and Åkerfeldt (2020) suggests that by their school's setting, lecturers may have promoted their social and instructional presence through a variety of methods. About time and location, adult education courses were flexible, making frequent lecturer-student interactions (such as chat, email, and feedback) crucial to establishing a teaching presence.

## Conclusion

EduNext is an online training platform that provides learners with a personalized learning experience through constructive learning methods based on the social constructivist theory. The current study's findings indicated strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Edunext platform through students' perceptions. The results revealed that students claimed that the Edunext platform was easy to use with a simple interface. Students also found it useful in their academic learning because they could exchange their ideas with their peers and teachers. However, EduNext had some weaknesses like an unattractive interface as EduNext was still primarily text-based and lacked exciting factors such as humanlike icons, pictures, and mindmaps, especially the lecturer-student interaction feature; unavoidable ethical issues due to copying others' answers; inappropriate for all courses because of the difference between practice-oriented and theoretical subjects.

Regarding the opportunities, Edunext would be improved in the future because of students' feedback. This was also an occasion for students and teachers to experience a novel digital learning platform. Besides, findings showed that introverts are more proactive and confident when it comes to expressing personal thoughts and opinions compared to traditional learning mode. Finally, some threats are discovered. It was Edunext system errors as well as feature limitations that students found unfair and demotivated. The relationship between lecturers and students on a virtual platform was not as highly appreciated as in a physical classroom.

## Recommendations

Edunext is a novel platform and social constructive learning has played a key role in education and science research, hence there are several suggestions for further research. First, using EduNext in different majors empirically. Because the nature of each discipline is different, the elements influencing the students' perceptions of using EduNext for each major are also different. Second, the participants in this study only included students, thus future studies should investigate both lecturers' and students' perceptions to explore the similarities and differences between their perceptions to have a complete picture.

## Acknowledgments

The author deeply appreciates the assistance and contribution of all participants, and her supporting colleague in this study.

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## Factors Affecting Undergraduate Student Well-Being in Learning English Online

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**Abstract:** Well-being emerges as a pivotal driver influencing student success, a recurrent theme in existing literature highlighting its integral role in education, particularly in the context of online learning. Consequently, the current study scrutinizes university students' perceptions of their well-being and explores factors affecting their happiness in learning English online. This research consisted of 268 undergraduate students who experienced at least one online English course at a private university in Vietnam and adopted a mixed-method approach, incorporating a questionnaire survey including 15 items of the PERMA (Butler & Kern, 2016) along with 6 items of the Academic Resilience scale (Martin & Marsh, 2006) and individual semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's Correlation were utilized for the quantitative data analysis while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data. Findings reveal students' perceptions of their well-being when learning online were assessed on average; Academic resilience demonstrated a correlation with student well-being and contributed significantly to their well-being; Students' Grade Point Average (GPA) solely impacted academic achievement construct. Notably, findings uncover negative emotions detrimentally affecting student well-being. Besides these insights, the study's limitations and recommendations for future research were also mentioned.

**Keywords:** Student well-being, online learning, PERMA, academic resilience, higher education

**Citation:** Pham, M., N., A. (2024). Factors Affecting Undergraduate Student Well-Being in Learning English Online. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 896-916), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In the era of technology development 4.0, learning is recognized as easier, and online learning truly exploded during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. According to Palvia et al., (2018), online education has been developing worldwide because of the combination of new technologies and it's predicted to become widespread by 2025. According to O'Regan (2003), emotions have a significant impact on learning, engagement, and accomplishment in students in online classrooms. Likewise, emotions in the online learning process are important to the success of learners (Torres et al., 2022). Therefore, emotions play a key role in the context of EFL (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Additionally, student well-being is accepted as vital to the positive development of students (Soutter et al., 2014). As a result, developing student well-being is a crucial aspect of education



(Govorova et al., 2020). Moreover, Chapman (2014) indicated that well-being in education is of great importance for educational achievement, health, socialization, social values, and human intelligence. Kern et al., (2015) used the PERMA model to measure student happiness in Australia. The study's findings showed that the PERMA model provides a wealth of well-being information to enable teachers to better meet the needs of their students, resulting in the lesson's success. In addition, Au and Kennedy (2018) adopted the PERMA model to evaluate the education program performance in Hong Kong; the results revealed that to increase student well-being, schools may include positive psychology in the curriculum. Furthermore, Kovich et al., (2022) carried out a well-being assessment of university students in the Midwestern United States. This study gave a deeper understanding of features to promote and improve undergraduate student well-being. According to Alqarni (2022), EFL learners with a high sense of well-being and tenacity were more likely to succeed in learning a foreign language. The results of this study confirmed that positive psychology is important for language learners and can help them succeed in learning foreign languages. From the above-mentioned studies, Seligman's well-being is extensively utilized in various nations. To evaluate the PERMA model as a potential tool to measure student well-being for schools, Kern et al., (2015) explored and evaluated well-being in a multidimensional way based on the PERMA model. It is concluded that the PERMA model is suitable for application in the field of active education.

In the previous literature study by Pearce (2021) on learning with technology, research results based on well-being theory and the PERMA model showed that learning with technology reinforces teaching and learning experiences such as creating positive learning attitudes with adequate training in learning with technology, affecting the promotion of student cooperation and social networks, and its contribution to personal well-being. Unlike the previous study, a study conducted by Al-Kumaim et al., (2021) in Malaysia determined whether online learning platforms used by university students pose any barriers to their learning. The results revealed that online learning harms student well-being. In addition, the study by Rogers (2022) investigated the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions (PPIs) in learning English students. Interventions based on the PERMA model for well-being. The result showed that the participants felt more positive because of the interventions. Pietarinen et al., (2014) studied "students' emotional and cognitive engagement as the determinants of well-being and achievement in school." The results indicated that student well-being experience was an important mediator for emotional and cognitive engagement and contributed to students' academic achievement.

One of the factors affecting student well-being is academic resilience. In other words, students who become resilient may have high subjective well-being when dealing with challenges in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eva et al., 2021). Likewise, Nashori and Saputro (2020) showed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, resilience maintains psychological well-being and strengthens amid existing limitations. This agrees with the study by Safitri and Nugraha (2021). Furthermore, academic resilience can help students transform difficult environments into an origin of motivation by keeping trust, orienting themselves with plans, and having problem-solving skills (Utami, 2020). Besides, Shaw (2020) believed that resilience is a process of adapting and controlling difficulties to improve subjective well-being qualities during a pandemic. Thus,

resilience plays an essential role in subjective well-being.

In Viet Nam, plenty of studies were undertaken to investigate student well-being in online learning environment. Nguyen et al., (2022) conducted a study to assess the well-being factors (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and other extended factors negative emotions, physical health, and loneliness) of students in University Foreign Languages – Ha Noi National University (VNU) during the period of social distancing due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. In the study of Dinh and Le (2021) on measuring the well-being of university students in Da Nang, Vietnam, the study uses five components of the PERMA model for implementation. The results show that university students' perception of their level of well-being is quite high. In addition, Tran et al., (2022) examine the perceived effects of the pandemic on well-being and possible factors related to university students' preferences for online class participation at two institutions in Vietnam. The results have shown that the impact on the mental aspect of well-being is higher than on the students' general health.

From reviewing previous studies above, it can be seen that even though many studies in the field of positive psychology have applied the PERMA theory (Magare et al., 2022), and the application of the PERMA model to measure well-being is taking place in many countries (Lee et al., 2017; Giangrasso, 2018; D'raven & Pasha-Zaidi, 2016; Watanabe et al., 2018), a literature review by Aulia et al., (2020) showed that much more research should have been done on well-being in the school settings. Therefore, the current study was conducted to investigate undergraduate students' perceptions of their well-being in learning English online. Moreover, the current research is expected to discover factors affecting student well-being via their online learning process. Hence, our research questions are:

RQ1: What are students' perceptions of their well-being in learning English online through the PERMA model?

RQ2: What is the relationship between students' GPA, academic resilience, and student well-being each other?

This research has three substantial contributions. First, in addition to exploring factors affecting student well-being during online learning time, the current study provided students with an opportunity to speak out about their actual sense of well-being when they learn English online. Second, instructors may deepen their understanding of students' thoughts to find ways to get students' attention and make the lesson entertaining and effective. Third, the results of the current study also contributed to the flourishing empirical literature on emotions in online learning settings.

## **Literature Review**

### *Definition of Terms*

#### *Well-being*

The term well-being can be defined in several ways. Ryff and Keyes (1995) suggested six components of well-being included environmental mastery positive relationships with others, autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and personal growth. According to Engels et al., (2004), student well-being is defined as a positive

emotional state that is associated with context-specific elements and the individual's expectations and desires for the school. In 2011, Seligman provided five elements including positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment to assess people's well-being indexes. Huppert and So (2013) indicated ten flourishing matters that contrast significantly with popular anxiety and depression symptoms. Well-being is essential to everyone's existence. In the current study, well-being is defined based on five elements identified by Seligman (2011). First, positive emotions are revealed through students' happiness, optimism, positivism, and satisfaction when studying English online. Second, engagement means that the students are interested in and devote time and effort to online English study. Third, the relationship is evaluated through students' feelings of being cared for by their instructors and their friends as well as students-teacher interaction, and students-student interaction when studying English online. Fourth, meaning is that learning English online involves objectives and direction for learners to build the appropriate learning goals. Finally, accomplishment implies that when students study English online, they experience progress and complete the learning goals that they establish for themselves

#### *Academic resilience*

According to Wang et al., (1994), academic resilience is defined as a higher likelihood of success in school and other life performance in the face of environmental obstacles bring by early features, conditions, and experiences. Likewise, academic resilience is defined by Martin and Marsh (2003) as the ability of learners to dare cope with setbacks, issues, or pressures in the educational environment. In addition, Hendriani (2018) showed that academic resilience shows how learners overcome numerous challenging situations or troubles that are vast, urgent, and obstructive during the learning process, allowing them to adapt and stand to any academic demands well.

#### *PERMA Model*

Seligman (2011) created the PERMA model of well-being with five elements consisting of positive emotion (P), engagement (E), relationships (R), meaning (M), and accomplishment (A). Seligman believes that the five primary elements of the PERMA model are what people need to be able to achieve a positive sense of well-being, contentment, and happiness in life, which can lead to realizing life's real meaning. To begin with, positive emotions include any pleasant feeling such as peace, gratitude, satisfaction, enjoyment, inspiration, hope, or love. Positive emotions are undeniably the most direct approach to happiness. For example, positive emotions improve work performance, improve physical health, develop relationships, and inspire optimism in the classroom or workplace. According to Seligman (2011), there are two components of positive emotion happiness and life satisfaction. As humans feel positive, their way of thinking will most likely change in a positive direction. The model's second element is engagement. According to Seligman, engagement is defined as "being one with music," which is similar to the notion of "flow" proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1997), one of the co-founders of positive psychology. Engagement refers to a deep psychological attachment to an activity in particular. As an illustration, when humans focus on something they love or are interested in, they are

likely to lose track of time; to put it another way, they are entirely involved with it. As a result, being in the flow state and engaging in life are vital components of well-being (Seligman, 2011). The model's third element is relationship. According to Seligman (2011), humans are essentially social beings, which refers to feeling supported, loved, and respected by others. Without any doubt, human beings possess a need to connect and become members of a group or organization. One can say that building strong connections is thought to be the key to well-being. Besides, there is evidence that relationships with others could be good for health as they promote chronic illness self-management and lower suicidal inclinations (Tay, Diener, & Gonzalez, 2013). Relationships are crucial for humans because problems with relationships or social interactions affect people's well-being. The model's fourth element is meaning. Meaning refers to having a feeling of purpose and direction in life as well as being able to access the good in every moment more easily. According to Seligman (2011), life has meaning when one "belongs to and serves something that you believe is bigger than the self." Moreover, having a purpose helps humans focus on what is important in situations of significant difficulties or challenges. It is associated with improved physical health, a lower chance of death, and increased life satisfaction (Boyle et al., 2009; Ryff et al., 2004; Steger, 2012). The last element in the model is achievement. On the one hand, achievement is in chase of the sake or aims of the individual (Seligman, 2011). Also, accomplishment has a positive association with health and happiness, and it is also a predictor of academic achievement (Tansey et al., 2018). On the other hand, accomplishments do not result in positive emotions, meaning, or relationships (Seligman, 2011). According to Butler and Kern (2016), achievement is a sense of being directed toward completing goals, proficiency, and efficiency in finishing tasks. According to Waters (2011), the usefulness of the PERMA model is acknowledged to support schools. Likewise, White (2016) not only noted that the application of positive psychology in the educational context is called positive education, which appeared very early also affirmed positive psychology needed more and more, and the development of student well-being became an 11 operational goal of the educational system. Furthermore, today's schools must consider well-being as a priority to be incorporated into school elements to adjust dominant paradigms to advance education (Kern, 2022). Likewise, Oxford and Cuéllar (2014) have shown that the components of the PERMA model are necessary for learning in general and language learning in particular and that it has potential for second language research.

### *Previous Studies*

PERMA model Kern et al., (2015) used the Perma model to measure student happiness in Australia. The study's findings showed that the PERMA model provides a wealth of well-being information to enable teachers to better meet the needs of their students, resulting in the lesson's success. In addition, Au and Kennedy (2018) adopted the Perma model to evaluate the education program performance in Hong Kong; the results show that to increase student well-being, schools may include positive psychology in the curriculum. Furthermore, Kovich et al., (2022) carried out a well-being assessment of university students in the Midwestern United States. This study gives a deeper understanding of well-being features to promote and improve undergraduate student well-being. According to Alqarni (2022), EFL learners with a high sense of well-being and tenacity are more likely to succeed in learning a foreign language. The results of this study confirm that positive psychology is important

for language learners and can help them succeed in learning foreign languages. According to the above studies, Seligman's well-being is extensively utilized in various nations. In a study by Prasath et al., (2021) about university student well-being at the time of Covid 19, the results from 806 students in the United States showed that one of the most affected PERMA factors in students' experiences was positive emotions. Correspondingly, Rogers (2022) investigated the effectiveness of positive emotion interventions based on the PERMA model for well-being in learning English for students; responses gathered through post-semester surveys and interviews indicated that the student's responses to the lessons were overwhelmingly positive. Likewise, Mustika et al., (2021) explored that students' positive perceptions towards online learning strongly correlated with their level of well-being. In other words, the level of students' awareness of online learning is directly proportional to their level of well-being. In addition, the results discovered that participating students had moderate levels of negative emotions during online learning. Tytler et al., (2008) argued that the degree of student engagement in a language class was very important because it can predict the progress of learners and facilitate education, and it had an important function in building students' critical thinking abilities, and problem-solving abilities. Notably, the survey results of Lan & Saad (2020) found that the engagement factor is rated at the highest level in contributing to the well-being of EFL students in China in the English learning process. On the contrary, research results by Prasath et al., (2021) revealed among the factors in PERMA-Profilier, engagement and physical health are the least affected ones on student well-being during online learning by Covid-19. Nguyen et al., (2022) investigated that positive relationships contribute to students being happier and more well-being in life and school. Moreover, students' relationships with families, teachers, and classmates are closely linked to student engagement and academic achievement at school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Besides, well-being is based on the quality of the relationship as well as the balance between giving and receiving, which is being present for someone, sharing, listening, and accepting at the most needed times (Kern, 2022). It may be advantageous to incorporate relationships in models of student well-being because Diener and Seligman (2002) discovered that extremely happy college freshmen had stronger social and romantic relationships. In addition, the data in the study of Kovich et al., 13 (2022) demonstrated that relationships with staff and teachers in universities improve the well-being of college students. Siek-Piskozub and Jankowska (2018) found a link between meaning and intrinsic motivation of English students to help them be more well-being and develop their ability to use English. Also, the research results of Nguyen et al., (2022) have shown that the meaning factor including valuable, meaningful, oriented life, and maintaining purpose had a significant impact on student well-being in online learning. To achieve meaning, people often pursue to accomplish something important such as improving health, taking part in charitable activities, or building relationships with family and others (D'raven & Pasha-Zaidi, 2016). In Kovich's (2020) literature review of the meaning element in the PERMA model, he concluded that meaning was a significant factor throughout the college experience. The research results of Lan and Saad (2020) showed that achievement is a factor impacting the well-being of English language learners. More importantly, achievement is considered to have an impact on student well-being in online learning (Nguyen et al., 2022). Additionally, Cheng and Chen (2021) investigated that applying the PERMA model to learning English had a positive impact on college students' English learning, specifically improving their English listening and speaking ability. Furthermore, achievement can also be an external reward, but it increases student well-being when they have a meaningful and intrinsically motivating goal for learning a foreign language (Min,

2021). To investigate the correlation between academic resilience and student well-being, the study on 200 university students in Malaysia by Idris et al., (2019) on the impact of resilience on psychological well-being demonstrated that resilience was a student's well-being predictor. The result also showed that resilience positively correlated with psychological well-being. In other words, students with a high degree of resilience would also have a high level of well-being. Besides, in the study by Safitri and Nugraha (2021) on exploring the impact of academic resilience and online learning readiness on the subjective well-being of 200 Junior High School Students learning online during the COVID-19 pandemic, the results revealed that both factors were concurrently valuable in identifying and predicting students' subjective well-being. Meanwhile, the level of resilience was recorded mainly at medium (40%) and high (44.5%). In addition, Ko et al., (2020) surveyed to investigate whether or not subjective well-being is influenced by academic resilience and perfectionism; The results of 245 university students in Korea confirmed that socially prescribed perfectionism negatively correlated with subjective well-being, but academic resilience positively correlated with subjective well-being. Specifically, the three factors identified as having an influence on subjective well-being in this study are school life satisfaction, academic resilience, and socially prescribed perfectionism. In the study by Rahmi et al., (2019), research was carried out on 87 students in Ma'had Daarut Tahfiz Al-Ikhlâs Islamic boarding schools. The results indicated that academic resilience has an impact on the subjective well-being of students and that they are positively correlated. In addition, the results showed that academic resilience affects subjective well-being with a value of 14.6% (R Square = 0.146), and the rest due to factors outside the limits studied in this study with a value of 85.4%.

## Method

### Research Design

This present study employed a mixed method to answer the research questions. According to Morse and Niehaus (2009), mixed methods research often employs qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This approach was selected because it provides broader and more detailed results regarding a phenomenon than using only qualitative or quantitative research (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki and Nummela, 2006). In the quantitative analysis, the questionnaire used to collect sample data consists of 21 items. It is used to examine students' overall perceptions of well-being in learning English online. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. Part 1 is about students' demographics; Part 2 is about student well-being in learning English online adapted and adjusted from PERMA (Butler & Kern 2016) to match the research objective and test reliability by officially using an 11-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" to "Always" with 15 items; Part 3 is about academic resilience adapted from Academic Resilience Scale by Martin and Marsh (2006) which consists of 6 items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". In the qualitative research, the study team used individual semi-structured interviews to acquire deep insights into the factors of student well-being via learning English online.

### *Data Collection Procedures*



In the quantitative phase, for piloting the questionnaire, 40 participants who have experienced English courses through online learning were invited to undertake the questionnaire (both English and Vietnamese versions) to test the reliability of the questionnaire before administering it. Quantitative data were collected by asking participants to complete a consent form via QR scanning, and then finish the questionnaire. Besides that participants were encouraged to ask questions during the process of questionnaire completion to clarify any misunderstanding. In the qualitative phase, ten random participants from a total of 268 respondents had personal interviews and they understood that the information they provided was chosen to conduct one-on-one interviews kept confidential and used for research purposes only. The interview consists of 6 questions. The interview time was about 15 minutes for each person. The interview was held on the Google Meet platform because of the convenience and flexibility of location, time frame, and time-saving for participants. At the beginning of the interview, participants answered questions related to their information such as their full name, age, major, and the number of times they experienced English courses. Followed by more in-depth related questions about their feelings and experiences of learning English online. Vietnamese was used for information exchange during the interview because the participants. Besides, to understand the meaning of the question more clearly as well as confidently express their views. Therefore, the content presented is also richer and more varied. The interview data were recorded, translated, and analyzed the data through thematic analysis.

*The validity and reliability of data*

Regardless of quantitative data, taking the results of the pilot test on 40 students to run Cronbach alpha. If the loading factor is  $\geq 0.60$ , the questionnaire is valid and accepted according to Hair et al., (2010). The validity of the questionnaire was checked by the author and double-checked by her colleague.

Table 1. The reliability of the questionnaire

No.	Name of variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of participants
1	Positive emotion	3	.806	40
2	Emotion	3	.731	
3	Relationships	3	.822	
4	Meaning	3	.683	
5	Achievement	3	.803	
6	Academic resilience	6	.849	

Regarding qualitative, the cross-check approach can help the researcher increase the accuracy and reliability of their research (Creswell, 2018). To validate the qualitative data, the author re-read the interview content and translated it into English. The second step was to send the translated interview content to her colleague who specialized in the research field for review. After the content had been checked by the colleague, The author sent it back to the participants through their email to determine if the translated content matched what the



participants provided.

## Results

### Quantitative Phase

*Students' perceptions of well-being in learning English through online learning*

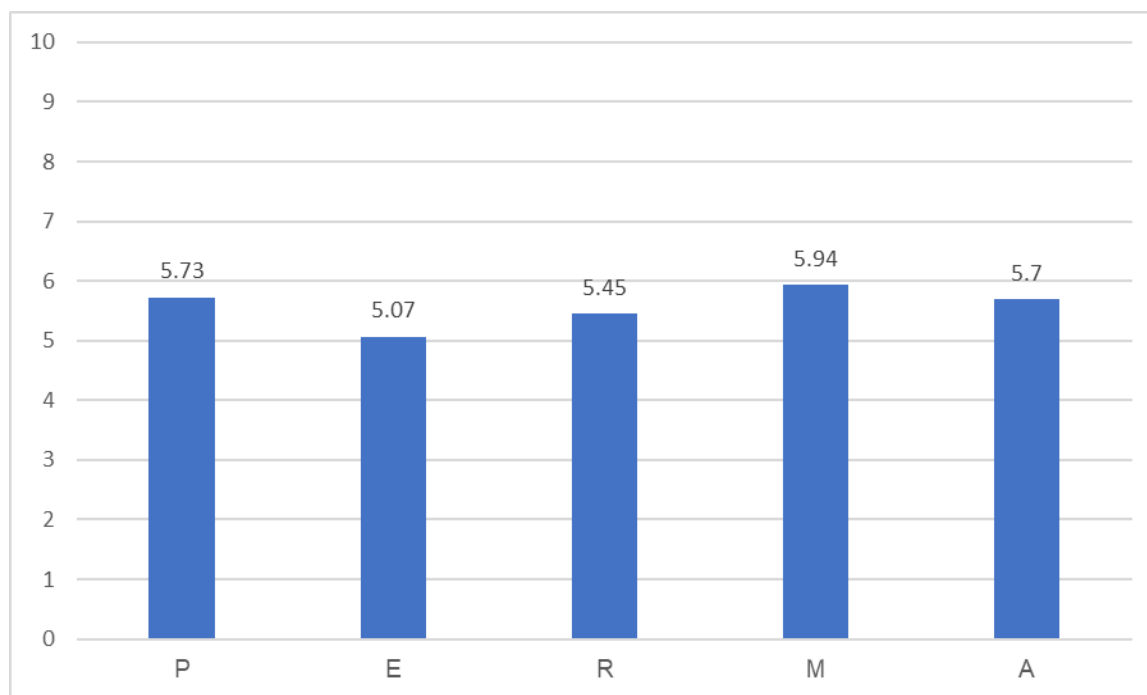


Figure 1. Students' perceptions of well-being (N=268, Likert Scale 0 = never, 10 = always)

Figure 1 depicts students' perceptions of their well-being in learning English through online learning with a total of 268 participants with a 15-item questionnaire according to the Likert Scale from 0 = never to 10 = always. In general, students were quite happy when learning English online (A=5.578). The first is about positive emotions, it could be seen that students feel happy through learning English online. In addition, they also felt positive, optimistic, and satisfied (A=5.73). The second is about engagement, students have regularly completed activities in online English classes. Moreover, students also found it interesting through this online English learning process (A=5.07). The third is relationships, the results showed that students are often supported by others when learning English online. For example, when students have faced certain difficulties, they usually ask for help from their peers or instructors. Furthermore, students also feel cared for and satisfied by those relationships (A=5.45). Fourthly, in terms of meaning, students felt that learning English online has helped them be more proactive and achieve their goals. In addition, students also said that learning English online helps them adapt to working remotely (A=5.94). The last one is achievement, students felt that they have achieved their goals such as improved presentation skills, teamwork skills, and higher scores through an online English course (A=5.7). Student well-being in learning English online is frequent and sometimes. This is evident from the average score of 5.578.

*Correlation of student well-being*

To examine the relationship between variables of students' well-being, academic resilience (AR), and GPA. Hence, we conducted the Pearson correlation.

Table 2. Correlation of student well-being (N=268)

		<b>WB</b>	<b>AR</b>	<b>GPA</b>
<b>WB</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.477**	.178**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.003
<b>AR</b>	Pearson Correlation	.477**	1	.033**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.588
<b>GPA</b>	Pearson Correlation	.178**	.033**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.588	

From the results of Table 2, there was a positive correlation between AR(academic resilience), GPA, and students' well-being in learning English online. The results indicated that the more difficulties in the learning environment students could overcome, the happier they were (Sig = .000). Besides, the higher grades students got, the happier they felt (Sig = .003).

*Qualitative Phase*

After confirming the data's validity, The author found that the results of a total of 10 participants which were analyzed by using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In addition to supporting the results of quantitative findings, the results also revealed other factor related to student well-being in their learning English process through online setting.

*Positive emotions*

Over half of the total respondents agreed that they feel quite satisfied, excited and positive with the online English learning program. "When I study English online, I tend to feel comfortable and active in participating in lesson development ..." (S10) "I feel excited when learning English online and when learning English online is as effective as learning in class" (S7)

*Engagement*

All participants who took part in the interviews stated that they always engaged in groupwork activities or

individual tasks like English games, presentations, ... Moreover, they sometimes voluntarily answered teacher's questions. "I often engage in answering questions on Edunext. Besides, the topics that I understand, I will volunteer to answer more questions." (S4) "I always fully engage in the activities of the online English class when my teacher gives me a quiz game or asks me to discuss a given task with my friends." (S8)

### *Relationships*

Most of the interviewees said that they got help from friends and lecturers whenever they were in need. When they had problems like answering questions, missing information, expressing their ideas, or facing mental pressure, they often shared these with their friends and teachers. "My class teacher and friends have supported me in the process of learning English online. If there's something I don't understand about the lesson, I'll message the teacher or ask my classmates to seek the answers." (S3) "I will often ask friends for coming up with ideas for topics that are beyond my capabilities as well as my understanding. Besides, the teacher also supports me with vocabulary provision as well as grammar correction so that I can speak or write correctly and use the right words." (S5)

### *Meaning*

Most interviewees shared that they had set goals regarding scores, English skills, grammar, and vocabulary. They felt that learning English online was very convenient in terms of time and study location. Besides, it brought confidence in communication, improved skills, self-discipline, and self-study. "I also have a learning goal that the end of the course, my score will be above 8.0. Truly, I achieved the goal of studying at the end of the semester above 8.0, gained more knowledge, and improved my ability to concentrate on studying. I feel that learning English online is very convenient because I can study anywhere, anytime. It also gives me more knowledge as well as skills so that later I can attend or teach an online class, I will know how to teach more effectively." (S1)

### *Achievement*

Qualitative data also revealed similar quantitative results that all the participants obtained certain achievement in the process of learning English online. They share that they got good GPA, improved their English skills, and gained more knowledge. "I achieved the goal of studying at the end of the semester above 8.0, gained more knowledge, improved my ability to concentrate in studying. During the course of the teacher instructing or answering questions, I will note the mistakes that have been corrected so that I can correct my own work to improve my skills." (S1) "I improved my presentation skills in English. Moreover, my grades have improved compared to the previous semester." (S3) "I achieved the goal that I set out, which is that my scores at the end of the course is above 8.0 overall. I have also enhanced my presentation skills, teamwork skills and gained more knowledge from this course." (S4)

### *Academic resilience*

The results of the qualitative data show that all participants had the academic resilience to access well-being. Even though they experienced certain difficulties such as weak internet connections, mental health, conflicts of teamwork, and bad grades, they always find ways to overcome them to move towards. This is proven by the following evidence: “If I get bad grades, I’ll ask my teacher for reasons and ways to improve it. When I am stressed, I will share those difficulties with my friends to overcome them.” (S1) “If I the network connection is not good, I will register for 3G for keep joining online English lesson. Regarding scheduling a group appointment, I will message to group mates to make an appointment in advance. If everyone is busy, I will spend 10-15 minutes in a quick meeting to discuss and solve the problem.” (S10)

### *GPA*

It is proven again through qualitative data that GPA had an impact on the fifth factor of Perma, achievement. 8 out of 10 interviewees stated that they got the achievement through their improved GPA. When they participated in learning English online, their scores range from 6.5 to 9, and they are happy with this achievement. “I have an average score of about 6.5 – 7.5.” (S9) “After I study English online, my score is improved and better. My score can be quite good, my average score at the end of last semester is 8.5.” (S6) “When I study English online, I feel my grades are quite good and improved. Specifically, my average score reached to 9.0, which is 1 point higher than the previous semester.” (S10)

### *Another factor related to student well-being*

In addition, the study also discovered another factor, negative emotions, which affected students’ happiness through online English learning. Out of 10 interviewees, 7 participants said that negative emotions appeared in their online English learning experience such as sense of boredom, distraction, and lack of interaction. “I don’t like learning English online because it’s boring, uninteresting. When I study English online, I feel sleepy, it is difficult for me to concentrate because learning online is more difficult to interact with others than traditional learning.” (S5) “Sometimes online learning has a little disadvantage. For example, when the network is weak, I find it very difficult to reconnect with the instructor so the interaction with the instructor is slightly reduced.” (S4).

## **Discussion**

The current study aimed to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students on their well-being whilst learning English online, then discover factors affected theirs utilizing the PERMA model.

### **Students’ perceptions of their well-being**

The more optimistic, happy, and satisfied the student feels, the higher their degree of well-being when learning online. Similarly, optimistic university students easily gained academic success, which leads to high levels of psychological well-being (Burriss et al., 2009). This is also in agreement with the study by Roger (2022), whose findings revealed that students respond positively to learning English. It is suggested that educators should be more regardful of learners' positive emotions, such as psychological well-being; design an enjoyable virtual learning environment increase learners' engagement like incorporating podcasts and videotapes into learning in online contexts. By doing so, student well-being will be enhanced, leading to improving their learning outcomes and boosting their interest in English language learning.

Additionally, students are engaged, spend time and effort on the assignment, or participate in group activities in learning English online. Similarly, Dincer et al., (2019) found that several activities, including accomplishing tasks, classroom participation, and connecting with teachers by asking and answering questions, are connected to student EFL engagement in class. Likewise, the survey results of Lan and Saad (2020) revealed that engagement element is top of the score in affecting the well-being of EFL students in China. It is recommended that teachers have active virtual simulations, and online games (preview vocabulary through quiz, booklet) to boost student engagement when learning English online program.

Moreover, students receive assistance and advice from others, which improves their well-being and reduces their stress levels when learning online. It is in the same vein that Graham et al., (2016) found that relationships with instructors are very important and can enhance student well-being by encouraging their growth and supporting them with challenges. Likewise, positive interaction between instructors and learners contributes to increasing students' enthusiasm for learning as well as enabling them to feel well-being in online learning (Xiao et al., 2023). Hence, teachers need to establish positive relationships with students through regular communication, feedback, and showing genuine care and interest in their progress.

Furthermore, students recognized the importance of setting goal and orientation of learning English online, which can encourage and engage them in the learning process. Similarly, the study by Siek-Piskozub and Jankowska (2018) discovered the relationship between meaning and intrinsic motivation of EFL students. This indicates that when students have a specific learning objective, their future life orientation gets better. Likewise, the study of Nguyen et al., (2022) discovered that the more meaningful, oriented and purposeful the students' lives were, the more valuable their lives were. Therefore, to enhance student well-being in learning English online, it's important to emphasize the meaning and purpose of acquiring English language skills. This can be done by connecting language learning to real-life situations, providing meaningful and relevant content, and highlighting the benefits and opportunities that come with proficiency in English.

In addition, achievements in online learning had a significant positive effect on student well-being. In other words, the more achievement students gain, the happier they are. Similarly, Pearce (2021) showed that students' overall well-being has significance for effective learning experiences, educational satisfaction, and academic achievement. Likewise, Alqarni (2022) emphasized the significance of well-being as a psychological element in

improving EFL learners' academic achievement. Indeed, achievement is a strong motivation for students in their English learning.

#### *The correlation between Students' GPA, academic resilience, and student well-being*

The higher students' GPA, the more achievement they gain. Likewise, the study by Steinmayr et al., (2018) indicated that GPA was used to measure the academic achievement of students. It is suggested that teachers may design some knowledge-related activities (educational games on online platforms) during lectures to stimulate students' involvement as well as give them bonus points. As a result, they could gain a higher GPA at the end of the course.

Academic resilience refers to students' capacity to recover from schoolwork pressures, setbacks, and failures such as bad marks or unfavorable comments on their work, leading to enhanced student well-being in learning online. Likewise, the research by Eva et al., 2021 showed that academic resilience permits students to confront challenges or negative emotions to adjust to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which also contributes to enhanced student well-being. Similarly, the study by Safitri & Nugraha (2021) found that the higher the level of academic resilience in online learning, the better the subjective well-being of students. The research also recognized that the academic resilience element contributes to the development of students' self-efficacy and confidence in learning English online. It is suggested that when students have low scores or do not pass a test, teachers should give them some advice or encourage them to keep moving to boost their academic resilience and to learn English better. In addition, the board of leaders of the university should invest in school infrastructure, namely improving internet speed.

More significantly, the study discovered that another element impacting student well-being in learning English via online setting is negative emotions. Negative emotions mean that when students learn English online, they feel unhappy, distracted, and lack interaction. Likewise, according to Sazdovska-Pigulovska (2021), student learning online leads to a lack of "connectedness" (lack of physical contact with teacher and peers) in class, which hurts their emotional well-being, and for some students, it also has a negative impact on their physical well-being. It is proposed that a helpful and inclusive learning environment be created, as well as clear instructions and the promotion of positive feedback and encouragement.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the study found that the perceptions of undergraduate students on their well-being in learning English via online environment were at the medium level with an average score of 5.578 by descriptive analysis. Hence, educators need to pay more heed to student well-being to strengthen their positive emotions, engagement, relationship, meaning, and achievement as well. Additionally, findings also discovered that GPA and academic resilience influenced student well-being. Furthermore, through qualitative analysis, the author

discovered a different element influencing student well-being when learning English online, which is negative emotions referring to feeling depressed, lacking attention, and lacking interaction when learning English online. Therefore, teachers should incorporate interactive learning activities, enhance interaction to alleviate negative emotions, and promote students' overall well-being in their foreign language learning process.

## Recommendations

The well-being of students in online learning can be influenced by many factors in different settings. Therefore, it is advisable that future studies should be undertaken in different contexts like secondary school and high school to provide a more comprehensive view of differences in the well-being of students at varied levels. In addition, the qualitative results in this study also found that there was a correlation between negative emotions and student well-being. That means negative emotions also significantly influenced student well-being. As a result, further studies need deeply research other aspects of negative emotions affecting student well-being.

## Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the support and approval from my institution, which enabled the execution of this research. Furthermore, I would also like to express our appreciation to my students for their assistance with data collection that significantly enriched this study.

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## Teachers' Psychological Resources - Coping Mechanisms in the Prevention of Burnout

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**Abstract:** In recent decades, there has been substantial interest in the mental well-being of educators, as they contribute to the establishment of societal and psychological safety within schools. Our research employed various assessment tools including the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-ES), Folkman-Lazarus Coping Strategies, Beck's abbreviated Depression Inventory, MOS SSS-H, and the Psychological Immune System Survey (PIF). A total of 301 individuals occupying educational roles participated in the study during 2021/2022. We investigated the primary factors impacting their burnout, such as the level of depression characterizing them and the criteria by which individuals fall into categories of burnout. Based on our findings, our sample exhibited low to moderate levels of burnout, only five teachers were affected by high burnout. The average age of the group was 47 years, representing the most active life stage. They tend to respond to challenges with higher levels of coping strategies, perceiving them as less threatening. Depression was also prevalent, with only 19% falling within the normal range. 12% experienced moderate depression, 2% (5 individuals) suffered severe depression, while the largest group (202 individuals) exhibited mild depressive states. Furthermore, 98 individuals lacked instrumental support, indicating a lack of assistance when needed. According to the PIF, they scored particularly low in the Approaching-Monitoring subsystem, suggesting a reduced understanding of their environment and monitoring positive outcomes. We also examined the prevalent coping strategies among educators and the psychological resources they could leverage for support and mobilization. Our research suggests that educators are greatly impacted by burnout symptoms, underscoring the necessity for their involvement in preventive training programs. These programs should prioritize reducing depression and enhancing coping mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Psychological resources, Prevention, Coping techniques, Teacher burnout

**Citation:** Szigeti, M. V. & Di Blasio, B. (2024). Teachers' Psychological Resources - Coping Mechanisms in the Prevention of Burnout. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 917-936), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.



## Introduction

The well-being, and professional and individual satisfaction of teachers at work is an outstanding factor from a socio-economic point of view, because psychosomatic problems, diseases, and disturbances in social relations affect children and young people in the complicated context of the school environment, and also affect workplace efficiency. International and domestic research unanimously confirms that teachers are generally exposed to a high level of stress and are at risk of burnout (Chaplain, 2008; Jagodics et al. 2020; Kyriacou 2001; Mihálka & Pikó, 2018; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Szabó & Jagodics, 2016; Szigeti & Di Blasio, 2022; Yu et al. 2015). The burnout of teachers is also increased by risk elements such as environmental changes, war and other extreme global events. The purpose of our research is to map the mental state of teachers and to identify their psychological resources that can be mobilized to deal with difficulties for the sake of a prevention training to be developed later. Our study undertakes a comprehensive examination of the factors imperiling the mental well-being of special educators, presenting the findings of our research conducted in 2022. Delving into the individual manifestations of burnout, our research aims to design workplace interventions tailored to the unique needs of these professionals. Given the multifaceted nature of special education work, it is imperative to delve deeper into the factors undermining well-being, which, in turn, impact personal and professional efficacy, constituting crucial domains for psychological and pedagogical intervention.

## Theoretical Background

### The Characteristics of Burnout Syndrome

In the scientific literature, we can primarily find definitions related to the context-dependent concept of burnout. Herbert J. Freudenberger was the first to write about the phenomenon of burnout, who studied the phenomenon in crisis intervention centers, medical institutions, and self-help communities. According to the previously presented definition, burnout is „a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that occurs as a result of chronic emotional strain and stress, which is accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and incompetence, the loss of goals and ideals, and which is characterized by negative attitudes towards one's own person, work and others are characterized” (Freudenberger, 1974, in Fekete, 1991:17). In another wording, the burnout syndrome means a change in the relationship to work, which appears in the clinical symptoms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decrease in personal effectiveness. It mostly affects those who work with emotionally saturated human relationships during their work, so in addition to doctors, health professionals, pastors, and social workers, it can especially affect teachers (Bordás, 2010). Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson (1981), the developers of the Maslach Burnout Questionnaire, define burnout as a set of symptoms that develop in response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stress processes. According to their idea, in addition to the unique characteristics of individual stress perception, the context of social relations at work and organizational characteristics also play a significant role in the process (Maslach and Jackson, 1981).

According to a further approach, the burnout syndrome is a psychosocial disease related to helping work that

appears in welfare societies. Its three main symptom groups are the feeling of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and the feeling of a decrease in personal effectiveness at work. When experiencing emotional exhaustion, the person cannot get emotionally involved in their work, depersonalization means the development of negative attitudes and emotions related to clients. According to some ideas, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization show a close connection (Fülöp and Gábris, 2022). During the feeling of a decrease in personal effectiveness, helping professionals believe that their performance is not enough to perform their tasks properly, and they are dissatisfied with the results they have achieved (Montero-Marín et al., 2009).

According to Michel (2016), the most significant effect of burnout is that it prevents healthy professional development, and the chronic psychosocial stress characteristic of burnout impairs the personal and social functioning of those affected by burnout, overloads their cognitive abilities and the neuroendocrine system, which ultimately leads to characteristic changes in the anatomical in formulas and how the brain works.

DSM-5, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - which is the classification system developed by the American Psychiatric Association - does not classify burnout syndrome as an independent mental illness, but believes that burnout can mostly be caused by the complexity of work tasks (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

BNO-11 (ICD-11) does not define burnout as a disease, but classifies it as „Factors affecting health status or contact with health services” and defines it as a syndrome resulting from chronic work stress, which is caused by insufficient stress management contributes. Its three characteristics are the feeling of exhaustion, emotional distance from work, and the development of a reduced sense of professional efficiency. According to the WHO, the phenomenon of burnout can specifically apply to the occupational dimension, not to other areas of life (World Health Organization, 2019).

At the same time, researchers who support the context-independent concept of burnout distinguish between client-related and personal burnout, and believe that personal burnout can also be experienced by people who do not work, such as students or retirees, but also by parents who stay at home to care for their children (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005).

From a differential diagnostic point of view, burnout must be separated from acute stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and adjustment disorders (Lubinski, 2012), and especially from depression (Oquendo, Bernstein, & Mayer, 2019), so that those affected are appropriate for the diagnosis. receive treatment.

Although the burnout syndrome can be interpreted not only on an individual level, but also in a broader social context, and - as a social problem - is closely related to employment and even to the economic issues of individual countries, still only a few countries have burnout prevention and/or intervention with strategy. Health and social support for those struggling with burnout would be an important state task, for which exemplary models have been found in Sweden and the Netherlands in recent decades (Van der Klink and Van Dijk, 2003;

Friberg, 2006; Kiss, Polonyi and Imrek, 2018).

*Factors of teachers' psychological safety*

Teaching comes with multiple responsibilities. The responsibility goes beyond the simple delivery of the curriculum, the creation of the curriculum, the assessment of competence, and many administrative tasks (Astrauskaite et al., 2011; Comber & Nixon, 2009). Teachers typically work with diverse groups whose ages, cultural backgrounds, motivations, and social competence can be very different (Comber & Nixon, 2009). According to researchers, teachers' socio-emotional skills are essential for maintaining an optimal classroom environment, managing conflicts, providing support and responding adequately to individual needs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert & Reichl, 2017). It is assumed that stress management, flexibility, positive organizational and motivational attitudes are predictors of professional success. They also draw attention to the importance of identifying and measuring the attitudes, qualities and motivations that can contribute to both job satisfaction and retention in the teaching profession (Hollett, McMahon & Monson 2021).

According to the prosocial education model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), teachers who possess certain social and emotional competencies are better able to cope with the demands of the profession while avoiding burnout. The lack of these competencies can lead to a loss of professional motivation and turnover, but their presence can strengthen the professional efficiency and commitment of teachers and reduce the likelihood of stress and burnout (Jennings et al., 2017). Research results also confirm that there is a strong relationship between teacher stress, negative emotional reactions, coping mechanisms and personality characteristics (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). These characteristics are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Zins et al., 2004). In terms of socio-emotional skills (e.g. self-awareness, motivation, perseverance, self-control, self-evaluation, etc.), there are many important qualities that are valuable for fulfilling the role of a teacher and professional perseverance. In order to avoid emotional exhaustion and respond to the needs of others, teachers must effectively regulate their own emotions, be reflective and able to identify the intentions of others (Jennings et al., 2017). Empathy, kindness, extraversion, and honesty are also traits that can increase the likelihood that a teacher can maintain their well-being or protect their own health by building support networks at work and avoiding stress. People who are people pleasers can be described as cooperative rather than competitive and genuinely interested in others (Barrick et al., 2002; Liao & Chuang, 2004). The ability to collaborate showed a positive moderate correlation with satisfaction, which can be explained in part by the efforts of individuals to maintain a positive workplace climate through their interactions with colleagues (Matzler & Renzl, 2007; Mount et al., 2006; Zimmerman, 2008).

In the other hand, there are also characteristics that can undermine well-being and the workplace climate. For example, neurotic people are assumed to worry a lot, be nervous, insecure, and emotionally unstable. They can also be characterized by impatience and vulnerability (Bastian et al., 2017), which probably reduces their self-efficacy and increases their risk of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Conscientious people are assumed to show self-discipline, perseverance, reliability, and are generally well-organized, goal-oriented, and hard-working.

Teacher self-efficacy is also claimed to be particularly important in protecting against stress and burnout and in effective coping (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Workplace stressors exhaust teachers emotionally, which ultimately reduces their coping resources (Blasé, 1982; Jennings et al., 2017). A growing discrepancy between the resources required for coping and the demands of the work environment leads to stress (Maslach et al., 2001). Organizational commitment is one of the most frequently measured variables in organizational development and is closely related to satisfaction and job retention. Importantly, in the case of teachers, organizational commitment correlates positively with satisfaction and negatively with intention to leave the workplace (Conley & You, 2009; Zeinabadi, 2010; Bos et al., 2016).

### *Coping strategies*

The characteristic features of personality functioning are coping mechanisms with stressful situations. During the process of coping, we try to resolve the conflict that causes stress, through cognitive, behavioral and emotional efforts (Pikó, 1997). Three factors play a role in coping with stress (Csíkszentmihályi, 2001):

- available external support, especially the social network,
- individual psychological resources,
- and coping strategies for overcoming stress.

Coping mechanisms are grouped by the authors according to several aspects, but coping strategies are usually used in a mixed manner. According to the division of Lazarus and Launier (1978), we can talk about emotion-focused and problem-focused coping mechanisms. In the case of the former, the goal is to reduce the negative emotional state associated with the stressful situation, so that it is possible to move on to a strategy focused on problem solving, in which case the goal is to eliminate the stressor or avoid the threatening stimulus. Lazarus and Folkman (1986) separated eight more strategies within the forms of coping, confrontation, distancing, regulation of emotions and behavior, search for social support, acceptance of responsibility, planning of problem solving, avoidance-escape and positive meaning. search. Compas et al. (2001) separate the coping categories of approach - mobilizing the individual towards the stressor and avoidance - moving away from the stressor. Approach coping mechanisms, such as problem solving and cognitive restructuring, correlate with better psychological adaptation, however, coping strategies (social withdrawal, avoidance behavior, self-blame, wish-driven thinking) can only be adaptive in the short term (Hamvai & Pikó, 2013).

## **Method**

### **About the research**

In our research, we addressed pedagogues/special pedagogues, the questionnaire was distributed among professional pedagogical services and unified special pedagogy methodological institutions, as well as on social media platforms and specifically in public education institutions maintained by the Kaposvári Education Center, so the largest proportion of answers - but not exclusively - came from the county of Somogy they arrived. The

questionnaire was distributed with the aim of getting to know the mental health needs of the target group as accurately as possible. The data was collected through an online, anonymous and voluntary, self-reported questionnaire survey, using the snowball method. With the snowball method, we ask the found person to recommend the questionnaire to other potential respondents (Bacsá-Bán, 2019). We received valid responses from N: 301 people to the sent questionnaire. The investigation was conducted between December 2021 and March 2022. The statistical analysis was performed with SPSS version 28.

*Sampling*

Data collection for our research took place in 2021/2022 after the pandemic subsided, the tests were completed online, anonymously, on a voluntary basis, among employed as public servant teachers, N: 301 people. The proportion of women was 91%, that of men was only 9% (27 people). The average age is 47 years, standard deviation 10.1. Since there were only 27 men in our sample, we did not examine gender differences.

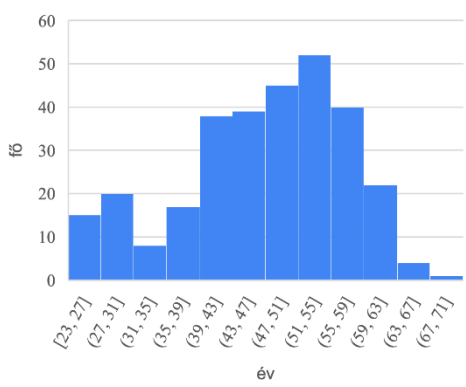


Figure 1. Distribution by age

72% of those who complete the questionnaires live in cities, 28% live in villages, 38% work in educational services, 33% in elementary schools, 15% in EGYMI, and the remaining 14% in high schools, vocational schools, and kindergartens. 45% are special education teachers, 27% are teachers, 14% are teachers, 10% are psychologists, and 4% are kindergarten teachers. According to education, 1% have a PhD degree, 57% have a master's degree and/or professional exam, and 42% have a college degree.

*Measurement Instruments*

In addition to recording demographic data, we used the following tests in our structured questionnaire cross-sectional study:

To examine burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) questionnaire, which examines emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decrease in personal performance in the form of a 22-item, easy-to-fill test. The items refer to the extent to which the individual feels his work is stressful, and how often or how strongly he experiences various physiological states (Maslach & Goldberg 1998).

A shortened version of the Coping Methods Questionnaire developed by Lazarus and Folkman was used to explore coping strategies (Lazarus–Folkman 1984). Coping is the result of the dynamic interaction of personal characteristics and environmental factors, which shows the amount of effort required to implement the selected coping strategy (Rózsa et al. 2008).

With the abbreviated version of the Beck Depression Questionnaire, we assessed the psychological state of the teachers and the symptoms of depression. The scale maps the degree and forms of emotional, cognitive, physiological and behavioral reactions to everyday stress (Purebl et al. 2006).

Using the MOS SSS-H Questionnaire, we undertook to measure social support (Sz. Makó et al. 2016), which plays a significant role in maintaining psychological well-being, in difficult, stressful life situations, in overcoming illnesses and in coping with stressors.

Psychological Immune System we examined the development and efficiency of the psychological immune system of teachers with a survey, and identified their abilities that help them cope with stress. The questionnaire consists of 80 items and 16 subscales (Oláh 2005).

The analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28.

### *Research Questions*

RQ1: How is the well-being of the teachers, how much are they at risk of burnout and depression?

RQ2: How do teachers cope with stress?

RQ3: To what extent and in which areas does the psychological immune system of teachers support them in sustaining the effects of stress?

RQ4: What correlation of strength and direction does the result of the selected measurement procedures show with the degree of burnout?

RQ5: What factors should prevention training focus on in terms of burnout prevention?

## **Results**

### **RQ1: How is the well-being of the teachers, how much are they at risk of burnout and depression?**

Our examined sample was characterized by medium and low burnout, high burnout affected 5 subjects (2%) (Figure 2). Moderate burnout affects 51% of the respondents, the degree of burnout in the sample is noteworthy. The average score for burnout is 43.9 (SD=18.58), which is a medium value. The mean score of the emotional exhaustion subscale is 23.9 (SD=11.26), the depersonalization subscale is 4.3 (SD=4.41), and the mean score of the personal effectiveness subscale is 15.7 (SD=6.97). In our sample, the total score of burnout and the total scores of the three subscales show a significantly lower value everywhere ( $p=0.05$ ) compared to the analysis

conducted in the same period (in 2019), also among teachers (Kapus et al. 2021). The percentage of the high burnout group is similar in both samples, but in our sample the percentage of the medium burnout group is much lower. The average age of the group with moderate burnout is 46 years, and that of the low burnout group is 49 years. In our sample, however, there was no relationship between professional years and the total burnout score ( $r=0.007$ ).

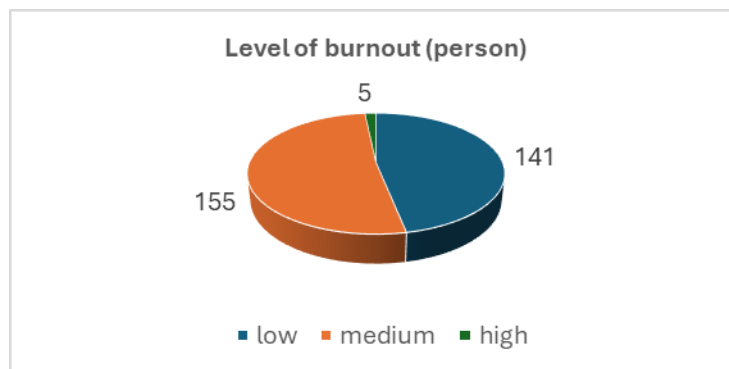


Figure 2. The level of burnout among teachers (Maslach)

The depression are also typical of the examined group, only 19% of respondents fall into the normal range (Figure 3).

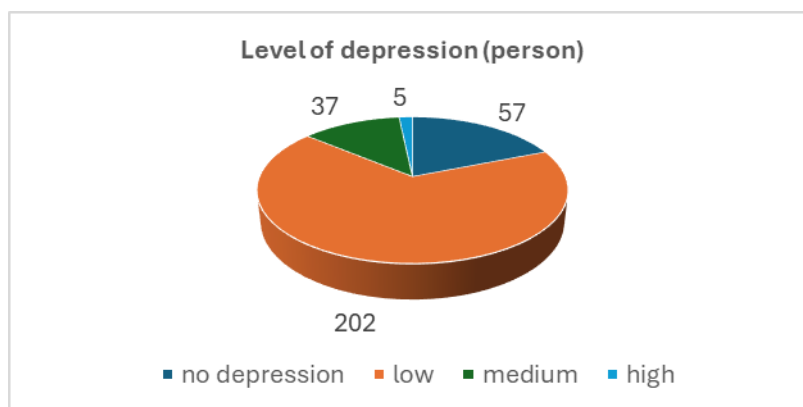


Figure 3. Severity of Depression according to the Beck Depression Inventory

12% of the respondents are moderately depressed, 2% (5 people) are severely depressed, and the largest group (202 people) is mildly depressed. In our sample, there is no linear relationship between depression and age ( $r=-0.091$ ). 5 out of 5 people (2-2%) affected by high levels of burnout and severe depression are not the same people.

**RQ2: How do teachers cope with stress?**

Among the ways of coping, problem analysis, asking for help and choosing purposeful action as a strategy seem to be typical (Figure 4).



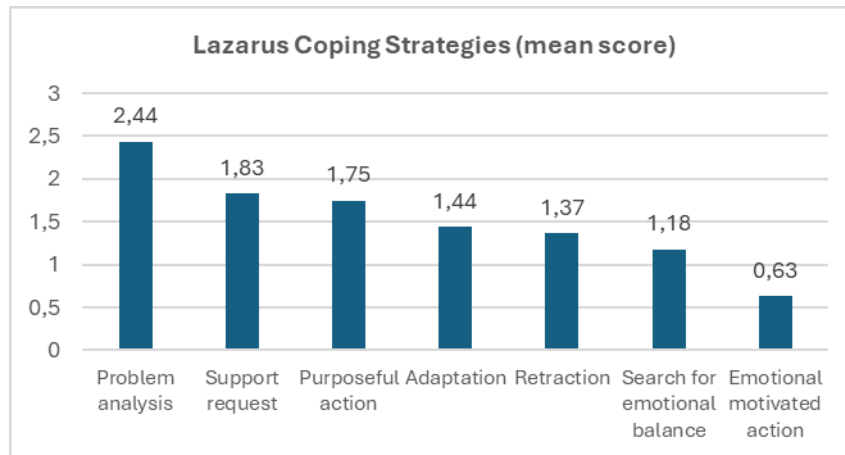


Figure 4. Lazarus Coping Strategies

This suggests that teachers tend to respond to challenges with high-level coping methods and perceive them less as an attack. Emotionally motivated actions as a coping strategy are less effective in coping with difficulties, and this is the least characteristic of the interviewed teachers. However, it seems that even high-level coping methods do not sufficiently protect against the development of burnout and depression, which may be due to the fact that problem-focused strategies do not work in practice in the current, multifaceted pedagogical environment, and the negative reactions of interaction partners may also hinder their implementation.

Higher social support is moderately associated with higher psychological well-being, positive affectivity, and lower depressive and anxiety symptoms (Sz. Makó et al. 2016). In the case of our studied population, 47 people lack emotional and informational support, they feel that they have no one to turn to for spiritual help and advice (Figure 5).

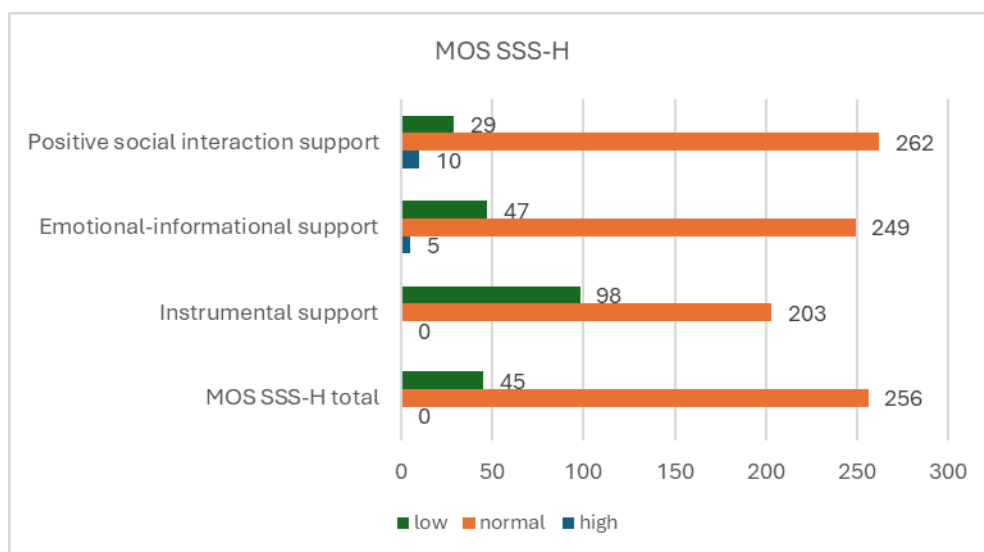


Figure 5. MOS SSS-H social support levels

98 people feel that they lack instrumental (tangible) support, that is, there is no one to help them if they need support or physical help. Relatively few, 29 people, feel that they do not have enough positive human relationships, that they have no one to relax with or share their emotions with. Finally, according to the global index of social support, 45 people have low support, even though it could help them cope.

**RQ3: To what extent and in which areas does the psychological immune system of teachers support them in sustaining the effects of stress?**

“The concept of the psychological immune system is used to indicate the personality resources that enable the individual to withstand the effects of stress for a long time, to effectively deal with threats, so that the integrity, operational efficiency and development potential of the personality are not damaged...” (Oláh 2005: 85). The teachers of the examined sample achieved a particularly low level in the approach-monitoring subsystem, that is, their understanding of the environment and monitoring of positive consequences is at a weak level (Figure 6).

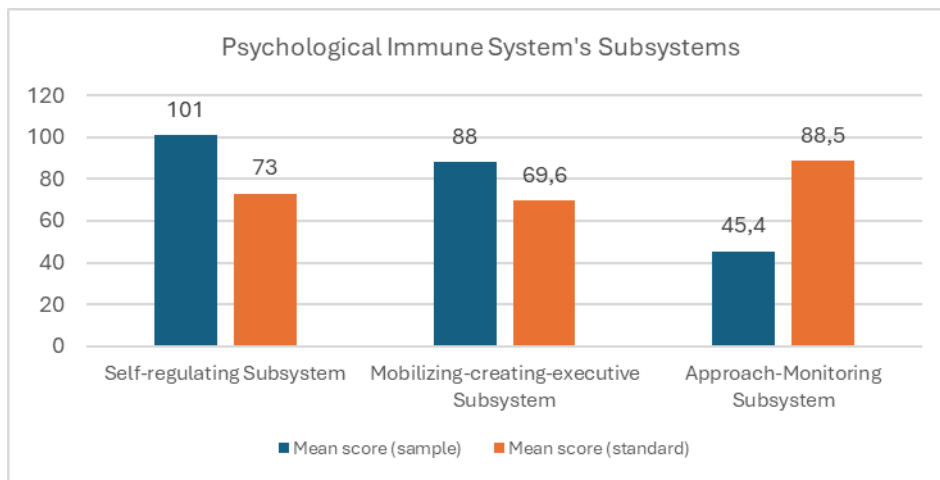


Figure 6. Psychological Immune System, mean score in subsystems in sample vs. standard

This includes positive thinking, experiencing constant development and a sense of control over life situations. The self-regulatory subsystem and the mobilizing-creative-executive subsystem are offered as psychological resources to be exploited, in which they perform at a high level.

Examining the correlations of the different tests provides the answer to our fourth research question.

**RQ4: What correlation of strength and direction does the result of the selected measurement procedures show with the degree of burnout?**

The results of the examination tests are related to burnout and have a predictive function. That is, based on the results of the Lazarus coping methods, the abbreviated version of the Beck Depression Questionnaire, the MOS SSS-H and the Psychological Immune System Survey, the results of the Maslach burnout questionnaire can be predicted to some extent. According to neither the Kolmogorov-Smirnov nor the Shapiro-Wilk normality test,

the distribution of any of the examined factors cannot be considered normal ( $p < 0.01$ ), so we used non-parametric tests (Table 1.)

Table 1. Normality test

Normality test						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
<b>Problem analysis</b>	,160	301	<,001	,879	301	<,001
<b>Adaptation</b>	,099	301	<,001	,977	301	<,001
<b>Emotional motivated action</b>	,188	301	<,001	,919	301	<,001
<b>Support request</b>	,144	301	<,001	,942	301	<,001
<b>Purposeful action</b>	,088	301	<,001	,978	301	<,001
<b>Search for emotional balance</b>	,176	301	<,001	,941	301	<,001
<b>Retraction</b>	,118	301	<,001	,969	301	<,001
<b>Depression (total score)</b>	,164	301	<,001	,876	301	<,001
<b>MOSS SSS-H (total score)</b>	,246	301	<,001	,746	301	<,001
<b>Instrumental support</b>	,322	301	<,001	,687	301	<,001
<b>Emotional-informational support</b>	,254	301	<,001	,739	301	<,001
<b>Positive social interaction support</b>	,272	301	<,001	,679	301	<,001
<b>Self-regulating Subsystem</b>	,063	301	,005	,984	301	,002
<b>Mobilizing-creating-executive Subsystem</b>	,052	301	,045	,983	301	,001
<b>Approach-monintoring Subsystem</b>	,077	301	<,001	,978	301	<,001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The total score of the Beck Depression Questionnaire and Maslach's burnout test has a positive and strong relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ;  $Rho = 0.682$ ) i.e., in accordance with literature data, a higher level of burnout is associated with a higher level of depression.

The total score of the Maslach burnout test shows a negative, weak relationship among the Lazarus coping modalities with problem analysis and seeking help ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $-0.3 < Rho < -0.1$ ), a positive, weak relationship with coping ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $0.1 < Rho < 0.3$ ), a positive, moderate relationship with emotionally motivated action ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $0.3 < Rho < 0.5$ ), and a negative, moderate relationship with purposeful action ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $-0.5 < Rho < -0.3$ ). There was no significant relationship between the total burn-out test score and the other coping modalities (emotional balance, withdrawal) ( $p \geq 0.05$ ).

#### **RQ5: What factors should prevention training focus on in terms of burnout prevention?**

Using multivariable multiple linear regression with the Stepwise technique, we examined to what extent the Lazarus coping strategies, the shortened version of the Beck Depression Inventory, the MOS SSS-H, and the

Psychological Immunization Inventory could predict the total score of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The regression model fitted to special education teachers (eight model) is globally significant based on the F-test results ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 2).

Table 2. Fitted multivariate linear regression model

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	<i>p</i>
8	Regression	365,813	8	45,727	58,409	<0,001 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	228,599	292	0,783		
	Total	594,412	300			

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	St. error of the estimate
8	0,784 <sup>a</sup>	0,615	0,605	0,88480

a. Predictor variables: Depression (0-10), Approach-monitoring subsystem (0-10), Goal-oriented action (0-10), Adaptation (0-10), Help-seeking (0-10), Emotional-informational support (0-10)

The multiple determination coefficient of the explanatory variables included in the model (depression, approach-monitoring subsystem, purposeful action, adaptation, help-seeking, emotionally motivated action, instrumental support, self-regulation subsystem) and the total score of Maslach's burnout is 0.784, so the relationship between the above explanatory variables and burnout is between, positive and tight. These variables, i.e. depression, the approaching-monitoring subsystem, purposeful action, adaptation, help-seeking, emotionally motivated action, instrumental support and the total score of the self-regulatory subsystem together explain 60.5% of Maslach's burnout the dispersion of the total score in the case of teachers. Based on the standardized beta values, depression has the greatest effect on the development of the burnout score, while the PIF approach-monitoring subsystem is the second, and the purposeful action coping method is the third most influential factor. Fourth is the self-regulatory subsystem, fifth is asking for help, sixth is emotionally motivated action, seventh is instrumental support, and eighth is adaptation (Table 3).

Table 3. Fitted multivariate linear regression model

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized B	Standard error of coefficients	Standardized beta coefficient	t	<i>p</i>
8	(constants)	5,033	0,497		10,124	<0,001
	Depression (0-10)	0,319	0,046	0,357	6,904	<0,001
	Approach-monitoring subsystem (0-10)	-0,234	0,048	-0,259	-4,851	<0,001
	Purposeful action (0-10)	-0,097	0,029	-0,153	-3,365	0,001
	Self-regulatory subsystem (0-10)	-0,135	0,055	-0,141	-2,467	0,014

	Help-seeking (0-10)	0,100	0,039	0,112	2,586	0,010
	Emotionally motivated action (0-10)	-0,069	0,022	-0,123	-3,191	0,002
	Instrumental support (0-10)	0,073	0,028	0,106	2,599	0,010
	Adaptation (0-10)	0,069	0,030	0,092	2,350	0,019

a. Dependent variable: Burnout (0-10)

If the depression total score increases by 1, then, on average, according to the model, the burnout total score increases by 0.32, holding all other factors in the model constant. If the score of the approach-monitoring subsystem of the PIF increases by 1, then, according to the model, the total score of burnout decreases by 0.23 on average. If the score of the purposeful action coping method increases by 1, the total score of burnout decreases by 0.10 on average, according to the model. If the score of the self-regulatory subsystem of the PIF increases by 1, the burnout total score decreases by 0.14 on average, according to the model. If the coping method of emotionally motivated action increases by 1, then, on average, according to the model, the total score of burnout increases by 0.10, assuming the other factors in the model remain unchanged. If the help-seeking coping method score increases by 1, on average, according to the model, the total burnout score decreases by 0.07. If the instrumental support score increases by 1, then, on average, according to the model, the burnout total score will increase by 0.07, and finally, if the adaptive coping score increases by 1, then the burnout total score will increase by 0.07.

Since there were only two categories in the sample – apart from five exceptions –, moderate or low burnout, we also examined to what extent the included explanatory variables predict the degree of burnout of the given person using multivariate binary logistic regression (Forward Conditional procedure) (Table 4).

Table 4: Forward Conditional procedure

**Combined test of model coefficients**

		Chi-square	df	<i>p</i>
5. iteration	Iteration	5,875	1	0,015
	Block	168,828	5	<0,001
	Model	168,828	5	<0,001

**Model summary**

Iteration	-2 log likelihood	Cox & Snell R <sup>2</sup>	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>
5.	240,853	0,435	0,580

The model is globally good based on the result of the Chi-square test ( $p < 0.001$ ). The included variables together explain 58.0% of belonging to Maslach's burnout group (Table 5).

Table 5: Classification of the Forward Conditional model

**Classification table**

Measured value	predicted value
----------------	-----------------

5. iteration	Level of burnout	Level of burnout		Találati arány
		low	high	
	low	115	26	81,6
	moderate	31	124	80,0
	Összes (%)			80,7

However, with the help of the fitted multivariate binary logistic model, the involved explanatory variables together can predict which burnout group a given teacher will belong to in 80.7% of cases. In terms of burnout, the level of depression (0-10) affects which group the given teacher belongs to, followed by purposeful action (0-10), followed by instrumental support (0-10), the approaching-monitoring subsystem (0-10) and asking for help (0-10) ( $p < 0.05$ ). Of these, depression and instrumental support act in such a way that, with a higher value of the variable, it is more likely to be classified into the „moderate” burnout category instead of „minor” burnout, while in the case of asking for help, purposeful action and the approach-monitoring subsystem, the variable is smaller value, it is more likely to be classified as „moderate” burnout instead of „minor” burnout. In the case of Depression (0-10), the teacher with one higher score is 3.772 times more likely to have „medium” burnout, i.e. he is 277% more likely to fall into this category than his colleague with one lower score. In the case of Instrumental support (0-10), the teacher with one higher score is 1.490 times more likely to have „medium” burnout, that is, he is 49% more likely to fall into this category than his colleague with one lower score. In the case of the Approach-monitoring subsystem (0-10), a teacher with a score one higher has a „higher” chance of having „medium” burnout by 0.582 times, i.e. he has a 42% lower chance of falling into this category than his colleague with a score one lower. In the case of Purposeful Action (0-10), a teacher with a score one higher has a „higher” chance of having „medium” burnout by 0.751 times, i.e. a 25% lower chance of belonging to this category than his colleague with a score one lower (Table 6).

Table 6. Classification of the Forward Conditional model

Included explanatory variables		B	St. error	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
5. iteration <sup>a</sup>	Help-seeking (0-10)	-0,161	0,067	5,712	1	0,017	0,085
	Purposeful action (0-10)	-0,287	0,081	12,554	1	<0,001	0,751
	Depression (0-10)	1,328	0,203	42,704	1	<0,001	3,772
	Instrumental support (0-10)	0,398	0,102	15,197	1	<0,001	1,490
	Approach-monitoring subsystem (0-10)	-0,542	0,148	13,421	1	<0,001	0,582
	Constans	1,160	1,331	0,760	1	0,383	3,191

a. : included explanatory variables Depression (0-10), Céltudatos cselekvés (0-10), Instrumental support (0-10), Approach-monitoring subsystem (0-10), Help-seeking (0-10)

## Limitations of the Study

The methodological limitation of the study is that our sample is not representative. The participants in the research mainly live and work in Somogy County, the measurement results may be influenced by regional

factors that we have not taken into account here. The factor endangering the research was the COVID-19 pandemic, which data collection took place immediately after its abatement. One of the consequences of this could be a lower level of willingness to complete, as we returned to our usual lives with dangerously depleted psychological reserves. Our measured data may reflect the exhaustion associated with the pandemic. Due to the above, it would be worthwhile in the future to ask again the group of participants in the study, and to extend the study to the school's organizational functioning as well.

On the other hand, since our main goal was to explore the background of burnout prevention and to determine the most important factors affecting burnout, the large number of burned-out teachers can also be interpreted as an advantage, we obtained a larger number of "burned out" samples.

## Conclusion

After the pandemic, nearly half of the teachers (N: 301) showed low burnout, the other half showed moderate burnout, and there was hardly any high burnout. Our results are somewhat similar to previous Hungarian measurements (Jagodics et al. 2020; Kapus et al. 2021; Mihálka & Pikó 2018; Szabó & Jagodics 2016; Szigeti 2021). The degree of burnout did not show any relationship with our widely taken demographic factors, nor with age or the number of years spent on the job. However, with the help of the other tests taken, we can predict which burnout group the given teacher belongs to in 80.7% with a linear regression model. According to the model, the total score and standard deviation of burnout with depression, the PIF approach-monitoring subsystem, the Lazarus purposeful action coping method, the PIF self-regulation subsystem, the Lazarus help-seeking and emotionally motivated action, the MOS SSS-H instrumental support, and shows a strong connection with the Lazarus adaptation. Among them, the degree of depression affects burnout the most, followed by instrumental support and then purposeful action.

This supports the fact that in burnout treatment, the main focus should be on reducing depression. In addition to depression, the frequent use of emotionally motivated actions and adaptation, which are part of Lazarus' emotion-focused coping methods, also increase the level of burnout, so prevention interventions must also focus on techniques that support proper emotion regulation and self-assertion. Purposeful action and the coping method of asking for help is a protective factor against burnout, so the trainings should develop openness to cooperation, asking for help and accepting help in addition to motivation and goal orientation. The high-level functioning of the approach-monitoring subsystem and the self-regulatory subsystem of the PIF also works against burnout, which emphasizes the need to support emotional and cognitive control functions, as well as tuning in to possible positive consequences (Oláh 2005). It is a surprising result that higher values of MOS SSS-H instrumental support predict a higher level of burnout, as literature data emphasize the pronounced health-supporting role of all forms of social support (Reblin & Uhino 2008, Stefaniak et. al. 2012, Sz. Makó et al. 2016, Sándor, Látos & Csabai, 2020). The need for instrumental support is of paramount importance during fallen and sick conditions, this may explain the coexistence of high burnout and the need for instrumental



support, however, reducing the need for instrumental support cannot be part of the training.

Kulikova and Maliy (2017) showed that the level of development of teachers' professional and personal qualities is related to the elements of psychological safety, such as emotional stability, normative behavior, low anxiety level, creative thinking and self-reflection. The poor psychological condition of the investigated teachers suggests that the decrease in their professional and personal efficiency represents a real threat both in terms of their own psychological illness and their adequate performance in the educational environment, which in the long term can make the implementation of safe education more difficult on several levels. The problem of teacher burnout is now a general societal issue that cannot remain in the exclusive field of interest of psychology.

## Acknowledgements

„Prepared with the professional support of the Doctoral Student Scholarship Program of the Cooperative Doctoral Program of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology financed from the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.”

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# The Use of The GoIro Semantic Mapping Method Enhances Composition Writing Skills Among Secondary School Elementary Japanese Language Students

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**Abstract:** Japanese is an international language subject offered as an additional language in secondary schools in Malaysia. Japanese language subject begins from Form 1 to Form 5 at the age of 13 to 17. However, composition writing often becomes a problem among students in Japanese language classes due to insufficient mastery of vocabulary and sentence construction. This action research aims to examine the impact of using the GoIro Semantic Map method on composition writing skills among Form 5 Japanese language students at SMK Iskandar Shah, Melaka, Malaysia. The study was conducted using the action research model adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). The GoIro Semantic Mapping is an intervention that combines the use of semantic mapping concepts with color psychology to help students memorize vocabulary and phrases focused on specific topics more quickly. The GoIro Semantic Mapping method was used to enhance students' skills in writing based on specific topics. The study involved three Form 5 Japanese language students at SMK Iskandar Shah. Data were collected through marking the respondents' composition writing, interviews with the respondents, and classroom observations. The study was conducted over two weeks in Form 5 Japanese language classes. Respondents reacted positively to the use of the intervention during essay writing exercises. They also stated that this method helped them understand and memorize words and sentences more easily and quickly. The respondents' writing scores also improved compared to before using the intervention. Thus, this study has proven that the use of the GoIro Semantic Mapping method has a positive effect on enhancing Japanese composition writing skills. This method can be used as an alternative in language learning to improve students' skills. Further research can be conducted to track the effectiveness of this method over a longer period.

**Keywords:** Japanese language, writing skills, semantic mapping, Malaysia education, action plan research

**Citation:** Isnin, S.R. (2024). The Use of The GoIro Semantic Mapping Method Enhances Composition Writing Skills Among Secondary School Elementary Japanese Language Students. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 937-950), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

International languages were first introduced in Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) schools starting in the 1970s. The first international languages introduced were French and Arabic followed by Japanese which was



first introduced in secondary school in 1984 (Dayang, 2022). In 2005, International language subjects including Japanese were expanded in regular day secondary schools as one of the elective subjects after more than two decades of being offered only in fully residential schools (BPK, 2005). Until 2021, a total of 130 schools in Malaysia offer Japanese from Form 1 to Form 5. I am an International Language Teacher (Japanese) at SMK Iskandar Shah, Jasin, Malacca, Malaysia. I have been teaching Japanese since 2008, with 15 years of experience in the field of Japanese language teaching and 22 years as a teacher. SMK Iskandar Shah is a rural school in Melaka that offers Japanese as an elective subject from Form 1 to Form 5 (Age 13 to 17). Japanese classes at SMK Iskandar Shah started in 2016 as the only school in the Jasin district that offers this subject. However, students in Form 4 and 5 will be selected to continue learning Japanese after they finish Form 3 and the students will sit the Ujian Pencapaian Bahasa Antarabangsa (UPBA, translated as International Language Achievement Test) in Form 5. Japanese, like other languages, requires students to have oral, listening, writing and reading skills. Writing skills in Japanese include the ability to write compositions based on a specified theme and title. However, students usually have problems writing good compositions, especially in assessment. I have done various levels of observation and I found that students with poor vocabulary and sentence structure will face problems when writing compositions. Form 5 students in the Japanese language class take the UPBA every year. One of the components in UPBA is writing a composition which accounts for 15 marks out of 50 total marks. If students cannot write compositions well, they will not reach the minimum level of mastery in writing skills.

### **Study Focus**

The purpose of this action research is to improve the composition writing skills of Form 5 Japanese language students.

The objectives of this study are:

- a) Improving the composition writing skills of Form 5 Japanese students by using the GoIro Semantic Mapping method.
- b) Increase students' interest and confidence in mastering the Japanese language.

The research questions of this research are:

- a) How effective is the use of the GoIro Semantic Mapping method to improve Japanese composition writing skills?
- b) Can the implementation of this intervention increase students' confidence and interest in mastering the Japanese language?

### **Method**

This research is an action study using an adaptation of the Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) Action Research



Model. In this research model, the process used is the process of observing, reflection, planning and action.

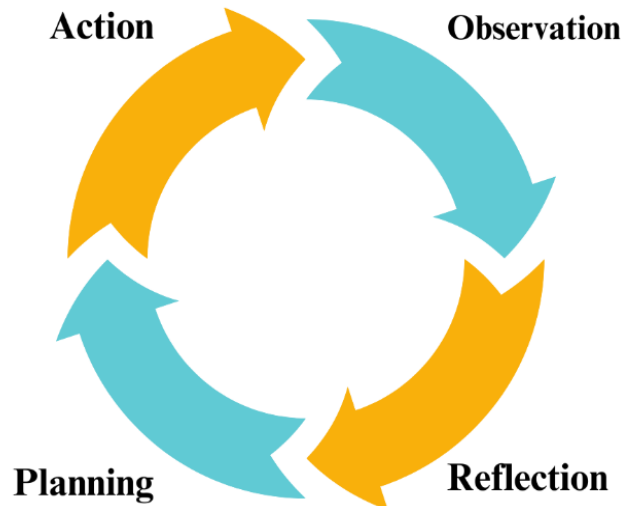


Figure 1. Adaptation of Kemmis and McTaggart Action Research Model

This study involves the following sequence of steps:

- a) Identify the issue
- b) Make preliminary observations  
Collect data through:
  - observation
  - interviews
  - composition marking
- c) Reflection based on observation
- d) Planning
  - i. Interventions:  
Planning the use of GoIro Semantic Mapping method to improve students' vocabulary
  - ii. Indicators / indicators of intervention success:
    - Assessment of student composition writing performance.
    - Less mistakes in the use of vocabulary in the composition.
    - Students' motivation and confidence in writing compositions.
- e) Perform an action
  - The action is carried out during Japanese class.
  - Actions are carried out according to plan with the use of GoIro's semantic map method.
- f) Observation
- g) Reflection
  - Reflect on the effectiveness of using GoIro to improve Japanese composition writing skills.

The respondents were three students in the Japanese language class in Form 5.

## Planning

### *Intervention*

In this action research, I have used the intervention of the GoIro method which uses the concept of a semantic map combined with the use of color. I have used this concept for the students of Japanese language class Form 5 in 2022 in writing their compositions. Based on the findings of previous studies, this concept of semantic mapping is effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery, and further makes it easier for them to write Japanese compositions.

Semantic mapping is a strategy to represent concepts graphically. Semantic mapping for vocabulary allows students to expand their vocabulary by using new words. The word used is connected with a phrase or sentence structure that fits the word. Heimlich & Pittelman (1986) define a semantic map as a diagram that helps students see how a word is related to each other.

Students build a concept map based on the chosen topic. In this study, I gave the theme まち which means city. Through these words, for the first layer, the students have to list some vocabulary that can be associated with the city. For example, the students list the words as in Table 1.

Table 1. Vocabulary examples

Vocabulary	Meaning
おおきい	big
ひと	people
たてもの	building
たべもの	food
みち	street

Students use the Vocabulary List provided to check unfamiliar words. They can also write the meaning of the word if necessary. The words chosen are not limited, and students can write as many words as they can think of.

Table 2. Examples of sentence / phrase structure based on vocabulary

Vocabulary	Sentence / Phrase Structure
おおきい	この まちは おおきいです。
ひと	マラッカのひとは 多くて、やさしいです。

たてもの ふるい たてものが たくさん あります。  
 たべもの 「アサムパダス」というたべものは ゆうめいです。  
 みち マラッカの みちは ひろくて、にぎやかです。

Students write the sentence structure or examples that can be used with the words on the third layer.

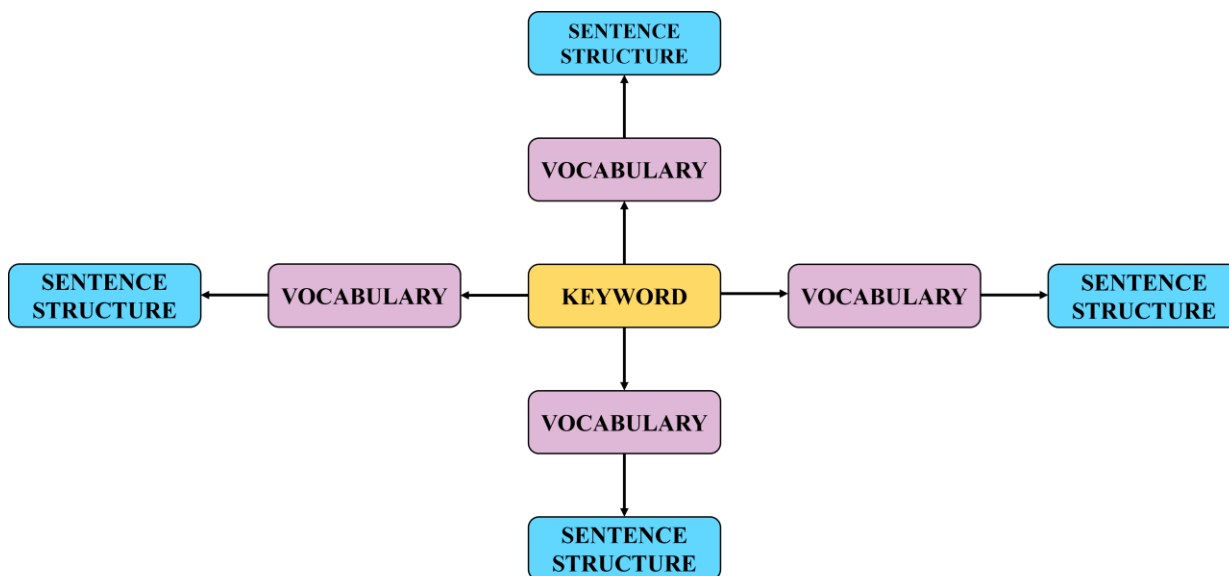


Figure 2. Mapping using GoIro Semantic Mapping Method

Based on the mapping made, the students will draft their compositions using the vocabulary and phrases that have been selected.

*Actions and Observation*

*Observations and Reflections*

Based on my observations in the Form 5 Japanese class, I have built an observation and reflection table as stated in Table 3.

Table 3. Observations and Reflections

Observation	Observational Evidence	Reflection
The students were unable to answer the composition question with the title 学校の休み(School	Student 1: Answered the question but strayed from the title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students cannot answer composition questions if they do not understand what the question requires</li> </ul>
	Student 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will not</li> </ul>

Observation	Observational Evidence	Reflection
Holiday)	Did not answer the question - left the answer field blank  Student 3: Answered with one sentence	understand if there are words they do not understand or cannot guess the purpose of the composition (if they do not understand the words)
When discussing the test questions, I asked the students why they couldn't answer the composition questions.	Student 1: <i>"I don't understand the meaning of school"</i>  Student 2: <i>"I don't understand at all, sensei!"</i>  Student 3: <i>"I don't know either, sensei."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need to understand the purpose of the composition</li> <li>• The students are still not able to master the vocabulary, especially those used in compositions according to the topic</li> </ul>
Students face difficulties in writing compositions because they do not know the vocabulary used in the context of the composition	Student 1: <i>" Sometimes I don't remember the kotoba (vocabulary) I want to use."</i>  Student 2: <i>" I don't understand, sensei. There's a kotoba in the question that I don't understand."</i>  Student 3: <i>" I don't know what to do. I don't remember kotoba."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need to be given a method that makes it easier for them to improve their vocabulary in a fast and focused time</li> <li>• The students only have 5 months left before the exam, they need to remember the vocabulary quickly</li> </ul>
Student 2 and Student 3 lacked focus when doing composition exercises	Student 2 and Student 3 tend to chat with each other during writing practice, causing their compositions to often not be completed on time  Student 2 and Student 3 also use the dictionary to find words they	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I need to use methods that can motivate students to focus on the task being carried out</li> <li>• I need to set different topics so that I can cover each theme ie myself,</li> </ul>

Observation	Observational Evidence	Reflection
	<p>don't understand, but they often choose the wrong word because of the similarity in meaning. They also take a long time to find words.</p>	<p>family and friends, school, city and country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I need to control the vocabulary used by students by using the Vocabulary List taken from the Curriculum and Assessment Standard Document</li> </ul>

### *Implementation of Actions*

#### *Learning Standard*

特定のトピックに関する短い（簡単な）パラグラフを書くことができる。

(Students can write short paragraphs for specific topics)

#### *Implementation of Activity 1*

In activity 1, there are three things that students need to do. First, the students were given the title *わたしのまち* and were given small cards with three different colors. Second, the students have to write the word *まち* (*machi*) which means 'city' on the first card as the title. Finally, the students have to use the *ことばリスト* (*kotoba risuto*) which is the Vocabulary List used for learning Japanese from Form 1 to Form 5. The students are given the freedom to use any word that can describe the chosen city, as long as the word is on the list.

Finally, the students write words that can be used to describe the 'city' they have chosen. These words depend on the framework of their composition. Examples of words that are used are *みち*、*ひろい*、*たべもの*、*おおきい*、*しみた*. These words are written on the second layer card. Students can also write the meaning of the word if necessary.

#### *Implementation of Activity 2*

For Activity 2, the students attach the card to the word card using a *ring file*. Next, the students write sentence structures or sentence examples that can be used for the words chosen on the third color card. They can also write a phrase that they think is appropriate for the word. These sentence structure cards are also attached to the

word cards and form a mapping for the title. Finally, the students will refer back to the composition questions and start writing compositions based on the mapping that has been done.



Figure 3. Student 1 starts writing an composition while Student 2 and Student 3 improve their GoIro cards

#### Observation Activity 1

The students looked excited when I pulled out the colored cards. All three students are female students, and they like to use colors during learning. At first the students did not understand the concept of mapping using cards in the GoIro method, but when I explained more, they were excited to use the cards.

The students also use the Vocabulary List provided well. They seem more focused and interested in finding the right words. Student 1 organized the words that have been written faster. I heard Student 1 muttered, *"I can arrange the kotoba more clearly,"* while arranging the cards.

Student 2 and Student 3 were still carrying out the activity by chatting but I could see they were more focused on this activity. Even their conversation revolved around the title of the composition. I also heard Student 2 and Student 3 discussing how to arrange the words chosen for this composition. They also asked Student 1 sentence structures and phrases that can be used in an composition.

However, I found that the students faced problems when using the file rings to join the cards. The rings were difficult to open and causing pain to their fingers.



Figure 4. Students are more focused during activities

### *Reflection Activity 1*

I found that the students were interested in doing this method because they were mapping using color cards. As I expected, the female students were more excited to use soft colors. However, I need to change the way I join the cards so that it is easier and less painful for the students. The file rings also took a long time to install because they were difficult to open so I decided to replace the rings with cellophane tape.

I saw a significant change in attitude in Student 2 and Student 3 when using this method. They were more focused and more serious than when using the old method. In the previous method, I also used the concept of semantic mapping, but using only blank paper and the students drew their semantic map as if it were a mind map.

In addition, I was also excited to see the interest of these students increasing. The students also suggested suitable topics to be used as a semantic map after this. I acknowledged this as a good development, and shows that students want to be directly involved in planning their learning.

### *Observation Activity 2*

Student 1 wrote the composition earnestly, while Student 2 and Student 3 hesitated to start writing. However, having found momentum, they realized what needed to be done, and reviewed their GoIro semantic map before drafting the composition. Occasionally I could see the students discussing their compositions with each other. They also chatted less casually but are more diligent in writing compositions. However, due to limited time, the students were unable to complete their compositions within the allotted time in class, and were asked to continue their writing as homework.

### *Reflection Activity 2*

Students are given 45 minutes to write their compositions. At this time, I found it easier for the students to write because the words prepared in advance helped in drafting the composition. In addition, the words chosen are focused on the topic, so it helps students to use only certain vocabulary without having to force themselves to remember other vocabulary. Each topic has specific words associated with it, so this activity helps students write compositions in a more structured way.

I also found that the students were more interested and confident in completing the task of building sentences for compositions. They were more determined to complete the composition and did not procrastinate as compared to before the intervention. In addition, I found that students understand more with constructed composition sentences. In my opinion, they could easily recognize the sentence form used based on the mapping made.



## Results

The findings of the study show that the implementation of this intervention has been able to improve the composition writing skills of the respondents. This research is evaluated through the number of sentences constructed in the set time to test the extent to which the students' sentence writing skills can be improved.

Before the intervention, I set a time of 15 minutes for the students to write sentences based on the given title. I gave the title yangまち(city) and asked them to build as many sentences as they could based on the word. After the intervention, I have given the same time with the same title for the students to build sentences and make a comparison between the number of sentences that have been built.

Table 4. The Difference in the Number of Sentences Constructed by Respondents in 15 Minutes

No	Student	Number of Sentences	
		Before Intervention	After the Intervention
1	Student 1	6	12
2	Student 2	2	7
3	Student 3	2	8

Based on Table 4, there is an increase in the number of sentences constructed by students in the set time. This increase is quite significant for the level of students in this class because in composition writing, they need at least 30 minutes to write a grammatical and structured composition.

Through interviews with the respondents, the students enjoyed using the GoIro method because it made it easier for them to draft a composition based on a specific topic. The following are excerpts from the students' interviews:

Student 1: " *I think this is easier sensei. I used plain paper before, so it looked plain and normal... When I use this card, I can see what words I have to use. And then, I know which is kotoba, which is sentence...*"

Student 2: " *I like it because I like the color of this card. It's a little fun to see which kotoba to use, which sentence structure to use...*"

Student 3: " *I didn't really understand at first, but now I understand how to use it. After this, use it for another theme, sensei.*"

Through my observation as well, the students become more interested and confident when writing compositions. Although at first they were a bit confused about what to do, after I explained more carefully, they were able to complete the given task. Even the students also gave ideas to make their GoIro semantic map easy to store.

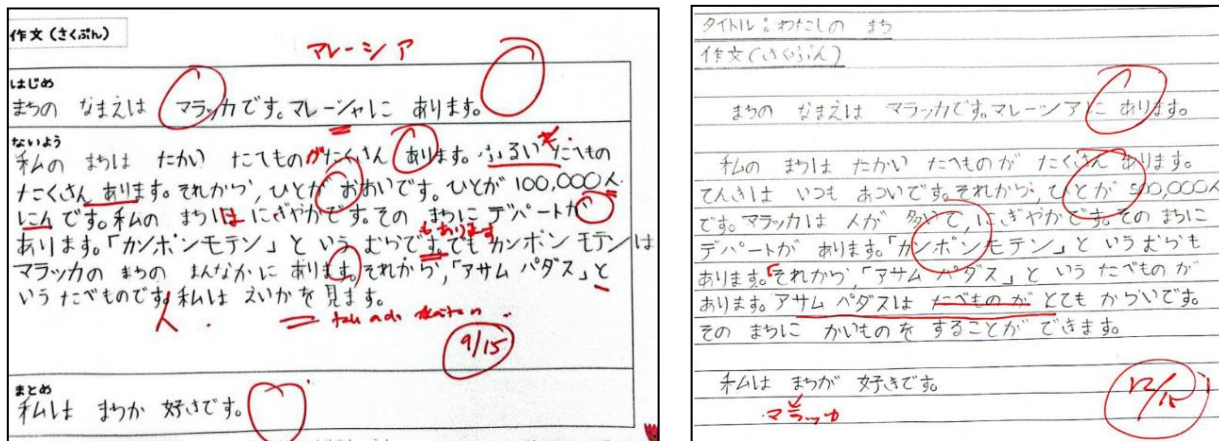


Figure 5. Student writing results before (left) and after the intervention (right)

### Conclusion

Based on the research carried out, I have made a conclusion that the use of the GoIro method can improve the Japanese language composition writing skills of students in the Japanese language class of Form 5 of this school. It has a positive impact on the students especially to solve the problem of lack of vocabulary which causes them to face a deadlock when writing compositions. The students are also more confident to write their compositions after using this intervention.

### Implications for Students

I chose this method of semantic mapping so that the students can remember only the necessary vocabulary to write an composition based on the topic. Students who use semantic mapping show significant improvement in reading comprehension, writing and vocabulary development (Zaid as stated in Thuwaibah, 2019).

The students' composition writing skills improve with the increase in the number of sentences that the students can construct in the given time. The constructed sentence is also more grammatical and uses the correct sentence structure. They also no longer procrastinate and seem lost when I give composition assignments. Through observation and interviews with the students after the intervention, they seem more confident when drafting compositions because they only have to focus on one topic and vocabulary related to that topic. Their writing results are more structured and use correct sentences compared to before the intervention activity. The students also gave a good response when I used color cards which are a concept of combining semantic and

psychological color maps in GoIro. They show interest in completing the composition because they feel easier and confident when building the composition outline.

Keller & Grimm (2005) stated that the use of color as a graphic tool can reduce search time and allow students to find information quickly. The first color layer shows the topic, the second color layer is the vocabulary and the third color layer is the sentence structure. This allows students to quickly identify their mapping. One of the advantages of the GoIro method is that students can make their own topic cards. They can make self-learning by building a GoIro Semantic Map based on the target topic, and use it when necessary. GoIro's Semantic Map is stored in a box that can be accessed at any time.



Figure 6. GoIro Card that has been folded

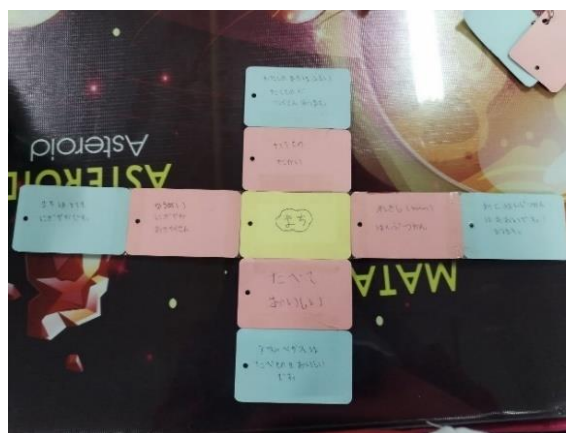


Figure 7. GoIro Card

#### *Implications for the Researcher*

After seeing the response given by the students, I feel excited to continue this method with Japanese language students in Form 4. I reflected on my previous teaching method, and felt that I did not take the students' needs into account when doing composition writing exercises. I should ask the students and take into account their opinions about the most appropriate way for them to learn.

I also plan to implement the expansion of this method for reading comprehension training of linear and non-linear texts for Japanese language classes. As stated by Buzan (2000), semantic mapping can be used to take notes, improve memory, generate and develop ideas. In addition, in his study, Ghuzayyil (2016) stated that by using semantic mapping as a remembering tool, memory retention of the meaning of words increases. Semantic mapping is also useful as an assessment method to measure student learning. So, as a continuation, I will use this concept of semantic mapping in the assessment of students' vocabulary development.

#### *Impact on the Institution*

I have shared the results of this study with other teachers, especially language teachers. I received a response from the English teacher at my school who expressed concern about the students not remembering English vocabulary. I share with these teachers the GoIro Semantic Mapping method that I use to apply in learning English. In addition, I have shared with several teachers of other subjects such as Malay Language, Chemistry, Biology and Science. As a result of the sharing, the teachers have given a positive response and expressed their interest in using this method.

*"...(I) can use this concept to teach thermochemistry, it's easy to use..."* – Ms, Wan, Chemistry teacher

*"... useful for students who do not master vocabulary."* – Ms. Zu, Malay Language teacher

This intervention can also help Japanese language students at school to master writing skills, especially in constructing sentences and compositions. This will give an idea for improving the teaching and learning of Japanese in this school in particular and the subject in general.

#### *Suggested Improvements*

I will continue this method in teaching and learning Japanese in the future. In addition, I will also improve the use of the GoIro Semantic Mapping method toward the production of innovative products in the form of interactive and digital materials, in line with the development of digital education technology today.

As a suggestion for future improvement, I would like to create a digital application that allows students to choose words from the Vocabulary List provided. Once the words are selected, this application will help students to build sentences based on their needs. For example, if the students choose a topic such as *すきなこと* (things they like), the application will list the words related to that title or topic. As an example, this application will display the word *花* (flower), the meaning of the word as well as suggested sentence structures that can be used with the word such as *花 (はな) はないです / わたしは 花 (はな) が なりみすきです*. This application can be used by students to revise vocabulary, enrich vocabulary, and improve the skill of constructing sentences correctly.

#### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan, Ministry of Education, Malaysia for the opportunity given and Yayasan Guru Tun Hussein Onn for the grant funding for this research to be presented.

Special appreciation goes to Norhafizah Mohd Yusoff for her supervision, coaching and continuous support, and Sabiah Ninggal for her suggestions and feedback. My gratitude also goes to Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Melaka for making things happen and for their constant trust in the teachers.

This endeavour would not have been possible without the continuous support and prayers from the only one Md Zaid Ali.

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## On the Causes of Earthquake Lights

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**Abstract:** Earthquake Lights (EQLs) has been observed in the Nature a long time ago but it was only in the last century that their study really began. The search for an explanation for the EQLs phenomenon, which only appears during certain strong earthquakes, was the aim of several studies. Today, there are many hypotheses but none of them is able to explain the EQLs phenomenon. However, in recent years, videos of EQLs have been increasingly broadcast on social media and websites due to the growing use of security cameras. In this work, our goal is to expose our explanation for the EQLs. For this, after analyzing data recorded in all videos that we were able to collect, and by correlating them with corresponding earthquake seismograms, we were able to find finally the causes of earthquake lights. So, for EQLs to occur, two conditions occur during the seism activity at the same time, the presence of clouds in the sky on the epicenter area and a magnitude greater than  $M_w=4.0$ ; these are their causes. Clouds act as in thunderstorm lightings and the magnitude  $M_w$  of earthquakes is, as we will see, closely in relation with the amplitude of the vibrations of the seismic S-waves and their frequency.

**Keywords:** Earthquake lights (EQLs), Seismic S-waves, Air vibrations, Quaking clouds, Electrical discharges.

**Citation:** Saad, B. (2024). On the Causes of Earthquake Lights. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 951-965), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Earthquake lights (EQLs) has been observed in the nature for several centuries. Since seismology began as a science in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, numerous reports have been published on this phenomenon. The first photographers of the earthquake lights – the blue bluish-white lightings that accompany the earthquakes – were taken between 1965 and 1968 in Japan's earthquakes (**Derr, 1973**). Several research studies confirm that EQLs really occur in the Nature but only during some strong earthquakes of magnitude greater than  $M_w$  4.0 (**Thériault et al., 2014; Fidani, 2010**). Currently, several explanations for their occurrence exist. Most proposed mechanisms require assumptions such as violent low-level air oscillation (**Yasui, 1973**), piezoelectric effect generated by stresses on quartz into the rocks (**Finkelstein & Powell, 1970 & 1971**), flow of positive charges in air produced by stresses on rock such quartz (**Thériault et al., 2014; Whitehead & Ulusoy, 2015**), surface charge density (**Takeuchi & Nagahama, 2002**), grain charging (**Cofield, 2014**), the presence of special minerals, gases, organisms or soil dust; or multiple other causes (**Torabi & Fattahi, 2019**) may be operating in different circumstances. All has difficulty explaining the cause of the EQLs appearance. Indeed, the only causal connexion that seems possible is



that the seismic strains of the earthquake somehow cause an electric field in the air, which in turn produces lightnings. What is the mechanism of this "seismoelectric effect" ?

We propose that all the EQLs are not the product of stress accumulation on rocks induced currents or shear rupture dynamics in fault zones, but rather result from interactions between the vibrations of atmospheric air and quaking clouds that have been essentially shaken by the transversal S-waves produced by the earthquake. A seismic S-wave is simply an earthquake generated sound wave in a solid or fluid such as water or air; hence the EQLs are essentially an atmospheric electrical phenomenon due to a large scale point discharge, it is a situation analogous to thunderstorm lightnings, but their causes are quite different. An EQL occurs in the lower-level part of the atmosphere in contact with the earth's surface in the vicinity of the epicenter where the electrical conditions are favorable, i.e., high electrical voltage occurrence. We strongly believe that the EQL phenomenon may be generated by charge electric separation exactly as thunderstorm lightnings but in the case of EQLs, the cause is the quaking clouds by seismic S-waves propagation in atmospheric air occurring at time of the earthquake. This requires of course the presence of clouds in the sky above the epicenter area.

#### **Materiels: EQLs Videos evidences**

Earthquakes are unpredictable, and EQLs recorded in rare videos that captured haphazardly by security cameras or cell phones have made studying them relatively easier. Indeed, the permanent presence of security cameras almost everywhere resembles a bit of an open-air laboratory. Twenty years ago, this was impossible. The increasing use of new technologies such as surveillance cameras during the last two decades has confirmed that EQLs does really occur but only during some earthquakes. Along our research work on EQLs phenomenon motivated by the Moroccan's earthquake of 8 September 2023, we found all videos recorded by chance from security cameras that have been broadcast on different websites and TV channels since 2007 until today (see Table 1). A certain number of videos on EQLs have been reported in some recent articles (**Heraud & Lira, 2011; Whitehead & Ulusoy, 2019**).

Videos from 1 to 5 in the Table 1 are on Earthquake Lights of the September 8, 2023 Al Haouz, Morocco  $M_w$  6.8 earthquake; videos 6 to 10 are on EQLs of the  $M_w$  7.8 earthquake of February 6, 2023 in Turkey; video 11 and 12 are on EQLs of the  $M_w$  7.3 earthquake of March 16, 2022 in Japan; videos 13 and 15 are on EQLs of the  $M_w$  7.1 earthquake of September 7, 2021 in Mexico; videos 16 and 17 are on EQLs of the  $M_w$  8.2 earthquake of September 7, 2017 in Mexico; the video 18 is on EQLs of the  $M_w$  7.8 earthquake of November 24, 2016 in Romanian; videos from 19 to 22 are on EQLs of the  $M_w$  7.8 earthquake of November 14, 2016 in New Zealand. The video 23 is on EQLs of the  $M_w$  7.8 earthquake of April 16, 2016 in Ecuador; videos 24 and 25 are on EQLs of the  $M_w$  6.0 earthquake of August 24, 2014 in Napa; the video 26 concerns the  $M_w$  8.8 earthquake of February 24, 2010 in Chile. The videos on EQLs used by **Heraud and Lira (2011)** in their article on the  $M_w$  8.0 earthquake that occurred on August 15, 2007 in Pisco, Peru here are videos 27 to 30. The authors are based their study essentially on data in the video 27, earthquake seismograms and some eyewitness. All earthquake lights



into these 30 videos are short blue bluish-white flashes seen in the night. The analysis of the videos in Table 1 shows that EQLs are coseismic phenomena as we will see.

Table 1. Videos of EQLs recorded in the word over the past two decades.

Earthquake lights	Date	Magnetitude	Video	Internet link
Al Haouz, Morocco	September 8, 2023	M <sub>w</sub> 6.8	# 1	<a href="https://youtu.be/31qCjxrMoQE">https://youtu.be/31qCjxrMoQE</a>
			# 2	<a href="https://youtube.com/shorts/OyARjiockIU">https://youtube.com/shorts/OyARjiockIU</a>
			# 3	<a href="https://youtu.be/zBxdO0J03Io">https://youtu.be/zBxdO0J03Io</a>
			# 4	<a href="https://youtube.com/shorts/_S_PB_H3-B0">https://youtube.com/shorts/_S_PB_H3-B0</a>
			# 5	<a href="https://youtu.be/zBxdO0J03Io">https://youtu.be/zBxdO0J03Io</a>
Turkey	February 6, 2023	M <sub>w</sub> 7.8	# 6	<a href="https://youtu.be/rNYjYGsZz1A">https://youtu.be/rNYjYGsZz1A</a>
			# 7	<a href="https://youtube.com/shorts/bvn9T__HqgY">https://youtube.com/shorts/bvn9T__HqgY</a>
			# 8	<a href="https://youtu.be/GazGi9q_G50">https://youtu.be/GazGi9q_G50</a>
			# 9	<a href="https://youtu.be/8Qq8MLNBawg">https://youtu.be/8Qq8MLNBawg</a>
			# 10	<a href="https://youtu.be/Lu7dPpS8AVA">https://youtu.be/Lu7dPpS8AVA</a>
Japan	March 16, 2022	M <sub>w</sub> 7.3	# 11	<a href="https://youtu.be/hHMBY8fmRDs">https://youtu.be/hHMBY8fmRDs</a>
Mexico	September 7, 2021	M <sub>w</sub> 7.1	# 12	<a href="https://youtu.be/1Ct64X2aGyg">https://youtu.be/1Ct64X2aGyg</a>
			# 13	<a href="https://youtu.be/F4REu2_JDx0">https://youtu.be/F4REu2_JDx0</a>
			# 14	<a href="https://youtu.be/pmQfGhn2L_U">https://youtu.be/pmQfGhn2L_U</a>
Mexico	September 7, 2017	M <sub>w</sub> 8.2	# 15	<a href="https://youtu.be/6RYySEOVfDE">https://youtu.be/6RYySEOVfDE</a>
			# 16	<a href="https://youtu.be/rimfLp-jMh8">https://youtu.be/rimfLp-jMh8</a>
			# 17	<a href="https://youtu.be/Za94ais13Iw">https://youtu.be/Za94ais13Iw</a> <a href="https://youtu.be/bYy-5-Pltec">https://youtu.be/bYy-5-Pltec</a>
Romanian	November 24, 2016	M <sub>w</sub> 7.8	# 18	<a href="https://youtu.be/TWzUo6gI47U">https://youtu.be/TWzUo6gI47U</a>
New Zealand	November 14, 2016	M <sub>w</sub> 7.8	# 19	<a href="https://youtu.be/BPcSAWI_2vs">https://youtu.be/BPcSAWI_2vs</a>
			# 20	<a href="https://youtu.be/CjqxiSxhNCw">https://youtu.be/CjqxiSxhNCw</a>
			# 21	<a href="https://youtu.be/MpXSolsRxI8">https://youtu.be/MpXSolsRxI8</a>
			# 22	<a href="https://youtu.be/Rd0oV7HBrZI">https://youtu.be/Rd0oV7HBrZI</a> <a href="https://youtu.be/By7ynEU80zo">https://youtu.be/By7ynEU80zo</a>
			# 23	<a href="https://youtu.be/U_YOi2ouhEM">https://youtu.be/U_YOi2ouhEM</a>
Ecuador	April 16, 2016	M <sub>w</sub> 7.8	# 24	<a href="https://youtu.be/cehoDc7jQsg">https://youtu.be/cehoDc7jQsg</a>
Napa	August 24, 2014	M <sub>w</sub> 6.0	# 25	<a href="https://youtu.be/rT8LTnCjq_M">https://youtu.be/rT8LTnCjq_M</a>
			# 26	<a href="https://youtu.be/5mtfWBRHibY">https://youtu.be/5mtfWBRHibY</a>
Chile	February 24, 2010	M <sub>w</sub> 8.8	# 27	<a href="https://youtu.be/zcytBTotahI">https://youtu.be/zcytBTotahI</a>
Peru	August 15, 2007	M <sub>w</sub> 8.0	# 28	<a href="https://youtu.be/pKMWSzSyFmc">https://youtu.be/pKMWSzSyFmc</a>
			# 29	<a href="https://youtu.be/GfN7sNzwyUs">https://youtu.be/GfN7sNzwyUs</a>
			# 30	<a href="https://youtu.be/eoVHPktRoS0">https://youtu.be/eoVHPktRoS0</a>

The video # 1 contains a 27 s length part of the September 8, 2023 Morocco  $M_w$  6.8 earthquake which lasted in total about 2 min starting at 23:11:00 local time. The video presents a sequence of three EQLs that occurred on the earthquake epicenter area, their color is blue to bluish-white like that of thunderstorms lightings. The 1<sup>st</sup> EQL occurred at 23:11:15, the 2<sup>nd</sup> at 23:11:23 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> at 23:11:25. Also, there are clouds in the darkness sky in the video # 1, probably mid-level and low-level clouds. Moreover, EQLs rise and extend from the epicenter to the clouds, which mean that their size is of the order of a kilometer and even more.

The maximum illumination of the 3<sup>rd</sup> EQL in the video # 1 is shown in figure 1. As we see, the earthquake light is surrounded by the red dashed ellipse at the top of the photo by the left. Clouds are visible in the sky by scattering the light of the Agadir city streets during the September 8, 2023 Morocco earthquake.



Figure 1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> EQL from the video # 1, 3, the clouds are visible there.

The video # 4 cited in the table 1 also contains four EQLs from the same September 8, 2023 Morocco  $M_w$  6.8 earthquake captured by a video camera very far from the epicenter. This video contains a sequence of the same EQLs as in video # 1. The 1<sup>st</sup> EQL occurred at 23:11:15, the 2<sup>nd</sup> at 23:11:17, the 3<sup>rd</sup> at 23:11:19, and the 4<sup>th</sup> at 23:11:40. Furthermore, the peak brightness of the 3<sup>rd</sup> EQL is shown in figure 2. This EQL is surrounded by the red dashed ellipse on the top of the picture by the left. Moreover, as we can see in the video # 4, clouds are invisible in the darkness, but they become visible only when they scatter earthquake lightning during the September 8, 2023 Morocco earthquake. So, the clouds are there.

The data analysis shows that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> EQLs are the same in videos 1 and 2 even though their instants appear as if they are different. Also, the EQLs appear blue to bluish-white in the video # 4 as that of thunderstorms lightings and are a few kilometers in size, they even penetrate the clouds. These new observations

overturn completely the seismoelectric effect advanced by **Thériault et al. (2014)** because, e.g., when we apply the conservation of energy theorem to their positive ions, it doesn't work. In addition, to product seismoelectric effect, the authors needs vacuum by analogy, e.g., with the photoelectric effect.



Figure 2. The 3rd EQL from the video # 4, 3, the clouds are visible there.



Figure 3. An EQL from then video # 6, the clouds are visible there.

The video # 6 contains a part of the  $M_w$  7.8 Turkey earthquake of 6 February 2023. The EQLs from this

earthquake extend from the epicenter until it penetrates low- and mid-level clouds, see figure 3. Thus, compared to their position in the troposphere, the size of EQLs is estimated to be about 2 km in altitude. The clouds in the video # 6 aren't visible in the darkness, but they become visible under the EQL illuminance as daylight.



Figure 4. An EQL from the video # 13, the clouds are visible there.



Figure 5. An EQL from the video # 19, the clouds are visible.

The video # 13 cited in the table 1 shows that clouds were present also in the Mw 7.1 earthquake of September



7, 2021 in Mexico. EQLs from this earthquake are also blue to bluish-white and extend from the epicenter until it penetrates mid-level clouds probably in the sky, see figure 4. Compared to their position in the troposphere, the size of EQLs is about 3 km in altitude. The video # 19 on EQLs of November 14, 2016 New Zealand  $M_w$  7.8 earthquake contains also clouds. The image of the max illumination of an EQL during this earthquake is presented in the figure 5, the clouds are in the sky. In the video # 19, the clouds aren't visible in the darkness sky, but they become visible only under the EQL illuminance as daylight, see figure 5. Moreover, the EQLs from this earthquake extend from the epicenter until they penetrate probably mid-level clouds in the sky. Compared to their position in the troposphere, the size of EQLs is about 3 km.

In addition, all videos on EQLs up to mid-2017 cited by **Whitehead and Ulusoy (2019)** contain clouds at various altitudes. Therefore, clouds exist during all EQLs events, even if they are not visible in some videos such as the video # 27 and # 28 that **Heraud and Lira (2011)** used in their article on the EQLs of the Pisco, Peru 2007  $M_w$  8.0 earthquake, clouds must exist there. Indeed, e.g., the clouds are clearly seen in video # 1 but they hardly appear in video # 4 cited in the table 1, yet these video-cameras were pointed by chance towards the same epicenter region and recorded the EQLs of the same Morocco earthquake of the September 8, 2023 but from two different directions, the camera 01 is situated near Agadir City but the camera 04 near Marrakesh city. It should be noted that half of the lightning in the case of thunderstorms occurs between clouds separated by a distance of more than 10 km; sometimes the electrical discharge goes so far that it reaches an open area and becomes the proverbial "lightning in the blue sky" (**Benson, 1996; Plonus, 1978**) as is the case of some thunderstorms due to the cloud-quakes. By analogy, this explains why Earthquake Lights can occur also in some places far from the epicenter area.

## Data Analysis and Results

By analyzing the thirty videos in the table 1 on EQLs of the earthquakes of recent years, we discovered that the first cause for an earthquake light to occur is the presence of clouds on the epicenter region whatever their type. The earthquake light phenomenon isn't like thunderstorms' lightings that require large and voluminous clouds such as cumulonimbus clouds. Indeed, non-bulky clouds are balanced by the strong air disturbances due to the seismic activity's energy. Nevertheless, the presence of clouds is a necessary condition, but alone is not sufficient. Thus, for cloudless earthquakes there would be no lightning, and this partly explains why lightings do not occur during a large percentage of earthquakes even when they are very strong. The second cause is the occurrence of the earthquake itself, but that is also not enough. Indeed, for earthquake light to appear, the earthquake should be sufficiently strong. In effect, the magnitude of the earthquake must be greater than  $M_w$  4.0 and EQLs only appear for 10% of earthquakes (**Thériault et al., 2014**). The failure to meet these two conditions together explains why EQLs only occur in about 10% of earthquakes. This percentage is a low limit given that many EQLs (those that are not filmed or occur during sunny days) were never reported in the literature. Definitely, EQLs do not occur during earthquakes that do not satisfy both of these two conditions at the same time. In effect, the first cause is imposed by the weather conditions which prevail during the

earthquake’s day. And to clarify the origins of the second cause, the seismogram of the  $M_w$  6.8 earthquake of September 8, 2023 in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco is from the San Pablo seismic station in Spain is shown in figure 6 hereinafter. By using the Tectoglob3D software available on the EduMed-Obs website, a good correlation was found between the time difference of the EQLs obtained particularly from video # 4 and the main peak seismic S-wave trains of the seismogram. The obtained results show that instants of all EQLs from the video # 4 are located during the earthquake occurrence. Seismic P-waves are push-pull waves that travel quickly and cause little damage. Seismic S-waves are up-and-down waves that travel slowly and cause significant damage. Deeper in the ground, seismic waves get smaller, this is why P-waves are completely attenuated when reached the San Pablo seismological station in Spain.

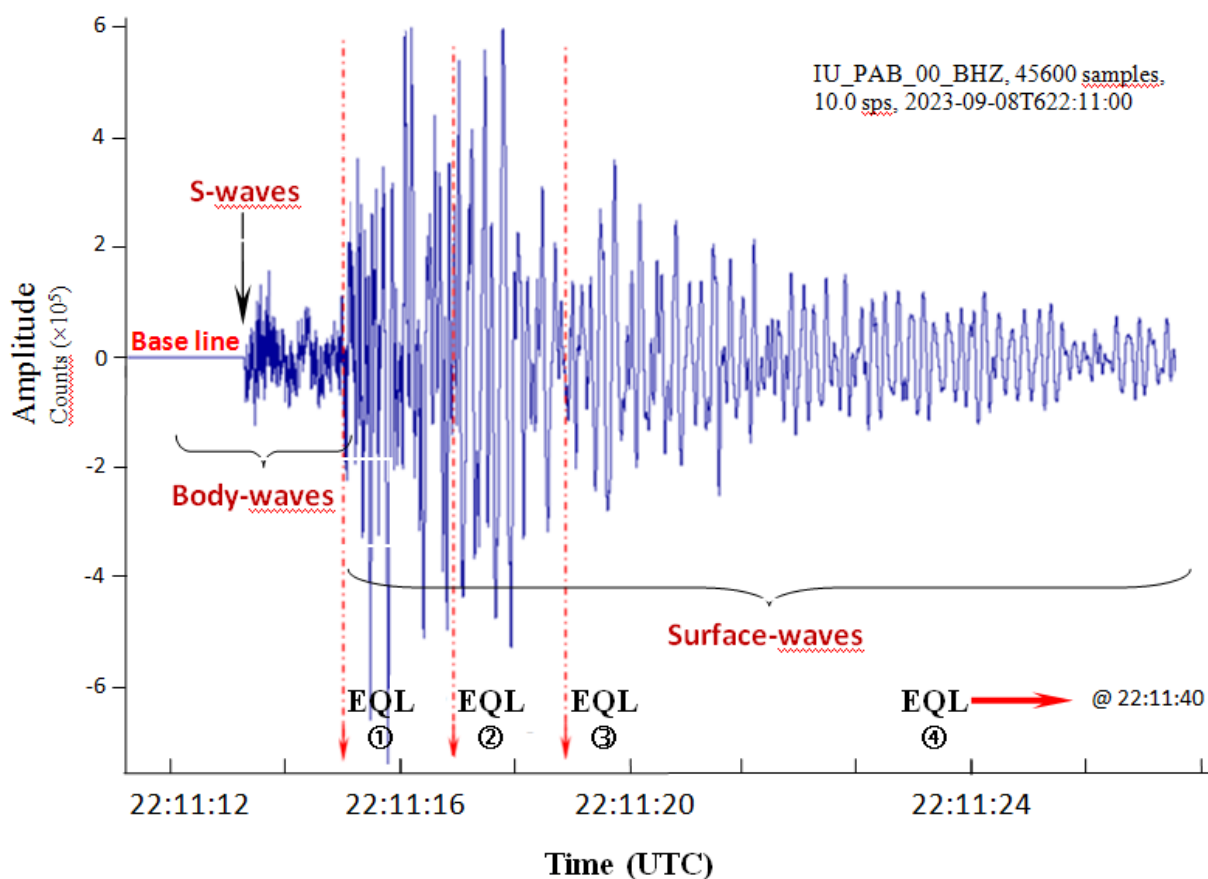


Figure 6. Seismogram from the San Pablo station in Spain of the September 8, 2023 Morocco earthquake.

As we see, there is neither pre-seismic nor postseismic lightning with respect to the seismogram, and this is why EQLs are essentially coseismic phenomenon as previously reported by **Heraud and Lira (2011)** . Additionally, the EQL ① that appear on the seismogram in figure 6 occurred after the passage of the 1<sup>st</sup> seismic S-wave train or even a little before its end, the EQL ② also occurred after the passage of the 2<sup>nd</sup> seismic S-wave train, the EQL ③ after the 3<sup>rd</sup> S-wave train, and the EQL ④ after the 4<sup>th</sup> S-wave train. This means that each train of seismic S-waves produces just one EQL and only one. The frequency of the 1<sup>st</sup> seismic S-wave train is high compared to that of the other three subsequent wave trains, but its amplitude is much smaller than that of these

S-wave trains. This is how we discovered the relationship that exists between the amplitude and frequency of seismic S-waves and the EQLs occurrence, that is to say that an EQL does not occur until after a certain number of seismic S-wave cycles have exited the earthquake epicenter and reached the clouds. As result, the EQL occurrence essentially depends on the amplitude and the frequency of the S-wave train that produces it; and then, the second cause is now made explicit by knowing that the cause of EQLs occurrence is the oscillations of air (**Yasui, 1973**) above the epicenter area due to the seismic activity.

The vibrations of the air can be modeled by spherical wave fronts emerging from the epicenter source and rising towards the ionosphere. Deeper in the troposphere layer, strength seismic waves get smaller, see figure 7, but since the clouds are closer to the epicenter than the ionosphere layer, then the air vibrations cause the clouds to shake before reaching the ionosphere layer, resulting in a situation similar to that of thunderstorms or more especially for large earthquakes. Thus, the separation of the electric charges occurs subsequently to the various interactions in the sky between the vibrations of the air and the shaking clouds, and then the negative electric charges develop in the bottom of the clouds and the positive charges on the epicenter by induction phenomenon like during thunderstorms lightings. Simultaneously, an electric field which becomes increasingly strong develops between the epicenter and the clouds, once it reaches the disruptive field value which is  $\sim 3.6 \times 10^6$  V/m for the atmospheric air (**Plonus, 1978; Benson, 1996**), an electric current density instantaneously and spontaneously circulates from the epicenter towards the clouds while causing excitation and ionization of air molecules, which is by the reverse process, ultimately produce an AQL. Just after the EQL occurrence, the cloud-epicenter physical system becomes electrically neutral and the process repeats due to the subsequent seismic wave train for as long as conditions are favorable. According to the seismogram in figure 6 above, the electric field reaches its disruptive value after a certain number of vibration cycles occurrence.

The electromagnetic energy density in air that gives EQLs or equally thunderstorms lightings is that which corresponds exactly to the disruptive field given by equation 1,

$$u_{em} = \frac{1}{2} \epsilon_0 E^2 \quad (1)$$

where  $\epsilon_0 = 8.85 \times 10^{-12}$  F/m is the vacuum permittivity.

Then, the electric energy density filling the space between clouds and epicenter area before appearance of an EQL is  $57.35 \mu\text{J}/\text{cm}^3$  which is the cutoff value.

The volume density of the mechanical energy (sum of kinetic and potential energies),  $e$  (in  $\text{J}/\text{m}^3$ ), imparted to air host medium by one vibration cycle of a seismic wavefront is given in the book of **French (1971); Kasahara (1981)** or equally into the letter of **Johnston (1991)** in Nature letters:

$$e_{cycle} = 2\pi^2 \rho (A_0 / \tau_0)^2 \quad (2)$$



where  $\rho$  is the density of the air and  $A_0$  and  $\tau_0$  are the displacement amplitude and period of the seismic wave respectively. The frequency of seismic wave train is  $\nu_0 = 1/\tau_0$ . The **amplitude** is the height of the wave relative to the baseline showed on the seismogram in figure 6 above. It depends on the amount of energy carried out by the seismic S-wave of the earthquake.



Figure 7. The Morocco earthquake's intensity of the September 8, 2023 from the epicenter.

According to the analysis of data obtained from the DAICHI-2 satellite by the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan, the earthquake of September 8, 2023 of Al Haouz, Morocco caused an uplift of 20 cm of the earth's

surface around the epicenter (**NHK World-Japan, 2023**). It follows that from the seismogram above, the values for  $A_0$  are 1 to 10 cm and  $\tau_0$  of 0.05, 0.1 and 0.2 s for seismic P-wave train causing the EQL ①, seismic S-wave train causing EQLs ② and ③, and seismic S-wave train causing the EQL ④ respectively. These obtained values in the case of the September 8, 2023 Moroccan earthquake agree well with those already mentioned by Johnston in his article in the journal Nature (**Johnston, 1991**). The air density is  $\sim 1.29 \text{ kg/m}^3$  under Standard Conditions of Temperature and Pressure, i.e.,  $T = 15^\circ\text{C}$  and  $p = 1 \text{ atm}$ . By using  $A_0 = 10 \text{ cm}$  and  $\nu_0 = 10 \text{ Hz}$  particularly for EQLs ② and ③, this yields seismic S-wave energy densities into air of about  $25.46 \text{ }\mu\text{J/cm}^3$  by cycle. So, seismic S-waves are capable of supplying pressure changes and energy densities by causing air vibrations.

However, since the average energy density of seismic waves is about  $25 \text{ }\mu\text{J/cm}^3$  per vibration at  $\tau_0 = 0.1 \text{ s}$ , i.e.,  $\nu_0 = 10 \text{ Hz}$ , this shows that the energy density of one cycle of the seismic S-waves is insufficient to produce only one earthquake light type EQLs ② and ③ s, regardless of its amplitude. Nevertheless, the September 8, 2023 Al Haouz Morocco earthquake seismogram in figure 6 shows that it takes about ten cycles by second of large seismic S-wave amplitude before producing the EQL ② or ③, and more than the double of this frequency for low amplitude seismic vibrations causing the EQL ① occurrence and only the half for EQL ④. For lightning to occur, the energy density must reach at least the threshold value of  $57.35 \text{ }\mu\text{J/cm}^3$ . Thus, within the air volume shacked by seismic S-waves, EQLs would arise as the integrated energy density in electric field from numerous vibrations albeit energy density of seismic spherical wavefronts get smaller from the epicenter, see figure 7, deeper in altitude in the atmosphere. In the case of the September 8, Al Haouz Morocco earthquake, the number of cycles, e.g., for EQL ② or ③ occurs is  $\sim 20$  cycles during two seconds, i.e.,  $\nu_0 = 10 \text{ Hz}$ .

The rate of doing work, as described by the mean energy density input  $E$ , is obtained by taking equation 2 above for the work per cycle and multiplying it by the number  $N$  of cycles ( $E = e_{\text{cyc}} \times N$ ). We recognize  $E$  as being equal to the total electric energy that the seismic wave adds to the clouds-air-epicenter capacitor system by seismic waves train. The energy is not retained at the epicenter source; it flow along the atmospheric air, which acts as the medium for the transport of energy sequentially from one point in the atmosphere to another, the speed of the transport being equal to the wave speed  $v \approx 343 \text{ m/s}$  (**French, 1971**). It then follows that the accumulated energy density during these two seconds is about  $510 \text{ }\mu\text{J/cm}^3$  which is obviously an amount of energy several times greater than the required  $57.35 \text{ }\mu\text{J/cm}^3$  which is the cutoff value. That is to say, when the seismic wavefront rises in altitude towards the clouds, it attenuates due to the effect of spherical wavefront broadening, see figure 7; and consequently its energy density decreases with altitude. Therefore, the energy density diminishes with altitude to certain percentage with respect its initial value. Obviously, this percentage depends on the amplitude and the frequency of the seismic S-wave train in question. In the case of the EQL ② or ③ and by taking possible losses into account, the percentage of energy density accumulated during twenty oscillations is only 11,25% of its initial value at the epicenter level. It is principally these coseismic surface wave trains which caused more than 2960 deaths and irreparable material disaster during the Morocco earthquake of the September 8, 2023. The percentage of energy missing (88.75%) from the initial seismic wave train probably serves to shake the troposphere and the ionosphere, the atmospheric air is an adiabatic thermodynamic system, its temperature and

entropy increase, and this effect favors the thermal agitation of air molecules from the warm epicenter to cold clouds in the sky and enhances their excitation and ionization process.

The 4<sup>th</sup> seismic S-wave train which is the cause of the production of the EQL ④ is a surface seismic wave damped according to the seismogram in the figure 6 above. Its frequency is  $\sim 5$  Hz only and its amplitude is damped from  $\sim 7.5$  cm to less than 1 cm as we can see in figure 6. Hence, the energy density per cycle is also decreasing, and consequently the EQL ④ was occurred with a delay of 21 s starting from the instant of the EQL ③ occurrence, see figure 6. This is exactly the time needed for the accumulated energy to reach the ultimate cutoff value of  $57.35 \mu\text{J}/\text{cm}^3$ . This delay of 21 s is the interval needed for the interaction between the vibrating air and the shaking clouds to accomplish the work allowing the electric field to reach the disruptive value triggering the electric discharge. On the other hand, the amplitude of the seismic S-waves of the first train which produced EQL ① vibrates between 0 and  $\sim 2$  cm with a frequency of 20 Hz according to the seismogram in figure 6. The accumulated energy into the electric field between the epicenter and the clouds due to air vibrations caused by seismic S-waves finally produced the EQL ① at time 23:11:15 local time. The amplitude of the seismic S-waves of the 1<sup>st</sup> train is smaller than that of subsequent S-wave trains, and this explains why in video # 4, the brightness of EQL ① is a little low compared to those of EQLs ②, ③ and ④. Therefore, an EQL is generated by the accumulation in time of energy densities of several consecutive seismic vibrations in air occurring at the time of the earthquake. Thus, seismic S-waves are capable of supplying pressure changes and energy densities that exceed the energy densities values (cutoff values) that induce disruptive electric fields. The remaining percentage of the energy (11.26%) that accumulates in the epicenter-air-cloud condenser system is almost transformed into lightning during the earthquakes from the excited and ionized air molecules, the EQL arise always from a single wavefront train. The wave train can be short or long depending on the amplitude and frequency of the seismic wave in question. If electromagnetic energy density put into the cloud-epicenter capacitor system is more than the ultimate  $57.35 \mu\text{J}/\text{cm}^3$  cutoff value, then it sufficient for reproducing, for example, several times a luminous flux equivalent to full moonlight of  $\sim 0.5$  lux ( $0.5 \text{ lm}/\text{m}^2$ ) as reported for EQLs in Japan (**Musya, 1931**). The brightness of the EQLs was so intense that the clouds appeared as if it were daytime even though it was dark during, e.g., the darkness nights of the earthquakes of February 6, 2023 in Turkey, September 7, 2021 in Mexico, and November 14, 2016 in New Zealand, this by watching the corresponding videos in the table 1 above in the present article.

## Discussion

As we see, in the presence of clouds, there must be a compromise between the amplitude and frequency of the vibrations for the value of the disruptive field to be achieved. The charge of the clouds-air-epicenter capacitor natural big system by interaction and friction between the shaking air and the quaking clouds as well as the subsequent development of the electric field between the epicenter area and the quaking clouds in the sky is all the more rapid and more efficient as amplitude and frequency of the seismic S-waves are greater. This explains why the earthquake lightning only appears after a certain number of successive seismic trains of vibrations. In

other words, it is impossible to observe an earthquake light after one cycle of the seismic vibration train whatever its amplitude. So, to observe an EQL, the earth's surface must vibrate several times depending on its amplitude, because the electrical charges created by interaction and friction between the vibrating air and the quaking clouds build up as the earth shakes, since the space filled by the air existing between these two media is adiabatic and electrically a perfectly insulating layer. The increase in electrical charges in clouds is due to *the accumulation effect of energy provided by several cycles of seismic S-wave train*. Thus why the earthquake lights cannot occur before the seismic activity starting, first of all, the earth must start to shake and here again the appearance of EQLs is not certain, this undoubtedly explains why they does not appear in most earthquakes in the word. This is why the EQLs are necessarily co-seismic lighting, and therefore it is impossible to rely on EQLs to predict the date an earthquake occurs because it begins before seeing an EQL.

The occurrence of electric charges in the clouds accumulates in the clouds- epicenter Earth's surface physical capacitor system, and their accumulation takes a certain time, it depends on the wave amplitude of the seismic vibrations and their frequencies; but if the wave amplitude of the seismic vibrations is very small, lightning will not be unlikely to produce because the work brought by these kind of seismic waves is insufficient to achieve the conditions of lightning, which explains why lightning does not occurs during earthquakes with magnitude less that  $M_w$  4.0. The accumulation of an electric charge in the clouds and an identical charge but of opposite sign in the epicenter surface sufficient to produce the disruptive field to excite and ionize the atmospheric air requires the production of consecutively several cycles of the seismic vibrations before. If the frequency of the seismic waves becomes very small like what happened with the EQL ④ during the Morocco earthquake of the September 8, 2023, the EQL ④ only appeared after 21 seconds after the EQL ③ occurrence, this is due at the frequency which has become low as well as the amplitude of the seismic waves which is attenuating exponentially, because it is the last phase of the earthquake.

On the contrary, the amplitude and frequency of the seismic vibrations which produced the EQLs ② and ③ are significantly greater than those of the vibrations which produced EQL ④ (see figure 6), and this explains why their illuminations are more intense than that of the EQL ①. Thus, seismic surface waves are capable of supplying pressure changes and energy densities that exceed thunderstorm energy density values that induce a lightning by cumulative effect of electric charges into the physical system of clouds. Within the atmospheric air volume shacked by seismic S-waves, EQLs would arise as the integrated electric charges separation between the ground and the clouds reaches the disruptive electrical field cutoff value after a certain number of the cycles of seismic vibrations. The time necessary for the disruptive field ( $\sim 3.6 \times 10^6$  V/m) to be developed between clouds located in the sky in the vicinity of the epicenter and the surface depends strongly on the wave amplitude of the propagating seismic waves and their frequencies. It is the Earth's surface located in the region of the epicenter of the earthquake that communicates the energy density of seismic vibrations to the air. For an EQL to be emitted, definitively the earth must vibrate several times. One cycle is still not sufficient to produce it, and so its occurrence is impossible.

## Conclusion

The object that I have set for myself in this research work is to discover the causes of EQLs, that is, to explain the earthquake lights phenomenon. The causes of the earthquake lights exposed in this article are valid for the explanation of any earthquake lightning on land as well as on seas and oceans. They are general. The causes are now comprehensive so it remains only to summarize them. Two conditions must be met at the same time for an earthquake lightning to occur: (1) the presence of clouds in the sky above the epicenter region, and (2) a magnitude of the earthquake greater than  $M_w$  4.0. The presence of clouds (or not) is always imposed by meteorological conditions (wind speed, humidity, sunshine, season, etc.) and weather thermodynamic variables (pressure, temperature, entropy, air density, etc.) which prevail in the epicenter region during the day of the earthquake. The causes of the magnitude of the earthquake are found in the amplitude and frequency of the seismic vibrations coming out of the epicenter. The magnitude of an earthquake is all the greater as the amplitude of the seismic S-waves producing it and their frequency are large. Cloudless earthquakes over the epicenter region, even if their magnitude exceeds  $M_w$  4.0, do not produce any earthquake lightning. In addition, EQLs can occur day or night, on land or seas and oceans, but only for earthquakes meeting these two conditions. EQLs can form regardless of the type of clouds and the altitude at which they are found in the atmosphere.

The mechanism for producing electric charges in clouds and their separation concerning the EQLs occurrence is identical to that involved in thunderstorms lightings, except that the causes of the energy input are completely different. The cause of lightning during thunderstorms is known. In the case of EQLs, the cause of the disruptive electric field development in the space between the epicenter and the clouds is the shaking of the clouds by air vibrations as well as their interaction, i.e., friction between air molecules, ice micro-crystals and micro-droplets of water. As we see, the occurrence of EQLs is a coseismic phenomenon and will not make it possible to predict the date when an earthquake will strike. When an EQL was occurred, the earthquake has started before, and the damage has already been done. And to be able to predict earthquakes and thus save human and material losses, we must continue to research a physical law that we will use to predict when and where an earthquake will strike and which will found probably by studying the evolution of seismograms coming from seismological stations which continually capture the movement of tectonic plates.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the generous support from *Cadi Ayyad University* for this work.

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## Teachers' And Students' Perspectives on Using English-Only Instruction in EFL Classrooms: A Case Study at A University in The Mekong Delta

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**Abstract:** The recent focus on Communication Language Teaching (CLT) seems to have fueled a belief in an English-only classroom. It appears to have fostered the notion that English should be taught exclusively in classrooms. In EFL classes, however, the views of teachers and students towards the use of English-only instruction have received a comparatively small amount of attention. The purpose of this article is to investigate Vietnamese university teachers and non-majored students' perspectives to the use of English-only instruction in EFL classes, as well as their agreement with potential barriers to its use in these settings. As a result, major obstacles have been identified, and solutions to overcome them have been proposed. A mixed quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaires and interviews with 56 university instructors and 135 students reveals that they do not support English-only classrooms. Furthermore, they come to in agreement with potential obstacles that prevent the use of English-only in EFL classrooms. They argue that including Vietnamese in the curriculum could be viewed as a solution to English-only classes. The findings of the study drew out certain consequences for pedagogy as well as the implications for more research in the future.

**Keywords:** English-only instructions, English-only in classrooms, English-only instructional policies, language perspective, language of instruction impact

**Citation:** Nguyen, T.V. (2024). Teachers' and Students' perspectives on using English-only instruction in EFL classrooms: A case study at a university in the Mekong Delta. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 966-983), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms offer an exclusive environment for language acquisition and competency development. The usage of English-only classrooms has caused much interest and debate. In recent years, educators and academics have become more interested in the impact of using English as the only medium of teaching in EFL contexts.

Smith and Johnson (2018) report a movement in EFL education towards English-only classrooms. This transition goes beyond language to language instruction's pedagogical philosophy. Language choice in the EFL classroom shapes the learning environment and language learners' cognitive processes (Brown, 2019).



Based on Decision No. 4159 issued by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam on December 6, 2023, regarding the training and certification of foreigners teaching English at foreign language and computer centers in Vietnam, creating favorable conditions for native English teachers is being prioritized. On other words, the demand for improved English communication in the community and EFL schools is expanding.

To achieve that goal, it is vital to consider teaching methods and language policies. On December 11, 2023, Education First (EF) announced that Vietnam ranked 58th out of 113 in worldwide English proficiency for adults, up two points from 2022. According to giaoducthoidai.vn, the University of Vietnam-France in Northern Vietnam, Duy Tan University in Central Vietnam, RMIT and Viet Duc University in Southern Vietnam, and the FPT educational system at all levels are also using English as the medium of instruction for various disciplines. Most graduates from these universities possess proficient English language skills and are capable of working in an international environment. It is a demonstration of the wide exert of English-only in teaching and learning English in Vietnam.

The researcher works at a Mekong Delta university with a CEFR level B1 language competency requirement for students. However, students' background knowledge makes it challenging to meet this requirement. In order to assist students, the teacher needs to reconsider her methods and change her approach. English instructions will replace bilingual ones.

According to past studies, English-only instruction in class can assist students improve their English. The current researcher's main issue is teachers' and students' perspectives on English-only instruction in EFL classrooms. She wants to know if teachers and students embrace this approach and what obstacles stand in its way. Therefore, the researcher wants to do this investigation based on the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of the English-only instruction in EFL classrooms?
2. To what extent do teachers and students agree with the possible impediments hindering the use of English-only instruction in EFL classrooms?

## **Literature Review**

### **Review of Relevant Studies on EFL Classroom English-Only Perspectives**

Many studies have examined various topics, but none have examined teachers' and students' views on English-only EFL classrooms. Research shows that some teachers and students support English-only environments while others disagree. After a private Japanese foreign language institution implemented a language policy, McMillan & Rivers (2011) analyzed teachers' views towards "English-only." This essay examines 29 native-speaker EFL teachers' viewpoints. Contrary to government policy, many teachers found that using students' native language

wisely by both teachers and students improved second language (L2) learning in a communicative framework, as shown by quantitative research.

Additionally, Saito (2013) assessed instructors' English-only policy views and practices. This article analyzed Japanese university lecturers' monolingual teaching methods. A Tokyo private school forced all first-year students, regardless of major, to take a year of English conversation. A qualitative analysis of video-taped observations and interviews with two Japanese university teachers indicated that all six classrooms followed the institutional English-only policy, regardless of student level. The 2013 Ceo-DiFrancesco report analyzed world language school instructor target language use. Teachers like using the target language with students, but self-reported use didn't work. The qualitative findings covered 237 language teachers' classroom realities and limits on target language employment. This study also suggested classroom target language use to improve student acquisition and help teachers achieve their goals.

Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015) conducted research with sixty Iranian EFL students. Their study discovered a significant proclivity among participants to use their native language (L1) and its beneficial effects on language learning when used selectively under specified settings. The overall outcomes of this study revealed that a deliberate, intermittent, and limited incorporation of L1 is a more successful technique for conducting and managing EFL classes than total inclusion or exclusion. Furthermore, the study emphasized the advantages of using L1 to clarify classroom instructions and solve other linguistic issues.

Yang and Jang (2020) found that establishing a policy requiring teachers to use only English in daily contact is a complex process including discussions of interconnected ideologies and identities related to nativism, gendered nationalism, and professionalism.

#### *Promoting L1 in EFL Classrooms*

Using students' mother tongue in EFL classes is controversial. Monolingual advocates say removing the native language improves target language learning. Cook (2001) recommends minimizing L1 use and maximizing L2 use. Researchers like Rivers (2011) and Lightbown & Spada (2013) advocate L1 use in EFL courses. These proponents believe L1 aids L2 learning. It is obvious that L1 is used in EFL lessons for many reasons.

According to Auerbach (1993, p. 19), "Starting with the L1 gives learners security and confirms their lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. Thus, the student is willing to try English." Correspondingly, Silvani (2014) points out using the mother tongue properly can help students and teachers learn English, which can aid language learning. For instance, it helps students communicate, share ideas, and construct meaning and concept in group discussions. Besides, the first language helps simplify instruction, pronunciation, and irritation or issues (Kasim et al., 2019).

Hawa et al. (2021) suggest that teachers can use the mother tongue to provide instructions, explain grammar or complex concepts, introduce new vocabulary, assess student comprehension, and maintain a conducive

classroom environment. Additionally, Yusuf (2009) and Cudi et al. (2014) found that the mother tongue improves foreign language learning efficiency and productivity. Since its benefits are obvious and natural in EFL courses, neglecting the mother tongue is advised.

L1 lowers student anxiety (Atkinson, 1993). Schweers (1999, p. 13) states that “Bringing L1 into the English classrooms has made learning English appear to be less of a threat to their vernacular.” Firsthand learning allows the two languages to coexist. It shows that utilizing L1 improves attitudes toward learning English and encourages learners to learn it. When presented with too much incomprehensible input (e.g., elaborate instructions, abstract terminology, and complex grammar rules), most students become irritated, disappointed, and negative about learning English (Farrel, 2012). Auerbach (1993, p. 20) stated that L1 reduces anxiety, improves the affective learning environment, considers socio-cultural aspects, incorporates learners' life experiences, and enables for learner-centered curriculum development.

Most significantly, it lets language be used to make meaning and language acquisition become a method of communicating ideas rather than an end in itself.” Yavuz (2012) discovered that teachers preferred using the native language (L1) to reduce learners' anxiety and overcome psychological hurdles before beginning instruction in a study evaluating the perspectives of English instructors. Furthermore, Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2013) observed Japanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in North America using L1 to build a healthy classroom culture. As their mother tongue, L1 encourages and enables students to speak comfortably in class (Khejri, 2014). To improve classroom anxiety, L1 should be used effectively, selectively, and wisely.

Schweers (1999) liked using the L1 to clarify difficult topics, verify comprehension, define new language, and joke about with students. Prodromou (2001) advised using L1 to describe dialogue background, class methods, lesson goals, and errors for low-level students. Mee-ling (1996) listed three other permissible uses of L1 in EFL classrooms: reprimanding, drawing attention, and delivering announcements. Cook (2001) found false assumptions about L1 avoidance in EFL classrooms and recommended using L1 to convey meaning, explain grammar, organize the class, scaffold students, and use it for collaborative learning and individual use. Mitchell (1988) was beneficial for disciplining students, clarifying activity directions, and providing background information, depending on teachers' L1 use preferences. These areas allowed L1 use.

#### *Overuse of L1 in EFL Classrooms*

The foregoing examples show that using L1 in EFL lessons is permissible to some extent. L1 has been misunderstood in most language situations. Mouhanna (2009) warned that overusing L1 will hinder second-language development.

To guarantee students comprehended abstract words or difficult grammar, switching to L1 worked well (Turnbull, 2001). Since students had little interaction with the target language outside of class and only short times of access in class, teachers were advised to use it as much as possible. He believed that depending too

much on the L1 when program design limited instructional time would waste time and discourage students from speaking that TL.

In any case, excessive mother tongue dependence should be avoided (Atkinson, 1987). The author advised ‘profitable usage of only 5% L1 in the EFL classroom’ (Mouhanna, 2009). Translate into the first language if the teacher or students don't understand something. In nearly the same scenario, the teacher or students failed to distinguish between form, semantic, and pragmatic equivalency and oversimplified to the point of crude and erroneous translation. Case showed relative requirement for L1 support. If students could chat to teachers about a course but didn't, it would be an overuse of L1. Alternatively, they knew that classroom activities must be in English but nevertheless used their mother tongue.

Khejari (2012) studied “Teachers’ attitudes towards the use of mother tongue as a language on instruction in lower primary schools in Hamisi district, Kenya”. The mother tongue as a language of instruction hinders English acquisition, according to one study. Using the first language hinders English acquisition. The mother tongue writing system differs from English writing. Thus, using L1 hinders English learning.

By employing L1, teachers may appear lethargic or unable to regulate students (Burden, 2000, p. 5). Polio (1994) warns that overusing L1 can lead to overreliance, oversimplifying differences between languages, student laziness, and failure to maximize English (Atkinson, 1987). Ellis (1997) explained that second language or foreign language professors who overused L1 robbed students of TL evaluation.

L1 is a useful tool for some EFL teachers but a hindrance for others. Monolingual advocates value English-only use. The following theoretical viewpoints discuss the EO policy (monolingual approach), justifications for employing EO instruction, and potential barriers to its usage in EFL classrooms.

#### *Promoting English-Only Instruction in EFL Classrooms*

Using English as the only language of instruction in EFL classrooms provides a number of advantages that enhance the overall language learning experience. The following are the primary benefits of using English exclusively in the classroom. Research by Lee et al. (2020) indicates that sustained exposure to English significantly correlates with increased language abilities among EFL learners. Engaging students in an English-only setting allows them to be exposed to the language on a regular basis. This immersion enhances language comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency.

One researcher joins monolingual advocate Krashen. He believed that L1 should not be used in the classroom to maximize target language exposure (Krashen, 1987). The monolingual approach advocated teaching all lessons in L2 and claiming that comprehensible input in L2 led to competency (Krashen, 1985). Ellis (2005) also claimed that L2 exposure accelerates learning. EFL students rarely use L2 because it is not part of their daily lives. Thus, teachers naturally deliver L2 input as much as feasible in class.

Excessive use of the mother tongue may impede English participation or target language communication (Sharma, 2006). This may limit learners' exposure to the target language (Sipra, 2007). Because learners must cognitively translate between English and their native language when using their mother tongue, they may struggle with real-world texts.

Turnbull (2001) believed that ignoring the target language in the classroom would not convince students that it could be used for communication. Tsukamoto (2011, p. 146) stated, "It is only through the actual usage that the students acknowledge its worth." Monolingual proponents believe that teaching the L2 lesson in L2 maximizes exposure and learning. According to Phillipson (1992, p. 185), "English is best taught monolingually; the ideal teacher of English is a native-like speaker; the earlier English is taught, the better the results; the more English is taught, the better the results; if other languages are used many standards of English will drop".

Larrea (2002) supported two claims that English was the main language in communicative language EFL classrooms. She argues that students should be exposed to the target language as often as possible to allow acquisition since language class is the only time they can use it in their L1 setting. Another idea is that preventing L1 use in class forces students to think and speak English, which helps them understand and negotiate meaning. Larrea (2002) recognized the importance of learning environment in teaching and learning. Pennycook (1994, p. 169) believed that "the monolingual teaching with authentic communication in L2 was the best way to learn a language."

Following Cook (2001, p. 412), he stated that "the learning of an L2 should model the learning of an L1, successful learning involves the separation and distinction of L1 and L2; students should be shown the importance of the L2 through its continual use." The first viewpoint supports the idea that more L2 exposure increases target language teaching (Ellis, 2005). Regarding Cook's second issue, monolingualists said that translating between L1 and L2 can be problematic since it promotes the idea that the languages are interchangeable (Pacek, 2003). They thought the languages should be independent. Cook's final point was likely that "the use of L2 only in the classroom does help to demonstrate the L2's importance and could portray the language being studied" (Pachler & Field, 2001, p. 86).

Lee (2013) suggests that the EO classroom should simulate real-world situations by providing an L2 language-rich experience with real-world communication and language use. Students must negotiate meaning in English since teachers insist on English-only. Students are encouraged to rephrase, try other styles, and accept mistakes to improve communication. Language is L2, not L1. This will challenge students' language skills. Meaning negotiation is key to purchase, according to EO.

This strategy assumes that students will not have a teacher or use L1 when they have communication challenges, thus they must develop independence and coping skills. Rethinking failed language teaches students methods. For this, teachers must provide as much target-language input as possible. Teachers should also teach limited-language students how to use the L2.

*Possible Barriers to English-Only Education in EFL Classes*

Before competence, more foreign language intake increases proficiency. Second language acquisition research and ideas show that meaningful language exposure affects students' language growth. Krashen (1985) calls this "comprehensible input". Students' linguistic progress is expected to increase as they utilize the target language in meaningful contexts and in practical situations. Students are reluctant to speak the target language again if they are not trained and expected to. Other professors want students to hear, understand, and use the target language exclusively from day one. Dickson (1992, p. 1) noted that "using the target language promotes natural acquisition and that use of the mother tongue (L1) undermines this process by diverting attention from the object of students' learning."

A typical English-only EFL classroom uses the L2 extensively, according to Lee (2013). L2 usage should be the teacher's medium and the subject. Ryan (2002) stated that students' L1s were not used in class to offer them more chances to utilize the target language. The requirement for first language equivalents lessens as students' English proficiency develops. They grow more fluent in English and utilize the first language less (Al, 2012).

Following the above result, EO use may enrich input and improve student communication. To give students enough input, Krashen (1985) advised intensive exposure. Lack of exposure makes L2 acquisition improbable. More L2 exposure is thought to help kids learn faster. In actual life, native speakers change their language when speaking to foreigners, according to Ellis (1997). Based on status, the teacher can imitate real-life communication in the classroom with adjusted input. Simple, slow, and short language were used to provide this input. The teacher's output encouragement allows contextualized, meaningful L2 use. When communication fails, students must 'negotiate' their output to be understood, which enhances language development (Long, 1996). The more authentic communication students have, the higher their risk-taking and communicative confidence (Leane, 2006).

Another result found that using the EO could boost students' confidence by giving them many communication opportunities to exchange meaning through risk-taking and sometimes without any preparation (Lee, 2013). The goal is to create a classroom culture that promotes speaking and mistakes. Teachers must teach students that mistakes are part of authentic English communication, which will boost student confidence in communication. English-only teachers also claim that classroom L2 input must be intensive and rich to foster L2 learning because learners have little L2 exposure outside the classroom. English use must be maximized in the classroom because students rarely speak English outside of class.

Tsukamoto's (2011) study on students' perception of teachers' language use in an EFL classroom found that EO use affects students' listening skills, speaking skills, word usage, and collaborative learning environment. The same author also noted a "role model" benefit. Although the teachers' native language is not English, all contacts with students were in English, which enthused and motivated them. Littlewood (1992, p. 45) argued



that students will not accept the foreign language as an effective means of communication if professors do not use it in the classroom. Through classroom use, students recognize the language as a communication tool.

Burden (2000) advised teachers not to utilize the L1 when discussing grammar, directions, class rules, why students are undertaking the assignment, testing, or assessing understanding. Lee (2013) noted that teachers' use of L1 to explain grammar or other conceptual language issues is beneficial because students struggle to understand grammar explanations in the second language. Many EFL teachers don't speak their students' L1 well enough to explain grammar, causing uncertainty. The use of L1 to explain grammar may be partly owing to limited teacher knowledge or expertise in L2 clarification-of-meaning abilities like those above, resulting in wasted opportunities to improve L2 exposure by using critical classroom time for teacher-centered L1.

### *Strategies for EFL Teachers Using English-Only Instruction*

There have been various strategies helping teachers deal with the English-only approach. Prior to the policies, Ceo-DiFrancesco (2013) recommended teachers to frequently communicate student learning with parents and the community. Teachers should inform administrators and community members about language learning goals and how word language studies prepare students academically. Teachers can inform constituents about their effective target language communication approaches through information sessions, newsletters, and meetings. The argument promotes English and seeks administration, community, and parent support. Moreover, teachers' strategies play a significant role here. Grammar instruction in the target language is recommended by Ceo-DiFrancesco (2013) and Polio (2007). The use of organized scenarios in conjunction with presentational tools, animation, and real-world context promotes form-meaning linkages. Total Physical Response (TPR) approaches, such as gestures and props, improve verbal comprehension. Maintaining cultural relevance is an issue that can be overcome by using cultural images and establishing explicit classroom rules in the target language. From the outset of the school year, teachers build an immersive environment with context, gestures, and cognates.

Students can benefit from learning the target language in class, says Ceo-DiFrancesco (2013, p. 8). Teach metacognitive and cognitive abilities such effective practice, learning style preferences, organisation, and self-monitoring. Students must be reminded they don't need to comprehend everything. Teachers can help students manage stress and anxiety by listening for keywords, sharing success stories, and reducing anxiety to improve cognitive performance.

Dickson (1992) suggests target language promotion methods. First, teach basic language and classroom directions, then set routines and help kids. Language ladders and graphic prompts help daily language use. Make the target language part of daily duties. Use gestures and paraphrase to compensate. Ask regular questions daily to create habits and confidence, especially for non-verbal learners.



## Method

This non-experimental descriptive survey employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods, commonly using surveys in educational studies (Cohen & Manion, cited in Nunan, 1994). The study utilizes a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The survey involves 56 English teachers at a Mekong Delta university. Among them, 29 teachers hold a B.A., 26 an M.A., and one a Ph.D. Additionally, 135 non-major students, majoring in IT, Applied Math, and Technology Management, enrolled in General English 3 at the same university volunteered for the research.

### Questionnaire

The author modified Ceo-DiFrancesco's (2013) questionnaire, which included 21 closed-ended questions (Kumar, 1999) with the Cronbach's Alpha = .77. The questionnaire is divided into three pieces. Part 1 includes a "Yes/No" question and a rating scale where participants discuss potential barriers to English-only (EO) instruction in EFL classes. Part 2 has students rate 21 reordered items across three areas on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19 are barriers outside teacher control in Domain 1. Domain 2 handles instructional training obstacles (1–21). Domain 3 includes student-related obstacles (3, 6, 9, 12, 15). The final portion collects research participants' name, email, phone number, gender, age, teaching and learning experience, and academic qualifications.

Table 1. Categories of the Questionnaire

Domains	Items
Impediments beyond teacher control	2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19
Impediments involving teacher training	1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 20, 21
Impediments involving student factor	3, 6, 9, 12, 15

### *Semi-structure*

Semi-structured interviews facilitate oral engagement within a relevant environment, which improves the investigation of participants' perspectives, opinions, and thoughts (Bryman, 2004). This method is adaptable, allowing researchers to pose follow-up questions to get more thorough data (Kvale, 2007; Patton, 2002). In this study, the questionnaire dominated the semi-structured interview. The interview was used to check study participants' questionnaire responses, acquire insight into their opinions toward EO instruction in GE3 classrooms, and learn EFL teachers' EO instruction methodologies.

## Results

### Quantitative Findings

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaire and interview data showed that research participants

prefer bilingual EFL instruction (Vietnamese and English) to monolingual EFL instruction at pre-intermediate level. Teachers and students understand the need of English-only instruction for communicative goal achievement. By examining teachers' and students' agreement on various hurdles to EO instruction in EFL classes, it was discovered that language proficiency barriers are the biggest. The interview also showed that most participants preferred Vietnamese-English to English-only.

*Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of English-Only in EFL Classrooms*

Table 2. below shows that 51.8% of instructors support using EO in General English (GE) 3 classrooms (pre-intermediate level), while 48.2% oppose it. Most teachers feel that English-only is essential to teaching English and should be utilized in GE3 classes for communicative purposes. However, when asked if EO use in classrooms could be difficult, 87.5% of instructors think that English-only in GE3 classes would be difficult, while 12.5% disagree (see Table 3). The evidence shows that teachers feel EO implementation in GE3 classrooms will be difficult, regardless of their support or opposition.

Table 2. Teachers' Support for the Use of the English-Only in EFL Classrooms

Question 1: Do you support the use of the English-only in General English 3 classrooms (cf., Pre-intermediate level)?		
Responses	Yes	No
	(51.8%)	(48.2%)

Table 3. Teachers' Support for Possible Impediments Hindering Teachers from Using the EO in EFL Classrooms

Question 2: Do you agree with the use of the English-only in General English 3 classrooms (cf., Pre-intermediate level) could meet impediments?		
Responses	Yes	No
	(87.5%)	(12.5%)

*Students' attitudes toward the use of English-only instruction in EFL classrooms*

Percentages of student replies to both questions were calculated in a descriptive statistics test. Student perceptions toward EO instruction in EFL courses are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Interestingly, 69.6% of students don't want their teachers to teach in English. Most students (88.9%) in the current study feel that EO instruction in General English 3 classrooms would overcome the obstacles. This may indicate that General English 3 students oppose EO instruction since it would cause obstacles.

Table 4. Students' Opposition to the EO Instruction in EFL Classrooms

Question 1: Do you support the use of the English-only instruction in General English 3 classrooms (cf., Pre-intermediate level)?		
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Responses	Yes (30.4%)	No (69.6%)
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Table 5. Students' Level of Agreement with Possible Impediments Hindering the Use of the EO Instruction  
Question 2: Do you agree with the use of the English-only in General English 3 classrooms (cf., Pre-intermediate level) could meet impediments?

Responses	Yes (88.9%)	No (11.1%)
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*Participants' Agreement on Potential Barriers to EO Instruction in EFL Classrooms*

Table 6. Mean Score of Participants' Level of Agreement with the Possible Impediments Hindering Teachers from Using the EO Instruction

Domains	N	Min.	Max.	Mean (M)	SD.
1. Impediments beyond teacher control	191	1.38	4.38	3.07	.57
2. Impediments involving teaching training	191	1.75	4.50	3.21	.53
3. Impediments involving student factors	191	1.40	5.00	3.20	.80
General Mean	191	1.71	4.14	3.16	.47

Table 6 shows that the participants' questionnaire mean score is somewhat higher than scale 3 in the five-degree scale ( $M = 3.17$ ). A one-sample t-test was used to see if participants' mean ratings were significantly different from 3.0, the established mean for potential difficulties. The sample mean ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.40$ ) differs considerably from the average point (3.0) ( $t = 1.09$ ,  $df = 40$ ,  $p = .28$ ). The results show that participants agree on the barriers to EO instruction in GE3 classrooms. The mean scores of these domains are similarly above medium. Thus, these domains hinder EO instruction in GE3 classrooms. However, obstacles beyond teacher control are not substantially different from 3.0 ( $t = 1.74$ ,  $df = 190$ ,  $p = .08$ ), indicating that this domain inhibits GE3 English instruction at an average level. The computed mean score underlying teachers' and students' agreement level for possible EO impediments may be: teaching training ( $M = 3.21$ ), student factors ( $M = 3.20$ ), and beyond teacher control ( $M = 3.07$ ).

*Comparison of the Order of Domain Prioritized by Teachers and Students*

Table 7. A Comparison of the Order of Domains Prioritized by Teachers and Students

Domains	Min.	Max.	Mean (M*)	SD.
1. Impediments beyond teacher control	1.63/1.38	4.13/4.38	3.00/3.10	.57/.57
2. Impediments involving teaching training	2.00/1.75	4.38/4.50	3.29/3.18	.53/.53
3. Impediments involving student factors	1.60/1.40	4.80/5.00	3.28/3.17	.64/.86

(\*): teachers/students

Table 7 depicts the agreement between teachers and students on potential impediments to English-only (EO) instruction in General English 3 (GE3) classrooms. The most emphasized domain is "Impediments involving teaching training" ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $M = 3.18$ ), while the least valued is "Impediments beyond teacher control" ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $M = 3.01$ ). The range between the highest and lowest mean scores for both teachers and students is minimal.

In conclusion, study participants agree that these domains hinder EO education in GE3 classes. Instructors slightly emphasize "Impediments involving teaching training" and "Impediments involving student factors" as the greatest hindrance to EO instruction, but both instructors and students evaluate them moderately. Nearly comparable perspectives on "Impediments beyond teacher control".

### *Qualitative Findings*

After analyzing the questionnaire data, the researcher interviewed 10 participants - four teachers and six students - based on their support or opposition to English-only (EO) instruction in General English 3 (GE3) classrooms. These interviews were used to evaluate questionnaire responses, understand participants' perspectives on EO education in GE3 classrooms, and learn teachers' EFL implementation tactics. The interviews asked four main questions about EO instruction and teachers' ways to overcome obstacles. The first interview question showed 50% support for EO instruction in GE3 classrooms, while the rest opposed it.

### *Promoting English-Only Instructions in EFL Classrooms*

EO advocates said they used EO training in GE3 classes to *create an English environment, improve language proficiency, and boost communication confidence.*

Teacher and student participants agreed on the first reason for implementing EO instruction in GE3 classrooms: *developing an English environment.*

Teacher 2 stated: I support the use of the English-only instruction in GE3 classroom because of several reasons. Firstly, it creates English environment with massive amounts of English. [...]

Student 1 said: I favor EO education in GE3 because it creates an English-communicative setting that helps students speak and think in English. The atmosphere may be crucial to students. Creating an EO environment motivates students to learn English.

With regard to the second reason, improving students' language proficiency, Teacher 1 explained:

I support EO instruction in EFL classrooms, especially pre-intermediate levels, because I believe that once students can practise English in an EO environment, they will try harder to communicate in the language of instruction, improving their language proficiency.

Teacher 2 supplemented: [...]. Second, EO instruction can help students think in English rather than translating from their mother tongue to the target language. If they can accomplish it, students can easily improve their language skills. [...]

Teacher 2 said the third purpose for using EO training in GE3 classrooms is to boost students' communicative confidence:

[...]. Additionally, it boosts students' confidence in utilizing English outside of class. Finally, EO education encourages teachers to speak more English in class.

Students thought EO instruction in GE3 classrooms was reasonable. Their explanation:

Yes. Pre-intermediate students may not understand all of the teacher's classroom instructions, but they can understand listening English lessons. We eventually speak Vietnamese intuitively without thinking about it. Thus, we can converse well in real life. (Student 2)

I favor EO instruction in GE3 classes because it improves vocabulary and natural language. If we are taught in an EO setting, we won't be bashful while speaking English outside of class with native speakers. (Student 3)

### *Possible Impediments When Using the English-Only Instruction in EFL Classrooms*

The interview data analysis identified two groups of impediments: *teaching training* (e.g., teachers' proficiency, tendency to use Vietnamese, lack of methodology teaching training, classroom management ability) and *student factors*. According to participants, *barriers beyond teacher control* do not affect EO use in EFL courses. Specifically, Teacher 1 said:

Due of students' diverse backgrounds, merely speaking English in class may cause confusion. In an English-only classroom, weak students may not speak. Since most Vietnamese students are passive learners, just speaking English in class may isolate weak students. They study English to pass the test.

Teacher 2 said that English-only training requires a lot of repetition if students don't understand. English is only a subject, making it hard for professors to motivate non-English majors.

Weak students would find the EO complicated and time-consuming. These non-English-majored students don't study English, so they're surprised when they hear English in class. Consequently, they avoid speaking in class. Since GE3 is not required, I don't think students are motivated to study everything in English.

Students had different ideas on EO's potential drawbacks in EFL classrooms. Student 1 and 2 said teaching training is the main reason EO instruction is difficult, whereas Student 3 said they are significant causes.

Student 1 explained:

One obstacle to using EO in class is that some ideas are hard to describe in English. I get trapped and lose interest in English. My teacher is biased since he thinks we all understood the material.

Student 2 supplemented: Students are confused by teachers' British-American accented pronunciation. Also, my teacher doesn't teach in English only.

Student 3 disagrees with two above students. She stated:

Our English timidity and poor speaking and listening limit EO instruction in my class. Communication in English requires more than fundamental knowledge. Also, kids don't cooperate with teachers. Lessons are rarely prepared well.

The evidence suggests that EO education in EFL classrooms advocates are English-only advocates who acknowledge the challenges.

### *Objection the EO Instructions in EFL Classrooms*

EO instruction in EFL classrooms is opposed by this group for many reasons, including student variables (proficiency, learning aim, motivation, etc.), instructor components (teaching technique, motivation, classroom management, etc.), and others.

Teacher 3 shared:

I disagree that General English 3 uses English exclusively for several reasons. First off, children lack the English vocabulary to comprehend teacher directions. Students struggle to learn new and difficult facts in their native language due to a lack of vocabulary to help them understand. General English topic is also difficult to study. Second, students' unfamiliarity with English speaking and listening makes class communication challenging. [...]

Teacher 4 continued:

I struggle to support EO lessons in my class. First, my students cannot speak English inside and outside the classroom. Second, student psychological block for non-native English teachers caused EO instruction to fail. Despite using English in class, I cannot unify the language. Cultural classes usually require Vietnamese. [...]

Students thought EO education for causes in GE3 classrooms was impossible.

Student 4 said:

I oppose English-only instruction in my class for various reasons. We have limited pre-intermediate English, therefore EO teaching makes it hard to grasp. Second, EO instruction requires time. To ensure comprehension, my teacher spends a lot of time translating things into Vietnamese. [...]

Student 5 contributed to the idea of objection the EO instruction in EFL classrooms. He shared:

My teacher rarely uses EO to explain difficult systems and abstract concepts. EO teaching is unfamiliar to us, thus it bores us even when it puts us behind proficiency friends. [...]

Students get bored and thrilled learning English with EO education, so I don't support it. We won't comprehend the lesson because students' English listening and speaking skills are unknown. Specialized terminology are hard to learn. (Teacher 6)

## **Discussion**

In Figure 1, teachers and students in General English 3 classrooms rate EO education differently. Only 30.4% of students disapprove with EO education, but 51.8% of teachers do. These findings differ substantially from McMillan & Rivers (2011). McMillan & Rivers (2011) discovered that most EFL teachers at a private Japanese school where English is not the official language disliked the EO policy. These advocates believed selective use of students' L1 may boost L2 communicative learning. Teachers' backgrounds may affect these findings. All

McMilan & Rivers (2011) participants were native-speaker EFL teachers who comprehended L1-L2. However, all teachers in this study are Vietnamese and speak the same language as students. They want an EO classroom to encourage students to speak the required language. Tsukamoto (2011) and Saito (2013) found that most university students preferred EO over Japanese in class, although recent results differ. Vietnamese and Japanese students differ in language policy and goal. All Japanese universities are English-only. Students understand English's value in education and community through this policy. Japanese students want good communication, while Vietnamese students learn English for the exam. This demotivated and made EO instruction less appealing.

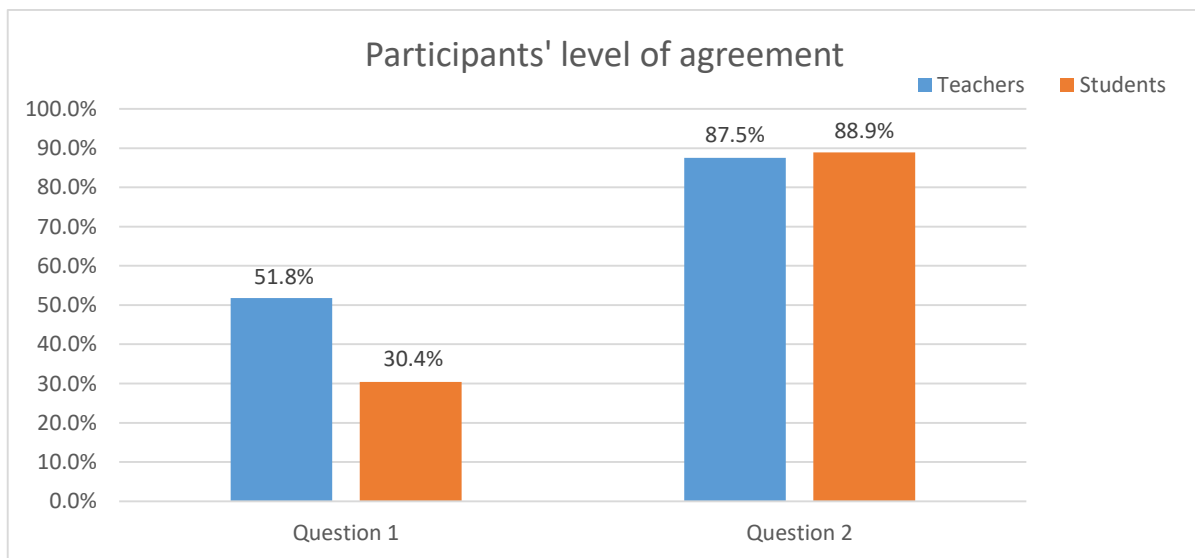


Figure 1. Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on the use of the EO Instruction in EFL Classrooms

## Conclusion

In General English 3 classrooms, teachers and students had various perspectives toward EO, although both strongly agreed that the specific use of EO education will have hurdles (Figure 1). Table 2 reveals 51.8% of teachers support EO and approximately 90% realize the challenges. They match Ceo-DiFrancesco's (2013) poll. Same author examined if EFL teachers' target language use goals and practical use differed. Surveys discovered disparities between teachers' goals and use. Two hundred thirty-seven teachers recognized EO classroom challenges. The results showing instructors' and students' views toward EO instruction in General English 3 classrooms demonstrate the English-only approach's challenges.

## Recommendations

The current study was undertaken at one university, thus its conclusions may not apply to others. Each university has unique teachers, students, instructional environments, and so on, which might lead to varied results. For this reason, comparable research should be conducted with participants from several institutions in



Can Tho city and elsewhere in Vietnam to generalize its findings to all English professors and non-major students at universities. Since the study is a survey, subsequent experimental studies to verify and prove the efficacy of EO training in EFL classrooms in genuine research contexts will make its results more significant and reliable.

## Acknowledgements

This study was made possible by the continuous support from Can Tho University.

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## The Awareness and Attitudes Towards Plagiarism in Academic Writing of English Major Students: A Case Study in Higher Education in Vietnam

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**Abstract:** Plagiarism is seen as a significant and extensively discussed matter in academic environments. This research aims to investigate the perception and attitudes of English major students towards plagiarism in academic writing. It seeks to explore the existing knowledge about the concept of plagiarism among English major students at a university in the Mekong Delta and offer suggestions for avoiding plagiarism. This research is conducted as a descriptive survey with 205 participants, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire is employed to assess the extent of students' understanding. Based on data collected by using this instrument, the outcome revealed that students possess knowledge in some forms of plagiarism. Nevertheless, due to some internal and external reasons, students have not known full information related to plagiarism, so they plagiarize unintentionally sometimes. This study also suggested some strategies to enhance students' comprehension of plagiarism and offer some effective methods to avoid it, thereby enhancing academic quality.

**Keywords:** plagiarism, academic writing, EFL learners

**Citation:** My, K.M.T (2024). The Awareness and Attitudes Towards Plagiarism in Academic Writing of English Major Students: A Case Study in Higher Education in Vietnam. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 984-1003), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

English has become an international language of great relevance in the modern world, so learning the language is crucial. In the framework of Vietnam, the language plays a vital part in promoting advances in a number of fields, including the sciences, politics, culture, technology, and the global community. Gaining proficiency in English involves developing both productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (reading and listening) skills. All these abilities are essential as mastery of any one of them always improves the others. Writing appears as an essential ability within this range of abilities, which enables better English comprehension and efficient self-expression in social interactions.

Academic writing is the primary basic that expresses the ability of a person in work, study, and knowledge about English. Because of the requirements of our society and studies, the role of academic writing is considered indispensable. Moreover, our country has been integrating into the world economy, so we have more and more

chances to cooperate with the foreign, English becomes useful. Consequently, Academic writing also becomes more necessary. Writing is important, and writing in one's own words is more important. It shows one's ability. It is true that intellectual study is considered an important issue that many researchers have been concerned about. "Academic honesty and respect of intellectual property are areas of considerable concern to tertiary institutions worldwide" (Weedon, 2000, Groak et al., 2001). In fact, in most countries, plagiarism is considered very serious, people have many ways to explore how a person plagiarizes and punish plagiarists. Plagiarism has been troubling the academic world for a long time. With the invention of electronic resources like the Internet in recent times, it has become easier and more accessible for students than ever before. Students who have limited time to devote to studying plagiarism matters and honing their writing skills may inadvertently engage in plagiarism. Plagiarism is, in fact, a critical and imperative issue. It requires constant attention from not only publishers, researchers, and academic institutions, but also students and instructors. Whether deliberately or unintentionally, authors who engage in plagiarism commit criminal offenses.

Particularly, English major students do not often have many chances to discuss about plagiarism. They often use the knowledge from studies and research without acknowledgment nor knowing that they plagiarized already. If students have a full understanding of plagiarism, and believe that plagiarism will be penalized, students will avoid it and have better writing. There have been a few studies focusing on the learner's awareness and attitudes toward plagiarism in Vietnam so far. Although plagiarism is not a novel issue, it remains a persistent concern that will likely continue to escalate over time. Furthermore, the various forms of plagiarism are becoming increasingly diverse and sophisticated. For these reasons, this study is conducted to explore the issue more deeply, to find out how much students are aware of plagiarism and make some suggestions to avoid it.

### **Research Aims**

The purpose of this research is to explore students' awareness and attitudes toward plagiarism in academic writing of English majors. Therefore, the research aims are:

- To explore English major students' existing knowledge about plagiarism.
- To identify common citation strategies used among students.
- To make suggestions for avoiding plagiarism.

### *Research Questions*

The study seeks the answers to these following questions:

- What is the existing knowledge about plagiarism among English major students?
- What are the common citation strategies used by students?
- What are the suggestions to help students avoid plagiarism in academic writing?

## **Literature review**

### **Definition of "Plagiarism"**

Plagiarism is a serious problem in the educational community. Jones (2011) mentioned concepts of plagiarism: it is a form of cheating that constitutes the academic equivalent of thief. Indeed, the word plagiarism comes from the Latin *Plagiarus*, which means “kidnapper” (Bejan, 2019). Helgesson, G., & Eriksson, S. (2015). also provide a definition that for learners using English to study other subjects, plagiarism is the act of copying another person’s ideas, words or works and pretending they are your own; something that has been copied in this way” In the course book *Academic Writing – A Handbook for International Students*, Stephen Bailey (2011) admits that “In academic work, ideas and words are seen as private property belonging to the person who first thought or wrote them.” Therefore, if writers take someone’s ideas to apply in their writing without acknowledging, the writer will be considered plagiarizing. From another point of view, plagiarism is the incorporation of someone else's work – including their language and ideas – without providing adequate credit. The University of Cambridge defines plagiarism as: "submitting as one's own work, irrespective of intent to deceive, that which derives in part or in its entirety from the work of others without due acknowledgement." (As cited in Wikipedia: Plagiarism, 2024). Sometimes, acknowledgement in a wrong way is considered plagiarizing. It is unintentional plagiarism.

According to definitional model of plagiarism of Pecorari (2002), Plagiarism is defined as (1) an object (i.e., language, words, text) (2) which has been taken (or borrowed, stolen, etc.) (3) from a particular source (4) by an agent (5) without (adequate) acknowledgement (6) and with or without intention to deceive”.

In brief, each researcher has his own point of view about plagiarism. Plagiarism means as a form of copying and paraphrasing other people’s works or ideas into your own work without full acknowledgement. Plagiarism does not simply involve copying a result and a product, or borrowing the ideas basically of someone but plagiarism means taking ideas or words from a source without giving acknowledgement to the author(s). Therefore, plagiarism is seen as a kind of theft and considered an academic crime.

### *Types of Plagiarism*

Plagiarism manifests in various forms. Barnbaum (2006) identifies several types of plagiarism, which can be categorized into five distinct classifications.”

#### *(1) Copy and paste plagiarism*

It means “copying word to word textual contents” (Hermann, Franks & Bilal, 2006) or with only minor changes from Internet, a book, or any other sources. Similarly, when we use the whole sentence or significant phrases from the source and forget to use quotations marks and reference the sources, we are also considered a plagiarist.

#### *(2) Word switch plagiarism*

If we take a sentence from a source and change some words, it is still called plagiarism. Therefore, if we want to quote a sentence, then we need to put it in quotation marks and cite the author and article. But quoting the

source articles should only be done if what the quotation says is particularly useful in the point you are trying to make in what you are writing." In many cases, paraphrasing and then citing the original sources is a better option. Translated plagiarism is a part of this kind. It means crossing language content translation and use without reference to original work.

### *(3) Style plagiarism*

It is also plagiarism when writers follow a source sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, even though writers change around a few words. It is the author's style that we copy.

### *(4) Metaphor plagiarism*

Using the ideas from the original sources and making them more clearly by paraphrasing without quotation are also considered plagiarism. "Metaphors are used either to make an idea clearer or give the reader an analogy that touches the senses or emotions better than a plain description of the object or process" (Barnbaum, C., 2006)

### *(5) Idea plagiarism*

It means using similar concepts or opinions which are not common knowledge. Writers have the same or similar ideas as others, but the ideas have been published in books, papers, and research by others. If writers use these ideas without acknowledgement, they are also plagiarizing.

Rhoten (1997) at California State University has another idea. He categorized plagiarism into:

*(1) Word by word:* the submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work is plagiarism although that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

*(2) Improperly paraphrasing:* Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays, papers, or presentations includes failure to use quotation marks or indentations if words are directly quoted.

*(3) Fail to cite the original source:* with this type, it is better to paraphrase other people's ideas by using your own words, but students must acknowledge the person from whom you borrowed the ideas. If writers cite in a wrong way or lack information, readers cannot find out the source, which means we are plagiarizing. In some cases, acknowledge in a wrong way is considered plagiarizing. These mistakes consist of various kinds. First, the forgotten footnote. It means the writer mentioned the name of author but missed the exact information such as published year, page, the name of the chapter, etc. Second, misinformation means the writer gives wrong information related to the source that made reader hard to find out the source. Third is the too-perfect paraphrase: giving enough information for the study but forgetting to use quotation mark when citing. After that the researcher will be considered not to respect the origin and translate information wrongly. Fourth, writers acknowledge all of sources, paragraph, and full citation. It is a resourceful Crime.



### *Factors causing plagiarism among students*

There are many reasons making students plagiarize. Chris Hackett & Deborah Eerkes (2013) discover that students plagiarize because of their poor writing and research skills; and misunderstanding key concepts which are presented below.

For the first reason, writers lack research skills. Many undergraduate students do not know how to search library catalogue databases for journal articles or use other reference sources. The second one is the problems evaluating the internet sources. Many students do not know how to critically evaluate Internet sources. This can affect the research process and the student's writing. It is important to remember that there is no quality control on the internet. Subsequently, students get confusion between plagiarizing and paraphrasing. Some students cannot distinguish between plagiarizing and paraphrasing text. The inability to distinguish between plagiarized text and paraphrased text, and incorrectly citing sources, are often the root causes of unintentional plagiarism.

Another reason for poor writing and research skills causing plagiarism is careless note taking. When we are taking notes of the contents, we usually take note of the information and forget to cite the sources or lack information about the references. In addition, students may have written incomplete or incorrect bibliographic information.

Misunderstanding key concepts is also considered a serious factor causing plagiarism. It consists of misconception of plagiarism – students lack knowledge about plagiarism or misunderstand misconception of common knowledge - students may not have the ability to distinguish what materials, facts, and ideas are considered common knowledge.

According to these researchers, plagiarism is not only caused by the reasons above but also by many other factors. The first factor is the pressure from family, competition for scholarships and jobs. The expectation of family and oneself can make students maintain the thinking of high marks so they can do anything, including plagiarism. These things often happen when they are competing for jobs, scholarship, and others. It is considered external factors. By contrast of external factors, students also plagiarize by internal factors (Bowden, 1996). Undergraduate students do not often manage time well and have a lack of organization skills to complete a large research paper. Therefore, they may become overwhelmed in learning.

In another viewpoint, the main reason causing plagiarism is lack of experience and knowledge about plagiarism (Hackett, 2013). The researchers denoted that “Inexperience and ignorance has been identified as the main clause of plagiarism” (Dodou, D. & Joost C. F., 2011). Students do not have many chances to study plagiarism, so their information and knowledge are limited. Therefore, they plagiarize easily without being recognized.

In conclusion, students usually plagiarize intentionally (poor time management, not good at writing so they are not confident enough to write by their own words, their friends plagiarize, and they do too, teacher do not care

about plagiarism, desire high marks, etc.), and unintentional (unaware of plagiarism, unknown the sources, citation confusion, etc.)

### *The negative effects of plagiarism on students' writing performance*

Because of many reasons, students often ignore long-term implications of plagiarism and other forms of cheating. They plagiarize, which affects learning and the teacher's perception about students. If students considered the impacts and consequences of this form of cheating, they wouldn't likely copy another writer's work and use it as their own. Plagiarism affects college students in a number of tangible and intangible ways.”

First, plagiarism makes writers limit their creativity because plagiarism is an imitation, which is opposite to creativity. Creativity is the ability to develop or generate something original and unique. This researcher admits that if students are acquainted with copying and imitating, they will gradually become lazy to think about new things. Thus, plagiarism limits thought, research and critical thinking involved in developing original papers or studies.

Besides, Kokemuller (2007) expressed that plagiarism has a negative effect on the college community. It may damage the relationships among professors - students, teachers – students, and students-students, i.e. If the original author (professors, teachers, friends, i.e.) finds that a student has used his work without citation, the plagiarist can easily become desolate from groups and society. If an instructor finds a student copies his work without citation, he would have become more critical going forward.

Furthermore, the reputation of plagiarist and his school may be damaged when plagiarism is found. Students routinely plagiarize; the education value of this school will be decreased. This affects all students on finding good careers after their graduation. If students usually plagiarize and do not try to develop their critical thinking and creativity, their skills and writing performance will be affected.

According to this researcher, the most impact of plagiarism for the students is the consequences on studying. Academic disciplines can be done by the students plagiarizing. Penalties can include grade lowering for the assignment as well as the course. Additionally, in serious cases, students may face criminal and civil penalties for plagiarism if they copy the copyright studies. Fines and even imprisonment are possible in these cases.

### *Strategies for avoiding plagiarism*

#### *General strategies for avoiding plagiarism*

Because of the negative effects of plagiarism above, students must avoid plagiarism by anyway. Steven B. (2011) noted that copying the works of others will not help students develop their understanding. By avoiding plagiarism, students can show that they understand the rules of the academic community. Moreover, plagiarism is easily detected by teachers and computer software. Seriously, plagiarism may lead to the failure of the courses

or even the leaving from school. For these reasons, if writers borrow some factors from the others, they must show that you have done this by providing the exact acknowledgement. There are many ways to do this. For instance, summarizing, paraphrasing with quotation, citation, etc. Especially, students can avoid plagiarism by developing good study habits. Steven B. (2011) suggested some general strategies to avoid plagiarism. Firstly, writers should take responsibility for learning. This means writers need to put significant efforts into study, minimizing social activities and part-time jobs. When writers spend time concentrating on study, they can get good results and no error in plagiarism. Secondly, educating oneself about plagiarism. By reading and exploring the information related to plagiarism, writers can get more knowledge to understand plagiarism and find out good methods to avoid plagiarism. Besides, to avoid plagiarism, we should manage the assignment carefully. Furthermore, because limited time is one of the reasons causing plagiarism, managing time well and reasonability from the start is a good idea for avoiding cheating.

#### *Specific strategies to avoid copying among peers*

Plagiarism is not only by a person from the sources but also from a person to others, for instance, between students. It usually happens in group work. Therefore, besides general ways, we should have some strategies to avoid copying among students. They avoid copying from others and ensure that other students do not copy from other students. The simple way is to do by own work and cover own work.

#### *Specific strategies to avoid plagiarism from the internet and other text sources*

The sources that students usually use are from the internet, books, articles, and other texts. Therefore, it is necessary to have specific strategies to avoid copying from these sources. First of all, Zuckerman (2003) suggested that one way to avoid copying or paraphrasing too closely is to avoid looking at the original while writing or typing assignments. Secondly, try to summarize the ideas of the original in your own words. Writers can also develop their writing skills from this work. If students want to use material from the Internet or other sources, they need to acknowledge it correctly. Writers should never use others' opinions, ideas or copy word-for-word in writing without using quotation marks or formatting conventions and correcting in-text citation. If writers use the information from the sources, they need to quote, paraphrase, reference, cite or acknowledge. There are some ways below to avoid plagiarism in academic writing.

#### *Using the precise words of someone else to support your ideas or the point writers are making.*

Devlin (2005) defined quotation is to reproduce, in our own written work, the precise work that someone else has written or spoken. In academic writing, students are encouraged to use the ideas of masters and researchers in their field by quoting or using the precise words of the scholar to support the student's own ideas or to emphasize a point the student is making. If students want to use the work of another person, they need to acknowledge what the original author meant to provide a reference or citation. An acknowledgement is when writers provide information that the words, ideas or concepts represented in our writing have come from another

person.

### *Reporting the ideas of someone else in our own words*

When writers use the words and ideas of others in academic writing, writers should do two things. Firstly, writers should paraphrase the words and ideas in the original text. Paraphrase means to re-phrase or rewrite the words or ideas of the others by own words within students written work. Sometimes, when students want to refer to the work of others, students can summarize the main ideas we have learned from those studies. It is necessary to acknowledge the author of the ideas they have summarized.

### *How to acknowledge what we have used from someone's work or ideas*

Rhoten (1997) argued that if writers have used another person's words or ideas, they have to acknowledge by referencing and citation. Reference has three meanings, all of which are important. (1) To reference is to provide an acknowledgement, within students' assignment, that the words used, or the ideas written about, in their work are not theirs and belong to someone else. (2) To reference is to provide an acknowledgement, at the end of students' assignment, of the original sources from which their quotes and paraphrases were taken. This second acknowledgement usually comes in the form of a list of all the original sources used for their assignment. (3) Each of the original sources writers have used is called a 'reference'. Besides, citation has the same meaning as "Reference". Writers cite a reference when we provide the details of it within, or at the end of, students' assignment. Each of the original sources that the writer has used can be called a "citation".

### *Using checking plagiarism tools from the Internet*

One effective strategy for preventing plagiarism is the use of online plagiarism detection tools. These tools provide a methodical way to detect cases of content copying by comparing submitted work with an extensive database of pre-existing texts. By integrating these tools into learning procedures, educators and institutions can enable students to participate in responsible research methods while promoting a culture of academic honesty. Additionally, these tools serve as educational aids, helping students understand the importance of proper citation and attribution while providing immediate feedback on their work. Consequently, the integration of plagiarism checking tools not only serves as a proactive measure against academic misconduct but also cultivates a deeper understanding of ethical writing practices within the scholarly community.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research design**

This research is conducted in the form of a descriptive survey. By collecting data from a big number of participants, the research can obtain information about the awareness and attitudes towards plagiarism in

academic writing of English major students at the same time.

### *Participants*

The study involved 205 participants majoring in English. These participants were drawn from various classes and courses, including freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and even seniors. The selection and division of participants were based on specific criteria. All of them were English majors, which provided them with ample opportunities to study and practice writing skills. The groups differed in terms of their educational background and knowledge of academic writing. Freshmen and sophomores, who had limited exposure to academic writing and strategies for incorporating others' work, were included to explore common perceptions among students without specialized expertise in this area. In contrast, juniors and seniors, who had more experience in writing, possessed a deeper understanding of methods for utilizing existing studies

### *Data collection*

For a collection of sufficient reliable and valid data for the study, questionnaires were administered to 205 English – major students.

A questionnaire is a tool used to gather information about phenomena that are not easily observable, such as attitudes, motivations, and self-concepts (Nunan, 1992). It is an instrument for collecting data, typically in written form, that includes both open-ended and closed-ended questions, as well as other prompts that require a response from the participants. A questionnaire is an appropriate method for doing research on the social problem of plagiarism due to the following reasons. Firstly, surveys are timesaving for researchers. Researchers can efficiently and expeditiously obtain information from a multitude of individuals. Furthermore, by concealing the identity of the respondent in questionnaires, individuals are more inclined to express their thoughts and opinions without reservation. As a result, researchers will obtain authentic findings. Questionnaire suits this study for above reasons.

In this study, questionnaire has developed based on the background of the related literature and the results of previous studies. The questionnaire comprised of 42 items in total to collect data about:

1. Definition of plagiarism
2. Reasons accounted for making plagiarism
3. Appropriate citation
4. Consequences of not applying appropriate citation

All the items in the questionnaire are designed in the form of 5-Point Likert Scale. Each item includes a statement about plagiarism. Following the statement is a five-point scale, the scale ranges from 1- indicating “strongly disagree” to 5-indicating “strongly agree”. In between, there are three points: 2, 3, and 4, which correspond to the increasing values of truth of the items to the respondents.

The questionnaire was designed originally in English. However, English may sometimes be difficult to participants because of hard vocabulary. Therefore, to make sure that students understand the questionnaire, questionnaire is translated into Vietnamese – the participants’ mother tongue. Finally, the questionnaires with two versions were delivered to students.

The questionnaire takes about 15 minutes to complete. More than 205 completed questionnaires were collected and used after some unqualified questionnaires were excluded.

## Results

### Descriptive statistical analysis in a research sample

To assess awareness and attitudes regarding adherence to writing conventions in academic essays among English major students, the researcher conducted a survey with 205 students using a questionnaire

#### *Descriptive statistical analysis of students’ gender.*

In academic writing, gender can influence how English major students perceive and react to the issue of plagiarism. Some studies suggest that women and men may understand and evaluate the act of “borrowing ideas” from different sources differently. This difference is not only reflected in how they recognize instances of plagiarism but also in their attitudes toward this behavior.

The results describing the gender distribution of students are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Descriptive statistical analysis of students’ gender

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	127	62.0	62.0	62.0
	Male	78	38.0	38.0	100.0
	Total	205	100.0	100.0	

The results in Table 1 indicate a significant gender distribution difference within the research sample, with 62% being female students and 38% male students. The study suggests that females tend to excel in language skills compared to males. They demonstrate better vocabulary development, more accurate grammar, and smoother communication abilities. Females may have an advantage due to their tendency toward collaboration and effective communication, leading to greater participation in language-related academic activities.

Based on survey data, the author will conduct a test to determine whether there are differences in perception and attitudes toward plagiarism between male and female students. To perform this test, the author will analyze

mean values (compare means) and conduct a One-way ANOVA. The results of this test are as follows:

Table 2. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

<b>Test of Homogeneity of Variances</b>				
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
PL	20.975	1	203	.000
RE	28.637	1	203	.000
AP	4.818	1	203	.029
CO	7.396	1	203	.007

The results of the analysis in Table 2 indicate that the significance level (Sig.) for the factors “Plagiarism means” (PL), “Reasons accounted for making plagiarism” (RE), “Appropriate citation” (AP), and “Consequences of not applying appropriate citation” (CO) in the Levene test are all  $< 0.05$ . Therefore, there is a variance difference between male and female students regarding their perception and attitudes toward plagiarism. We will utilize the results of the Welch test from the “Robust Tests of Equality of Means” table.

Table 3. Robust Tests of Equality of Means

<b>Robust Tests of Equality of Means</b>					
		Statistic <sup>a</sup>	df1	df2	Sig.
PL	Welch	81.432	1	119.940	.000
RE	Welch	34.853	1	202.822	.000
AP	Welch	31.455	1	137.420	.000
CO	Welch	3.999	1	134.832	.048

The Welch test results in Table 3 indicate that the significance levels (Sig.) for the factors “Plagiarism means” (PL), “Reasons accounted for making plagiarism” (RE), “Appropriate citation” (AP), and “Consequences of not applying appropriate citation” (CO) are all less than 0.05. This implies that there is a statistically significant difference in the average perception and attitudes toward plagiarism between male and female students. Therefore, we can assert that the perception of plagiarism significantly differs between male and female students.

Male and female students may have distinct perceptions regarding the importance of citation and plagiarism in academic writing. The evaluation of plagiarism behavior could be influenced by gender and individual perspectives on its ethical implications. Additionally, there might be variations in academic writing skills between male and female students, affecting how they apply citation principles and avoid plagiarism. Some studies suggest that female students tend to pay more attention to proper citation and adhere to higher academic writing standards compared to male students. Social and cultural factors may also impact the perception of plagiarism among male and female students, with regional differences based on ethical and academic norms.



*Descriptive statistics on student groups*

The total number of students participating in the survey was 205. Among them, there were 52 Freshman students, accounting for 25.4% of the total student population; 43 Sophomore students, representing 21.0% of the total; 47 Junior students, making up 22.9% of the total; and 63 Senior students, comprising 30.7% of the total. The statistical results describing students' study time are presented in the following table:

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on student groups

<b>Groups of Students</b>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Freshmen	52	25.4	25.4	25.4
	Sophomores	43	21.0	21.0	46.3
	Juniors	47	22.9	22.9	69.3
	Seniors	63	30.7	30.7	100.0
	Total	205	100.0	100.0	

Based on the survey data, the author will conduct an analysis to determine whether there are differences in perception and attitudes toward academic writing among the student groups (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior). To perform this test, the author will compare means and conduct a One-way ANOVA. The results of this statistical test are as follows:

Table 5. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

<b>Test of Homogeneity of Variances</b>				
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
PL	4.848	3	201	.003
RE	9.095	3	201	.000
AP	11.917	3	201	.000
CO	2.964	3	201	.033

The analysis results in Table 5 indicate that the significance levels (Sig.) of the factors "Plagiarism means" (PL), "Reasons accounted for making plagiarism" (RE), "Appropriate citation" (AP), and "Consequences of not applying appropriate citation" (CO) in the Levene test are all < 0.05. Therefore, there are variance differences among the student groups (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior) regarding their perception and attitude toward academic writing. To address this, we will utilize the results from the Welch test in the Robust Tests of Equality of Means table.

The Welch test results in Table 6 indicate that the significance levels (Sig.) for the factors "Plagiarism means" (PL), "Reasons accounted for making plagiarism" (RE), "Appropriate citation" (AP), and "Consequences of not

applying appropriate citation” (CO) are all less than 0.05. This implies that there are statistically significant differences in perception and attitude toward academic writing among the student groups (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior). In other words, there are clear distinctions.

Table 6. Robust Tests of Equality of Means

Robust Tests of Equality of Means		Statistic <sup>a</sup>	df1	df2	Sig.
PL	Welch	56.164	3	106.034	.000
RE	Welch	18.216	3	109.063	.000
AP	Welch	23.120	3	99.671	.000
CO	Welch	2.876	3	106.649	.040

Each student group (Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors) typically exhibits unique characteristics related to their educational level, experience, and cognitive maturity. These factors can influence how they perceive issues related to academic integrity and citation practices:

**Freshman (First-year students):** Freshmen are often new to university life and may not be familiar with academic writing principles. They might benefit from specific and detailed guidance on using and citing sources.

**Sophomore (Second-year students):** Sophomores have experience writing academic papers since their first year. They likely have a better understanding of citation practices and plagiarism avoidance. They have begun to grasp and apply basic academic writing skills.

**Junior (Third-year students):** Juniors have more experience with complex academic writing. They may have developed a deeper awareness of the importance of proper citation and plagiarism prevention.

**Senior (Fourth-year students):** Seniors have the most experience in academic writing and consistently practice thorough source citation. They likely have a high level of awareness regarding maintaining authenticity and ethical standards in their academic work.

*Results of assessing the reliability of the scale using Cronbach's Alpha*

The reliability assessment results for the factors “Plagiarism means” (PL), “Reasons accounted for making plagiarism” (RE), “Appropriate citation” (AP), and “Consequences of not applying appropriate citation” (CO) are presented in the following table:

The analysis results reveal the presence of four factors with 41 observed variables included in the reliability assessment. After evaluating the reliability, seven observed variables were deemed unreliable and were

consequently excluded from the measurement scale. The remaining 34 observed variables were used in the exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Table 7. Evaluate the reliability of the scales

Scale name	Observed variables after evaluation	Cronbach's Alpha
Plagiarism means (PL)	PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, PL7, PL8, PL9, PL10, PL11, PL12, PL14	0.945
Reasons accounted for making plagiarism (RE)	RE1, RE2, RE3, RE4, RE5, RE6, RE8, RE9, RE10	0.941
Appropriate citation (AP)	AP1, AP2, AP5, AP7, AP8, AP9, AP10	0.932
Consequences of not applying appropriate citation (CO)	CO1, CO2, CO3, CO4, CO5, CO6, CO7	0.924

*Results of EFA exploratory factor analysis*

The results of EFA exploratory factor analysis are as follows:

Table 8. Total Variance Explained

Total Variance Explained										
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared			
				Loadings			Loadings			
	% of Cumulative			% of Cumulative			% of Cumulative			
	Total	Variance	%	Total	Variance	%	Total	Variance	%	
dimension0	1	8.477	24.932	24.932	8.477	24.932	24.932	7.173	21.097	21.097
	2	5.807	17.079	42.011	5.807	17.079	42.011	6.218	18.289	39.386
	3	5.197	15.286	57.297	5.197	15.286	57.297	5.114	15.041	54.427
	4	4.005	11.780	69.076	4.005	11.780	69.076	4.981	14.649	69.076

Table 9. Factor rotation matrix table

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
PL1	.859			
PL2	.844			
PL11	.815			
PL10	.808			
PL9	.800			

PL7	.796
PL8	.786
PL14	.782
PL4	.781
PL3	.778
PL12	.708
RE9	.918
RE3	.849
RE2	.837
RE8	.832
RE4	.820
RE6	.817
RE5	.800
RE10	.784
RE1	.721
AP2	.900
AP8	.891
AP9	.860
AP10	.841
AP1	.836
AP7	.814
AP5	.752
CO5	.863
CO1	.843
CO6	.840
CO4	.837
CO7	.814
CO2	.807
CO3	.735

The analysis results from Tables 8 and 9 indicate that the four factors used by the author to measure students' perception and attitude toward plagiarism are independent. These factors collectively explain 69.076% of the issues under investigation, while the remaining 30.924% depend on other unmentioned factors in this study.

*The results of assessing students' perceptions and attitudes toward various factors.*

The 5-point Likert scale is a common tool in research for collecting data on students' perceptions and attitudes toward academic integrity. The mean value of Likert scores is calculated by summing the scores of all

respondents and dividing by the number of respondents.

Mean from 1.00 to 1.80: Students are completely unaware of academic integrity.

Mean from 1.81 to 2.60: Students have limited awareness of academic integrity.

Mean from 2.61 to 3.40: Students are somewhat aware about the concept of academic integrity.

Mean from 3.41 to 4.20: Students are moderately aware what constitutes academic integrity.

Mean from 4.21 to 5.00: Students consistently demonstrate accurate awareness of academic integrity.

The specific results of students' awareness assessment are presented in the following table.

Table 10. Assessing students' awareness and attitudes about plagiarism

Items	Students' awareness and attitudes about plagiarism	Mean	Results
PL1	Adapting the original structure without acknowledgement	3.82	Moderately aware
PL2	Using common knowledge; it is not necessary to cite	3.61	Moderately aware
PL3	Citing information without acknowledgement	3.63	Moderately aware
PL4	Copying some words from the sources without quotation	3.92	Moderately aware
PL7	Only giving name of the author in writing acknowledgement	3.78	Moderately aware
PL8	Mixing some studies to make a new one without acknowledgement	3.79	Moderately aware
PL9	Referring to get ideas from the internet, books or any other source when writing essay	3.83	Moderately aware
PL10	Using another person's idea, opinion, or theory	3.76	Moderately aware
PL11	Using and edit some words from the original study	3.74	Moderately aware
PL12	Using synonym to rewrite the original study doesn't require acknowledgement	3.68	Moderately aware
PL14	Giving incorrect reference for information I used	3.79	Moderately aware
RE1	Lack of time to finish writing.	3.52	Moderately aware
RE2	Lack of knowledge about plagiarism	3.57	Moderately aware
RE3	Lack of knowledge for citation, quotation and acknowledgement.	3.67	Moderately aware
RE4	Finding hard full information of the source	3.75	Moderately aware
RE5	Unbelieving in oneself writing skill	3.67	Moderately aware
RE6	To get high marks in writing course	3.55	Moderately aware
RE8	Copying unintentionally the information	3.65	Moderately aware
RE9	Plagiarism will never be recognized by readers.	3.60	Moderately aware
RE10	No rule for penalizing plagiarist.	3.76	Moderately aware
AP1	Acknowledgement must be full and clear	3.37	Somewhat aware

	Providing exact references so that the reader can find out the original studies.	3.30	Somewhat aware
AP2			
AP5	Trying to rewrite by own word when using the original words.	3.05	Somewhat aware
AP7	Managing time well and right from the start	3.40	Moderately aware
AP8	Acknowledge when using any information from the sources	3.48	Moderately aware
AP9	Putting direct quotes into quotation marks.	3.34	Somewhat aware
	Citing any facts, any pieces of information that are not common knowledge	3.29	Somewhat aware
AP10			
CO1	Plagiarize can limit creation	4.29	Extremely aware
CO2	Plagiarism can be discovered anyway.	4.41	Extremely aware
CO3	Plagiarism makes unfair	4.35	Extremely aware
CO4	Plagiarism may damage relationships	4.33	Extremely aware
CO5	Plagiarist can easily become desolate in groups and society	4.29	Extremely aware
CO6	Plagiarists can be punished.	4.21	Extremely aware
CO7	Plagiarism destroys academic integrity	4.26	Extremely aware

The provided data indicates that awareness of plagiarism and related difficulties in proper source citation remains insufficient. The mean scores reveal that students tend to have clear awareness of specific issues, such as failing to credit the original source (PL1), copying without proper citation (PL4), and borrowing ideas from others (PL10). However, there appears to be uncertainty regarding the need for comprehensive and precise citations (AP1), accurate reference provision (AP2), and correctly placing direct quotations within double quotation marks (AP9).

On the other hand, variables CO1 through CO7 demonstrate that students possess a high understanding of the consequences of plagiarism, including stifling creativity (CO1), the risk of detection (CO2), and potential harm to relationships (CO4). High scores in this group reflect a deep awareness of the negative impact of plagiarism on individuals and the academic community.

In summary, the data highlights significant awareness of plagiarism, emphasizing the necessity for further education on proper citation and attribution to avoid undesirable consequences. This underscores the importance of educating students about academic ethics and writing skills.

#### *Strategies to support students in avoiding plagiarism*

According to the research findings, several solutions are provided to assist students in preventing plagiarism. Primarily, it is imperative for all of us to enhance education. It is necessary for educators to arrange workshops and courses on academic ethics, correct citation practices, and the utilization of plagiarism detection systems. Secondly, offering educational resources: Establish an internet-based repository containing comprehensive

instructions on precise citation and reference. Furthermore, it is advisable to recommend the use of plagiarism detection software to assist students in their writing. By promoting the utilization of plagiarism detection software, students have the opportunity to review their work prior to submission. In addition, learners require instructor help. Faculties have the ability to designate time for teachers to provide explicit and precise instructions to students on how to write and properly cite sources throughout the learning process. Lastly, facilitating collaborative learning also plays a crucial part in aiding pupils. Teachers can foster collaborative learning among students to enhance their understanding of citation and attribution abilities, as well as to cultivate their ability to provide constructive comments and engage in self-revision of their own work.

## Conclusions

Based on the data you provided, it can be concluded that within the academic environment, awareness of plagiarism and proper citation practices remains limited. Students seem to understand specific instances of plagiarism and their consequences, but they still struggle with the correct methods of citation and attribution. This highlights the need for greater efforts in educating students about academic ethics and writing skills, enabling them to avoid unnecessary mistakes and develop their creativity in a healthy and fair manner. Accurate and comprehensive awareness of plagiarism is key to maintaining integrity and fairness in the academic setting.

## Limitations

The study faces several limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small, which affects the representativeness of findings. Second, the factors investigated account for only 69.067% of students' perception of plagiarism, leaving room for unexplored variables. Additionally, the research scope remains narrow. Lastly, due to limited research knowledge and experience, there may be inherent shortcomings in the research process.

## Recommendations

In order to have a thorough understanding of the extent of plagiarism in academic environments, it is crucial to assess both its occurrence and severity among students. This can be accomplished by methodically examining a representative sample of academic literature, such as essays and assignments, to determine the prevalence and different forms of plagiarism that are present. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach will enhance this analysis by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. Structured questionnaires can be used to collect comprehensive data on the occurrence of plagiarism, including its frequency, underlying causes, and resulting consequences.

Simultaneously, conducting comprehensive interviews will yield useful qualitative insights on students' attitudes, motivations, and perspectives around plagiarism. This dual approach will provide both a strong statistical basis and a clear knowledge of the complex psychological and contextual aspects that influence



student behavior. As a result, it will contribute to a deeper comprehension of plagiarism in educational institutions.

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# The Effects of Spelling Bee Game on EFL Young Learners' Vocabulary Learning

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**Abstract:** Vocabulary plays an important role in learning English. However, due to the difference between English and their mother tongue, many students find it difficult to remember the English vocabulary. This research aims at investigating whether Spelling Bee Game has any significant effects on EFL young students' vocabulary learning. The research followed a quasi-experimental design with the participation of 25 EFL grade-three learners in a primary school in the Mekong Delta. Three research instruments namely a vocabulary screening, a vocabulary test, and a semi-structured interview. The findings from the tests showed that there was a huge change between students' pre-test and post-test scores. It means students significantly improved their vocabulary before and after the treatment. Besides, most of the participants held positive attitudes toward learning vocabulary with Spelling Bee Game. The participants claimed that the use of Spelling Bee Game helps them to improve their vocabulary, increase their spelling, and pronunciation skills, helps them learn vocabulary in a fun and interesting way, and increase their self-confidence as well. The researcher suggests that further studies should consider a larger sample size to obtain a better picture of the reality of the effect of Spelling Bee Game on vocabulary learning.

**Keywords:** Spelling Bee Game, young learners, vocabulary learning, , attitudes, spelling

**Citation:** Huynh, C., T. (2024). The Effects of Spelling Bee Game on EFL Young Learners' Vocabulary Learning. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1004-1018), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In learning English, vocabulary plays a fundamental role since it supports four skills including receptive skills namely listening and reading skills, and productive skills namely speaking and writing skills (Masruddin, 2019). However, students usually find difficulties in learning vocabulary (Wafaa, 2017). Related to students' problems with vocabulary learning, using games is a good solution to help students improve their vocabulary. The use of games in teaching vocabulary makes the lessons more interesting, enjoyable, and effective (Azar, 2012). In addition, games are motivating because they are entertaining and stimulating, and they can be practiced in all language skill tasks (Ersöz, 2000). However, in Vietnam generally and in Can Tho City specifically, many studies have been carried out on teaching vocabulary using games, but very few existing studies focus on using Spelling Bee Game in teaching vocabulary to young learners (Haeri, 2019; Masruddin, 2019; Megawani, 2020).

Besides, the second problem is that just a few investigations have been carried out to investigate EFL learners' attitudes toward the use of Spelling Bee Game (Megawany, 2020, Rohmawati, 2015). Considering the problems faced, the researcher found the motivation and necessity to conduct this study to examine the possible effects of using Spelling Bee Game on EFL young learners' vocabulary and learners' attitudes toward of the use of Spelling Bee Game.

## Literature Review

### The importance of vocabulary learning

Krashen and Terrell (1983) stated that learners should be able to employ vocabulary to convey the meaning of the words if they would like to express their ideas or like to ask for information. In addition, Furnas et al. (1987) claimed that if there are no sufficient words, the speakers and listeners may not understand and convey what they would like to communicate. Likewise, based on Nation's (1990) view, if learners lack vocabulary knowledge, they will have problems in both receptive and productive language use. Thus, vocabulary is the basic factor for communication competence and a lack of vocabulary may lead to unsuccessful communication. Richard (2002) stated that vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. Moreover, Carpenter and Olson (2011) emphasize that vocabulary is an essential component in language learning because it is needed for expressing ideas and conveying thoughts through receptive and productive skills. Vocabulary embraces all the words, we must know to express our ideas and communicate effectively (Sedita, 2005). Besides, Schmitt (2000) indicated that a learner with limited vocabulary in a second language will find it difficult to communicate. The more words that students know, the more they understand what they hear and read; therefore, the better they express what they want (Shoebottom, 2007). Therefore, learning vocabulary is a crucial part of learning a language. In teaching English vocabulary, there are various methods and techniques that could help the students to enrich and improve their vocabulary. The teacher had to choose an appropriate method for teaching vocabulary because it was not easy to teach English, especially vocabulary without using a suitable method. One of the methods to develop students' vocabulary is using a language game which will be presented in the following section.

#### *Using Spelling Bee Game in teaching vocabulary to young learners*

Spelling Bee Game comes from the Spelling bee Competition, a kind of competition where "participants are required to spell words (Sebba, 2009). Ranga (2003) also defined Spelling Bee Game as a competition in which a competitor who spells the word wrongly will be eliminated. Spelling Bee Game can help build a strong foundation in learning spelling and vocabulary (Payra & Cardona, 2016) since the purpose of this game is in line with two language components of English vocabulary and spelling. Umulaika (2019) suggested some advantages of using Spelling Bee Game in teaching vocabulary. First, Spelling Bee Game makes vocabulary learning more meaningful and memorable because students can experience the vocabulary directly by themselves and therefore it helps to memorize the vocabulary well. Second, Spelling Bee Game brings

relaxation and fun for students; therefore, it helps them retain new words more easily. These create the motivation for learners to get involved actively in vocabulary learning. Third, learning vocabulary using Spelling Bee Game brings real-world context into the classroom and encourages students to use English flexibly and communicatively. The procedures of conducting Spelling Bee Game in the EFL classroom have been proposed by several researchers. Mcmillan (2012) said that there can be several ways to conduct Spelling Bee Game in the classroom because it is easy to set up. First, the teacher divides students into several groups. They work together and practice spelling the words. Next, they are asked to stand in lines based on their groups and receive a word card. After that, they are given time to memorize and understand the words in order that students do not misspell the words. When students are ready, the game gets started. If the student spells the word correctly, he/she will stay in the game, but if they misspell the word, they get out of the game. The correct words will get one score and zero for incorrect spelling. The next student will follow this way. At the end of the game, the group that has more scores will be the winner. Similarly, Ilham and Humaira (2020) suggested the procedures for conducting Spelling Bee Game in the ELF classroom. First, the teacher divides the students into several groups. Second step, the teacher gives the collection of words to the students in the form of a paper on one topic, then distributes it to each student and gives time for students to memorize and understand the words in order that they do not misspell the words. After that, the teacher asks the students to follow her to spell the words correctly. Next, the teacher prepares some words that were written on a piece of paper and rolls them. Then, the teacher asked students if they were ready to play or not. After ensuring that the students were ready to play that game, the teacher asks students to stand up or sit down and make a line based on their groups. Then, the game will begin from the first group until the last group. Every group will spell the word based on their choice. If they spell the word rightly, they will stay in the game, but if they spell the word incorrectly, they get out of the game. The correct words will get five scores and zero for incorrect spelling. The next group will follow this way. Finally, at the end of the game, the group that had more scores will be the winner.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research questions**

The aims of the current study were to investigate the effects of using Spelling Bee Game on EFL young learners' vocabulary learning and the attitudes of EFL learners towards the use of Spelling Bee Game in learning vocabulary. The current research seeks answers to the following two questions:

1. What are the effects of Spelling Bee Game on young learners' vocabulary learning?
2. What are young learners' attitudes towards the use of Spelling Bee Game?

### *Research design*

The study mainly followed quasi-experimental research. To collect quantitative data for the study, the pre-test and post-test which were designed in the form of vocabulary achievement tests were administered. In order to collect the qualitative data for the study, the semi-structured interviews were conducted to document in-depth information about the students' attitudes towards the use of Spelling Bee Game in vocabulary learning. The

intervention of the study lasted 10 weeks. During the intervention, students received traditional face-to-face instruction of English from unit 6 to unit 10 of the coursebook (Family and Friends Grade 3). Besides, the implementation of Spelling Bee Game was implemented and monitored during the study.

### *Participants*

The participants of the study were 25 grade-three EFL learners from a primary school in Can Tho city chosen by using a cluster sampling technique. All the participants were assigned to the experimental group. Moreover, after the treatment, six participants were selected based on their final scores to attend the semi-structured interview.

### *Material*

Students were provided with the “Family and Friends Grade 3” (Special Edition) which was written by Naomi Simmons and published in Vietnam in 2015. This textbook is current used in student’s class. The book is divided into four parts Words, Grammar, Phonics, and Skills. Part one Words is the main focus of this study.

### *Research instruments*

In this research, vocabulary screening, the vocabulary test, and the semi-structured interview were employed. Firstly, vocabulary screening was performed to select target words for the intervention. In this study, vocabulary screening was crucial and efficient in assisting the researcher in identifying words that students have no awareness of. The vocabulary screening of the study consisted of 45 words selected from the six units from unit 6 to unit 11 of the course book - “Family and Friends Grade 3” (Special Edition). Students were asked to give the Vietnamese meanings of these 45 words within 20 minutes. Based on the result of the vocabulary screening, no words were excluded from the vocabulary pre-test and post-test because all the students had no ideas with these words. Thus, the vocabulary screening helped shape the focus of the treatment on these unknown words and ensured the reliability and validity of the pre-test and post-test.

Second, the vocabulary test which was used as the pre-test and post-test was administered to collect the data. The pre-test was used to measure students’ vocabulary before the treatment. The post-test was conducted to measure the vocabulary of students after they experience the ten-week treatment. The vocabulary test has 45 words that are selected from six units of the course book “Family and Friends Grade 3” (Special edition). The level of difficulties each word was the same. These words were unknown words to students, based on the result of the vocabulary screening. Each item of the vocabulary test includes a picture which are attached to a word in the coursebook and jumbled letters. The students look at the jumbled letters and a picture to write down the correct answer. The vocabulary test was carefully explained so that the participants can easily comprehend them. Then, it was given to twenty-five EFL learners from the experimental group. The researcher thoroughly observed the participants avoid cheating. The score for each correct answer is 01 and a score of 0 was given for

incorrect answers. The post-test of the study had the same content as the pre-test. Before the administration of the pre-tests, the tests were examined and assessed by two professional teachers who have experience in this field to test the reliability and the validity of the instrument. As a result, the reliability and validity of the post-test would be strengthened as well.

The third instrument was the semi-structured interview. Six participants were involved in the semi-structured interviews which were conducted to deepen students' attitudes towards the use of Spelling Bee Game. Before the actual study, interview questions were piloted by three EFL learners in the first week of the study. These three learners were not the target participants of the current study. The researcher interviewed those learners in Vietnamese so that their ideas and opinions were best conveyed in Vietnamese. According to the piloting learners' feedback, it was shown that they were able to understand most interview questions clearly. Therefore, these interview questions could be used for actual interviews in this present study. Additionally, piloting for interviews enables the researcher to gain experience in conducting in-depth interviews. After the post-test was carried out, the semi-structured interview was administrated to give the researcher a deeper understanding of the entire process of students' vocabulary learning with Spelling Bee Game as well as students' attitudes toward the use of using Spelling Bee Game in learning vocabulary. Before the interviews, interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study and the importance of their participation in the current study. The researcher interviewed 6 out of 25 students. The six students were 2 students who got the highest scores, 2 students who got the average scores, and 2 students who got the least in the vocabulary post-test. The participants were expected to comment on the benefits of using Spelling Bee Game, the drawbacks of using Spelling Bee Game, the challenges of using Spelling Bee Game, and give some suggestions for using Spelling Bee Game in teaching vocabulary in the future. To analyze the quantitative data, the computer Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was employed. Second, a Descriptive Statistics Test and One Sample tTest were run to examine the mean scores of students' pre-and post-test.

#### *Data collection*

The procedure lasted ten weeks with 40 sessions, each session lasting 35 minutes. Before the treatment, all students were instructed to complete the pretest by looking at 45 pictures and jumbled letters, then writing the correct words. They would not be penalized for incorrect answers in the scoring process, but they would be given one point for every correct answer. Students' total scores were recorded for later data analysis. During the treatment, the class was divided into 5 teams; each group consisted of 5 students. Before the game started, each group had 5 minutes to learn how to spell the words together. After that, one student who stood in front of the line would get a word card from the teacher. The student pronounced the word, then spelled it out, and then pronounced it again. For example, "lake... l-a-k-e...lake". Then, the student wrote the word down on the board and moved to the end of the line. If the student could spell, pronounce, and write the word correctly, they would get 10 scores. On the contrary, the student who misspelled a given word were allowed to play again but get no score. This way is followed by the next student and the student who finished the spelling, pronouncing, and writing turned to the back line. The group that had the highest score in the game was the winner. The game was



repeated eight times during the treatment. At the end of the treatment, the same test was given again as a posttest to examine young learners' vocabulary gains. Finally, the interviewees were asked four planned questions and two more unplanned questions to investigate their attitudes toward the use of Spelling Bee Game in vocabulary learning. Each interview took approximately 8-10 minutes. These interviews were recorded by a portable recorder, then transcribed and translated into English for later analysis data (see Appendix N).

### *Procedures of the study*

The data was collected in the second semester of the academic school year 2021- 2022 (as outlined in Table 3.2).

Table 1. An overview of data collection procedures

Week	Activities
	Vocabulary screening
1	Delivering the vocabulary pre-test
2	Analyzing the vocabulary pre-test
3 - 8	Applying Spelling Bee Game to teaching vocabulary
	Analyzing the vocabulary post-test
9	Conducting the semi-structured interviews
10	<b>Analyzing the data from the semi-structured interviews</b>

## **Results**

### **Students' vocabulary scores before and after the treatment**

The score on the vocabulary tests ranged from 1 to 45 points. Scale Tests were run to check the reliability of these tests. Table 4.1 below displays the results of the Scale Tests.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic for the pre-tests and the posttests

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Pre-test	0.700	45
Post-test	0.895	45

It can be seen from Table 4.1 that the reliability of the pre-test and the post-test were acceptable ( $\alpha=0.700$ ,  $\alpha=0.895$  respectively). Accordingly, these tests were reliable enough to be used as instruments in this research. Depdikbud (2012) introduced the Standard Quality of the Vocabulary Test as follows.

**Table 3. Standard Quality of the Vocabulary Test**

No	Range of score	Criteria
1	96-100	Excellent
2	86-95	Very Good
3	76-85	Good
4	66-75	Fairly Good
5	56-65	Fair
6	46-55	Poor
7	0-45	Very Poor

In this current study, due to the differences in the number of questions and the score for each question, the researcher adopted the Standard Quality above and created a new one suitable for the current research.

**Table 4. Current Standard Quality of the Vocabulary Test**

No	Range of score	Criteria
1	41-45	Excellent
2	36-40	Very Good
3	30-35	Good
4	25-29	Fairly Good
5	20-24	Fair
6	15-19	Poor
7	0-14	Very Poor

The results of the pre-tests are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 5. Frequency distribution of the pretests

Score Interval	Frequency	Criteria	Percentage
41-45	0	Excellent	0%
36-40	0	Very Good	0%
30-35	0	Good	0%
25-29	0	Fairly Good	0%
20-24	0	Fair	0%
15-19	0	Poor	0%
0-14	25	Very Poor	100%

Table 4.4 shows that students' competency in vocabulary was less satisfactory in the pre-test. In the pre-test, 25 students got the very poor scores. This indicates that students still had little knowledge about the vocabulary being learned in class.

The results of the post-tests are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 6. Frequency distribution of the post-tests

Score Interval	Frequency	Criteria	Percentage
41-45	20	<b>Excellent</b>	80%
36-40	3	<b>Very Good</b>	12%
30-35	2	<b>Good</b>	8%
25-29	0	<b>Fairly Good</b>	0%
20-24	0	<b>Fair</b>	0%
<b>15-19</b>	0	<b>Poor</b>	0%
<b>0-14</b>	0	<b>Very Poor</b>	0%

In the post-test, there were 20 students who got excellent scores, 3 students got very good scores, 2 students got good scores. The number of students who very poor scores in the pre-test decreased significantly in the post-test.

For comparison, the scores of the pre-test and post-test were combined. It can be seen that the pre-test scores start from very poor scores ranging from 0-14 achieved by 19 students. Meanwhile, in the post-test, the score started from the good scores ranging from 30-35, which was achieved by 2 students, very good scores (36-40) by 3 students, and excellent scores (41-45) by 20 students. From this calculation, it can be inferred that there was a difference in students' scores before and after getting the treatment.

In other words, the improvement of students' vocabulary from the pretest to the post-test was obvious after they were taught by using Spelling Bee Game. The Descriptive Statistic Test was performed to identify the mean score of each test. These scores are illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 7. Mean score of students' vocabulary gain before and after the treatment

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Pre-test	25	.4	3.6	1.924	0.9884
Post-test	25	3.6	10.0	8.504	1.5151

Table 4.6 shows the mean score of participants' pre-test and post-tests. Particularly, the mean score in the pretest was Min= 0.4, Max=3.6, M=1.924; the mean score in the post-test was Min= 3.6, Max=10.0, M=8.504.

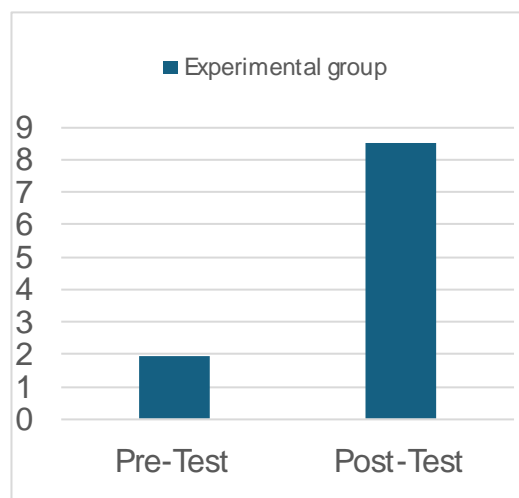


Figure 1. Summary of participants' vocabulary mean score before and after the study

It can be clearly seen from figure 4.1 that there was a significant difference in vocabulary scores of the pre-test and post-test from 1.924 in the pre-tests to 8.504 in the post-tests.

Table 8. Comparison of participants' vocabulary after and before the treatment

Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pre - Post	-6.5800	1.3229	.2646	-7.1261	-6.0339	-24.870	24	.000	

In Table 4.5, a paired samples T-test was applied to measure whether there was a significant difference between the participants' vocabulary in the pre-test and post-test. The results showed that the participants' vocabulary in the pre-test and post-test was significantly different ( $t=-24.870$ ,  $df=24$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). It can be concluded that students' vocabulary was highly improved after eight weeks.

*EFL young learners' attitudes towards using Spelling Bee Game in learning vocabulary*

The students mentioned that Spelling Bee Game is fun and helps them to learn new words because they can learn and play at the same time.

*"I find Spelling Bee Game funny because I can learn and play together. I felt really happy when I spell the words correctly and then I want to do more".*

(Participant 1, line 9)

Besides, one student said that it was fun and encouraging because he could play with his friends, especially in a team rather than alone.

*"I find this activity interesting because I have many opportunities to practice spelling the words with my friends."*

(Participant 2, line 27)

On the other hand, Spelling Bee Game is considered a good way to learn vocabulary easily and quickly and remember words longer which means helps them improve their vocabulary.

*"I believe that I can learn vocabulary faster and improve my spelling skills with this game."*

(Participant 1, line 5)

*"The most beneficial thing I have to say is that it helps me to remember words more easily."*

(Participant 4, line 75)

*"I think I can remember more vocabulary than before."*

(Participant 6, line 115)

Additionally, during the interviews, students also revealed that the use of Spelling Bee Game can improve their spelling and pronunciation skills.

*"Besides, I can improve my spelling skills and pronunciation."*

(Participant 4, line 75)

*"To tell the truth, I think I have improved a lot, especially in my vocabulary, spelling skills, and pronunciation."*

(Participant 5, line 92)

Furthermore, students also stated that they became more confident and fluent in spelling and pronouncing words. At first, they felt nervous and embarrassed about spelling and pronouncing words. After 10 weeks, they felt really confident to spell and pronounce words in front of the class.

*"Definitely yes. Before, I used to be afraid of making mistakes, but after participating in Spelling Bee Game, I feel more confident when spelling and pronouncing words."*

(Participant 3, line 58)

*"Yes, of course. Now I feel quite confident to spell words in front of my friends."*

(Participant 5, line 98)

On the other hand, participants also revealed some challenges that they encountered while learning vocabulary with Spelling Bee Game. According to one participant's opinion, he found some of the words are so long that he could not remember them. As a result, he was quite confused to spell in front of the class.

*"Yes, some words are too long with so many characters, so I find it difficult to remember and spell them correctly."*

(Participant 1, line 19)

One more challenge felt by other students is that there are so many words that he could not remember all of them.

*“My difficulty is that there are many words to remember, and I must spell them very carefully. Therefore, I sometimes feel a little bit stressed and worried.”*

(Participant 3, line 62)

In terms of suggestions for better use of Spelling Bee Game in the future, students have various ideas and opinions to assist the researcher use this activity better in the future. They are (1) supporting students with long and complicated words, (2) giving students more time to learn and work with their friends, (3) the teacher should spell and pronounce words slower and louder, and (4) conducting this game more frequent.

*“In order to use Spelling Bee Game better, I think the teacher should support students more with long words.”*

(Participant 2, line 43)

*“In my opinion, in order to practice Spelling Bee Game better, the teacher should give us more time to work together.”*

(Participant 3, line 68)

*“Well, I think I need help from the teacher, she should pronounce and spell long words many more times.”*

(Participant 4, line 85)

*“I think the teacher should spell words slower and louder so that all the students can hear clearer.”*

(Participant 5, line 106)

*“I think the teacher should conduct this game more often because I find this game interesting and beneficial.”*

(Participant 6, line 127)

## **Discussion**

### **The effects of Spelling Bee Game on students' vocabulary**

The Independent Samples t-test was run to compare the post-test mean scores between two groups with the sig. = .000. Therefore, we could conclude that the results of the Independent Samples t-test show that there was a statistically significant difference in the vocabulary scores. This means that Spelling Bee Game has substantially influenced students' vocabulary learning. Explicitly, students' vocabulary scores in the experimental class have changed by more than 6 points from 1.924 to 8.504. Besides vocabulary gain, students' pronunciation and spelling improved as well. The pretest mean score was 1.924 (M = 1.924), and the post-test mean score was 8.504 (M = 8.504), this indicates the mean difference was -6.58 and the Sig for the comparison of the average scores of the pretest and post-test was as p = 0.00. Thus, there was a statistically significant difference in the pretest-posttest scores. The researcher could tell from the means that post-test scores were higher. Before applying Spelling Bee Game, the student's competence was very different. Most of students were in the lowest levels, and none of them were in good and highest scores. Meanwhile, after applying Spelling Bee Game,

students showed an improvement in their vocabulary scores. Most of them were in the excellent scores, only three students with very good scores and two with good scores. The results of the pre-test and post-test showed that Spelling Bee Game gave a positive impact on students' vocabulary learning. These results were similar to the results obtained in Yusuf et al. (2017), Wafaa (2017), Haeri (2019), Jusning (2019), Masruddin (2019), Qomariyah and Nafisah (2020), Wedhanti et al. (2021). According to these authors, the learners sometimes have difficulties writing the words correctly because they cannot remember their spelling. After learning vocabulary with Spelling Bee Game, they could easily remember the words, which points out that Spelling Bee Game created more opportunities for them to learn new vocabulary easily. Therefore, this treatment could help learners to improve their vocabulary.

#### *Student's attitudes toward the use of Spelling Bee Game in vocabulary learning*

The findings revealed that students had positive attitudes toward using Spelling Bee Game in learning vocabulary. This is seen from the results of semi-structured interviews. All students agree that the use of Spelling Bee Game in class can help them to increase their vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation skills. During the game, students tried their best to remember the spelling and pronunciation of words so that they can spell and pronounce them correctly to get a score for their team. Unconsciously, they remember the spelling and pronunciation of the words. This was reinforced by the results of the research conducted by Yunisrina et al. (2017) that the use of Spelling Bee Game in the classroom improved students' vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. In addition, Yusuf et al. (2017) stated that Spelling Bee Game makes students remember words easier. In this study, students claimed that thanks to Spelling Bee Game they could learn the words quicker and easier and remember them longer. Besides, they also mentioned that Spelling Bee game helps them learn vocabulary better than learning vocabulary in traditional ways. This phenomenon is in line with the study conducted by Sari (2017). She stated that Spelling Bee Game helps students in remembering and memorizing the vocabulary easily and carefully and improves students' accuracy in pronouncing words and increases their motivation in learning English. Spelling Bee Game is used as a tool to create a relaxing and fun atmosphere. Based on students' views, this game helps them enhance their vocabulary by learning in a fun and interesting way. It was reported by Nguyen and Nga (2003) that Spelling Bee Game can facilitate learners to enjoy the fun atmosphere, the spirit of competition, and the great increase in motivation. For example, students were divided into several groups and when the game started students in each group tried to answer the teacher's question as quickly as they could. They tried to collect as many scores as they could to show that they were the best team among all of them. This phenomenon is in line with the study conducted by Ningsih (2013). She stated that the implementation of Spelling Bee Game is recommended for teachers to build an amusing and competitive atmosphere for students in learning vocabulary. Not only improve students' vocabulary, but Spelling Bee Game can also increase their self-confidence. Based on the results of the interview, students stated that they became more confident in spelling in front of the class. In the same vein, Megawany (2020) believed that Spelling Bee Game can improve students' confidence and fluency. Before the use of Spelling Bee Game, they felt nervous and embarrassed in spelling and pronouncing words, but after using Spelling Bee Game they felt more confident. The present study also revealed a challenge that some words are too long or too complicated to



remember; in fact, students said that they easily make mistakes with these words. In addition, another challenge is that the students did not have enough time to remember words; as a result, they claimed that they need more time to learn the spelling and pronunciation of words before they join the game. Some students also suggested various ways to help the researcher to conduct Spelling Bee Game in a better way. First, with long and complicated words, the teacher should spell slower and louder so that the students can hear better and remember them easier. Second, the teacher should support students who have problems with long and complicated words. For example, they can guide individual students rather than the whole class or group. Next, the teacher should give students more time to revise words and discuss with their friends.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

The scores of the post-test were significantly higher than the scores of the pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in students' vocabulary. Besides, the findings from the semi-structured interviews showed that students have positive attitudes toward the use of Spelling Bee Game in learning vocabulary. To sum up, teaching vocabulary by using Spelling Bee Game could help students improve their vocabulary, enhance their spelling and pronunciation abilities, and make students enjoy the learning process. It means that there is a significant effect of using Spelling Bee Game on young learners' vocabulary learning.

Based on the research that had been calculated, some suggestions are presented for the teachers, students, and other researchers who are interested in this particular field.

### For the English teachers

English teachers should be more creative in delivering the activities in the classroom as use the Spelling Bee Game as a tool to increase students' vocabulary. It makes students interested and not feel bored in the teaching-learning process. Thus, teachers can use Spelling Bee Game with the good step-steps to operate that roles play.

### *For students*

The researcher highly expects that students can use the results of this study to overcome their difficulties in learning vocabulary. Students are suggested to be more active and study hard in the teaching and learning process. To improve students' knowledge of the English vocabulary, they do not have to just study seriously with many exercises, but they can also apply the various strategies in order to help them in learning vocabulary. Furthermore, they should study more vocabulary by using Spelling Bee Game to help them relax so that they do not feel bored.

### *For readers*

The researcher expects that the result of this study can be additional information for future researchers who are interested to conduct a study on a similar topic. For the other readers, the researcher hopes that the result of this study can be useful as a reference for future research concerning English vocabulary. Moreover, a quasi-experimental method is needed to enable the researcher to have a valid conclusion and to see the improvement of the researcher's findings whether the result is consistent or not. Hence, the next researcher should develop the study using media and good strategies to create the capability of students.

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## Intergenerational Learning in the 21st Century: Importance, Role, Features, and Types

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**Abstract:** The contemporary social environment, and especially the technological and media environment, contributes to creating great intergenerational differences. In contrast to previous periods, when the young would learn from the old and when the context of values, resources, and access to knowledge and information was known to everyone and passed on from one generation to another much more slowly than today, the contemporary social and media environment increases intergenerational differences. Therefore, it is not surprising that the importance, role, and types of intergenerational learning are being increasingly promoted and researched in the context of lifelong learning. In contemporary society, intergenerational learning implies the mutual exchange of knowledge, values, and resources between two or more generations, whereby members of different generations learn from each other. The main goal of this paper is to analyze the features, types, role, and importance of contemporary intergenerational learning as an integral part of the concept of lifelong learning, with regard to the informal context of learning (primarily family and workplace learning) and in the process of non-formal and formal education.

**Keywords:** Intergenerational learning (IGL), Lifelong learning, Informal learning, Non-formal and formal education

**Citation:** Koludrović, M. & Delija, F. (2024). Intergenerational Learning in the 21st Century: Importance, Role, Features, and Types. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1019-1034), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In terms of the development of civilization, intergenerational learning is the oldest way of learning and teaching. Ever since the earliest cultures, knowledge had been acquired, expanded, and upgraded when older generations would teach younger generations passing on their knowledge, values, attitudes, and rules and teaching them the skills needed in everyday life (Faure et al., 1972; Gadsden and Hall, 1996; Jarvis, 2004; Jelenc Krašovec and

Kump, 2012; Kump and Jelenc Krašovec, 2014). Moreover, in earlier societies, intergenerational learning was informal, mostly familial and transmissive, meaning that the older generations transmitted their knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills to the younger generations. In this sense, Faure et al. (1972) point out that, despite not being included in a formal education system, each adult was to a greater or lesser extent a teacher to the younger generations.

The same trend continued with the development of education systems and formal education, whereby it was implied that the teacher teaches students the curriculum-prescribed knowledge and skills, including values, attitudes, and rules depending on the respective social system and the degree of democracy in society where education took place (Knowles, 1970; Pivac, 1995; 2009). This way of educating the younger generations was self-evident, as confirmed by analyses of rich older pedagogical and didactic literature in which it is impossible to come across the concept of intergenerational learning because it was implied that the younger would learn from the older. Ultimately, the entire contemporary student-centered co-constructivist education system was created as a reaction to the insufficiency of the traditional imitative and reproductive education paradigm (Pivac, 2009), which emphasized the transmissive role of teachers and consequently the passive role of students (Faure et al., 1972; Pivac, 2009; Koludrović, 2013).

Only in the last decades of the 20th century, the concept of intergenerational learning emerged as a sporadic topic in pedagogical, andragogical, and didactic literature. In recent decades, which saw the development of the knowledge society and demographic and generational changes (Mannion, 2016; Schmidt-Hertha et al., 2014; Newman and Hatton – Yeo, 2008), intergenerational learning as part of lifelong learning became an interesting concept in research and theory, differing greatly from the intergenerational learning of earlier societies. Contemporary intergenerational programs and projects sprung up in the late 1970s and early 1980s to help build relationships between different generations, facilitate exchanges of ideas and learning resources (Mannion, 2016), and be used as social planning models that would create connections between younger and older generations who are not connected in a familial or biological way (Newman and Hatton Yeo, 2008). The goals of the first contemporary intergenerational projects and programs also included the promotion of social growth, lifelong and mutual learning, and emotional stability, which traditionally characterize relationships between younger and elder family members (Newman and Hatton Yeo, 2008).

Following the development of the knowledge society and in particular lifelong learning in the 21st century, intergenerational learning has become a relevant topic for scholars and researchers increasingly applied in the context of non-formal and formal education. Accelerated technological development, including the development of modern media, which create additional differences between different generations, has further contributed to the research of intergenerational learning and especially the application of intergenerational programs. While the content that the young generations would learn and use was known to the old several decades ago, today the situation is significantly different due to the accessibility of modern media. Namely, a large part of the social relations among younger generations is inaccessible and unknown to members of other generation groups. Furthermore, the set of media content and social networks that young people follow and participate in is very

often unknown, and thus inaccessible to members of other generations. The use of social networks has changed the relationships and knowledge of different generations and has certainly deepened the differences between them in a way that different generations do not know the content that other members of the generation use. Consequently, this situation affects the quality of communication among participants of different generations. The affirmation of contemporary intergenerational learning has certainly been reinforced also by changes in the family structure as families have become increasingly geographically distant from each other and ever smaller in size. In other words, the past typical multigenerational family relationships have become increasingly disjointed, and families have become smaller. In this context, intergenerational learning is seen as a way of effectively connecting different generations that are not necessarily in a familial relationship.

Considering the diversity of social and other circumstances that determine contemporary society and the quality of life of its members, intergenerational learning is becoming an essential and relevant scientific topic. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to analyze the features, types, role, and importance of contemporary intergenerational learning as an integral part of the concept of lifelong learning, taking into account the informal, non-formal, and formal context of learning and education.

### **Intergenerational learning seen from the perspective of the contemporary social and economic environment and lifelong learning concept**

Almost all authors who study and research intergenerational learning in the contemporary social and educational context agree that this concept is related to the development of the knowledge society and the concept of lifelong learning, as well as contemporary demographic, social, and economic trends (Granville, 2002; Newman and Hatton – Yeo, 2008; Findsen and Formosa, 2011; Learning for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Learning: Final Report, 2012; Schmidt – Herta et al., 2014; Mannion, 2016).

At the macro level, the development of the knowledge society and moving away from an industrialist lifestyle and education have enabled an understanding that lifelong learning and education can help societies and economies to be more efficient and foster personal, social, and professional well-being in individuals so that they can improve their knowledge and skills, change jobs and qualifications, and be successful in different areas and sectors compared to the initial qualification they acquired during formal education. The development of the concept of lifelong learning produced an understanding that it can contribute not only to the professional but also to the personal and social well-being of all members of society, especially adults and the elderly, i.e., those who completed formal education at a young age (Knowles, 1970; Jarvis, 2004; Koludrović, 2018).

The importance of adopting lifelong learning with a special emphasis on learning in adulthood and older age was also contributed by demographic changes at the end of the 20th century when the Western world faced an increasingly aging population, followed by a more systematic thought of increasing the quality of successful aging and the importance of adult education (Older American Act, 1988; Jarvis, 2004; Newman and Hatton Yeo, 2008; Findsen and Formosa, 2011; Schmidt – Hertha et al., 2014; Mannion, 2016). These changes at the

macro level also redefined the traditional understanding of the definition of generation, while the development of intergenerational learning, as an integral part of lifelong learning, was influenced by changes in the family structure (Newman and Hatton – Yeo, 2008). Extended families have been increasingly replaced by nuclear families, and subsequently by various modern family structures of ever smaller sizes with the increase of single-parent families, and at the same time modern families have been geographically more and more distant from other family members and relatives. Such a way of structuring the family did not only affect the younger generations, but also the older ones when their vulnerability was revealed in terms of their personal, social, and financial well-being (Older American Act, 1988; Learning for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Learning: Final Report, 2012). Jarvis (2004) points out that the development of contemporary society also changes the perception of culture as the totality of knowledge, skills, beliefs, rules, and other elements of a social group, which ultimately affects all members of society. Newman and Hatton Yeo (2008) claim that geographic family separation causes loss both on part of younger and older generations because the young lack the support and values of the elderly and their worldview, while the elderly remain deprived of social support and insights of the younger generations, love, new knowledge, skills etc. The consequence is the development of different subcultures, excessive individualization, and existential anxiety (Jarvis, 2004) in which the promotion and application of different models of intergenerational learning can play a key role.

In such social and cultural environment, intergenerational learning ceases to be understood as the transmission of knowledge, values, and rules from older generations to younger ones and acquires new definitions, models, and roles as an integral part of the concept of lifelong learning. Contemporary intergenerational programs can be defined as “learning initiatives that increase cooperation, interaction, or exchange between any two generations that involve the sharing of skills, knowledge and experiences” (Findsen and Formosa, 2011, p. 5). A similar definition can be found in Mannion (2016, p. 5) who sees intergenerational learning as an inclusive and reciprocal process that connects different generations through purposeful and beneficial activities for all members that promote mutual understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Other authors offer similar definitions of intergenerational learning, agreeing that it is an integral part of lifelong learning, that it is reciprocal and transactional, that it contributes to the personal and social well-being of all stakeholders and greater inclusion (Springate et al., 2008; Schmidt – Hertha et al., 2014).

Some of the goals and thus the benefits of contemporary intergenerational learning are to use different activities to increase the connection, inclusion, and security of the community made up of members of different generations who are not necessarily connected in a familial way. Intergenerational learning also aims at increasing the understanding and tolerance of different generations, breaking stereotypes, and enabling positive role models, learning values and about values, preventing undesirable behaviors etc. (Granville, 2002; Schuller, 2010; Learning for Active Aging and Intergenerational Learning: Final Report, 2012; Schmidt – Hertha et al., 2014). Mannion (2016) points out that intergenerational encounters are seen as a force for challenging age-segregation and diverse forms of ecosocial injustices.

Consequently, it is necessary to scientifically examine and analyze the types and ways of achieving the



effectiveness of contemporary intergenerational learning. Although this concept is indisputably important in contemporary society, as confirmed by its definitions, importance, and effects presented in this text, it is clear that we deal with a theoretically and organizationally very complex concept that requires deep reflection and continuous (re)definition. Based on the analyses of the rich literature, it is almost impossible to come across a systematic classification of intergenerational learning. Therefore, contemporary concepts, approaches, and types of intergenerational learning will be analyzed below with regard to:

- (1) the type of formality of IGL application (in the context of informal learning; within programs and projects in non-formal education; in the context of formal education);
- (2) the degree of intentionality;
- (3) the context in which intergenerational learning takes place (family, workplace, non-formal, formal);
- (4) social relations and communication dynamics (transmission or transactional intergenerational learning).

Considering the type of *formality of application*, today's literature offers the terms of informal intergenerational learning, non-formal intergenerational education carried out within non-formal programs and various project activities, and intergenerational education in the formal education system. As for the degree of *intentionality*, intergenerational education in the context of formal and non-formal education is always intentional. On the contrary, informal learning can be intentional and unintentional. While intentional intergenerational learning is typical of the professional environment and the mentoring process in the professional environment as well as informal learning in the community, intergenerational informal family learning is often unintentional. Nevertheless, the degree of intentionality in all types of intergenerational learning and education can vary depending on their purpose and context. When analyzing *the purpose and context* in which intergenerational learning take place, it is clear that there are no limitations and that the only criterion is the presence of at least two different generations. The place and reasons for intergenerational learning can range from a completely familial and unintentional context to a fully programmed context that takes place in an institutional setting. Considering *social relations and communication dynamics*, we distinguish between the transmission and transactional forms of intergenerational learning. While the intergenerational transmission approach is characteristic of traditional informal intergenerational learning and the traditional education system, transactional intergenerational learning is typical of contemporary intergenerational learning.

#### *Intergenerational learning in the context of informal learning*

As already stated, informal intergenerational learning is the first way of (non – formal) teaching, characterized by the transmission of knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, rules, and all other life elements from older generations to younger ones ever since the first civilizations. Contemporary intergenerational learning in the informal context, however, is expanding and acquiring some new elements and forms. In scientific and research terms, informal intergenerational learning is a multidisciplinary topic that requires connecting numerous scientific disciplines such as developmental psychology in a lifespan perspective, pedagogy, andragogy, gerontology, sociology, medicine, and many others (Gadsden and Hall, 1996; Bostrum et al., 2000). For example, it is possible to come across many studies, which are not primarily andragogical or pedagogical,

examining the impacts of generational connections of older family members on younger ones. Such research is primarily related to psychology and important for understanding intergenerational learning in a familial context. Contemporary research in economics and organizational psychology provides some new insights into generational differences in the working or professional environment that have traditionally not been put in the context of intergenerational learning at all. Sociological research is important because it questions the meaning and definitions of generation as a scientific construct in a dynamic social and cultural environment. Therefore, when studying intergenerational learning in an informal context, one should not forget that the definition of generation is changing and that it no longer refers only to chronological differences between individuals and differences among family members including not only age but also attitudes, culture, and values (Mannion, 2016). In contemporary society, generation as a construct is determined also in a social sense, i.e., different generations, who do not necessarily have to have significant age differences, can belong to different social groups (Mannion, 2016).

#### *Informal intergenerational learning in leisure and family context*

In order to understand contemporary intergenerational learning in an informal context, it is important to consider the development of a lifelong learning paradigm that results in changes in the perception of intergenerational learning that have occurred over only a few decades. For example, older literature on intergenerational learning often focuses on the transactional and familial model of defining intergenerational learning. Thus, Gadsden (1995) primarily sees intergenerational learning as ways in which older family members contribute to the development of children, i.e., younger generations. In his later work, the author shifts away from such attitudes extending the definition of intergenerational learning to non-biological participants of different ages (Gadsden and Hall, 1996). Newman and Hatton Yeo (2008) therefore distinguish between familial and extrafamilial intergenerational learning, while Springate et al. (2008) and Granville (2002) point out that modern intergenerational learning has an important characteristic of members not being connected in a familial sense. Granville (2002) states that familial connection in intergenerational learning activities can also have a negative effect on intergenerational learning outcomes due to stereotypes and family relationships. Similarly, Gadsden (1995) confirms that intergenerational learning in the family was influenced by younger generations' relationships with peers and the external environment, which often contradicted the values and attitudes transmitted in the family context. On the other hand, research by Ho (2010) and Jelenc Krašovec and Kump (2012) found that in connected and quality families, social learning of all generations is strong and transactional. Jelenc Krašovec and Kump (2012) also showed that in such families, the younger generations learn about honesty, diligence, respectiveness, preservation of family tradition, and practical skills, while the older generations experience joy of life, optimism, and fearlessness in this mutual process. We can conclude that intergenerational learning in the family is primarily informal and it is a scientifically multidisciplinary and dynamic field of research, that it can be both intentional and unintentional, and that depending on the culture, values, personal experiences of parenting and family, and the quality of family relationships, it can be both transmission and transactional.

In addition to the family context, informal intergenerational learning can certainly include all those activities that do not relate to implementing a specific program but contribute to the personal, social, and, in some cases, professional well-being and learning of an individual. According to Gadsden and Hall (1996), intergenerational learning is not only focused on the family context but also on learning in other informal contexts such as the church where elders help young people understand religious concepts and involve them in church community activities. Informal intergenerational learning certainly includes, for example, reading and library discussions, as well as numerous other activities involving relationships between different generations. For example, Giuliani et al. (2005) claim that older people find it harder to cope with modern technologies and are prone to give up when they encounter difficulties. Intentional, but structure-wise informal intergenerational learning activities in the local community (for example associations and libraries) could be devoted to the exchange of experiences, whereby the young would teach the old about the use of modern technology and media, their values, etc. while older people could contribute to younger people with their life experience and values. Such informal activities would certainly contribute to the inclusiveness and well-being of different members of the community, fostering socio-emotional learning, family and social values, respect, understanding etc. In this regard, activities between adults in home for the elderly and children in kindergartens and schools are particularly important. The research conducted by Lyndon and Moss (2023) showed that activities such as singing, unstructured moments, continuity et al. contribute to meaningful interactions between children and older people. All of the above shows how contemporary informal intergenerational learning is characterized by an intentional transaction and includes members of different generations who are not in a familial relationship.

Although stakeholders of contemporary informal intentional intergenerational learning do not necessarily know all the scientific assumptions, results, and benefits of this form of learning, it is vital that (potential) organizers of such activities – such as librarians, gerontologists, teachers, educators, andragogues, educators, psychologists, doctors, and many other experts who can provide activities of participants of different generations – are educated about the role, importance, opportunities, and benefits of intergenerational learning for different community members (Yasunaga et al., 2016; Lyndon and Moss, 2023). This is confirmed by Lyndon and Moss (2023) who showed that the benefits in terms of emotional rewards also include practitioners who participate in the organization of projects and activities that encourage intergenerational informal learning and that experts who organize and implement such activities should have essential competencies of flexibility and openness to change.

#### *Informal intergenerational learning in the professional context*

Compared to earlier research on informal intergenerational learning, which was mostly focused on relationships within the family, informal intergenerational learning extends to the professional context nowadays. Thus, informal intergenerational learning in the professional context is an insufficiently studied construct. Intergenerational learning gains importance with adopting the work-based learning model (WBL) as an integrative part of formal secondary and higher education. Formal process of education increasingly promotes work-based learning as a model that connects educational institutions and the labor market with the aim of

overcoming the sluggishness of the education system in relation to the modern fast and changing labor market (Rainbird et al., 2005; Raelin, 2008; Avis, 2010; Heyler, 2015). Although the activities of work-based learning are mostly prescribed by the curriculum, the success of the organization and implementation of WBL depends on the competencies of mentors and students who approach practical work in the institution. In this sense, WBL certainly has the features of intentional informal learning because the point is to familiarize an inexperienced person with everyday work performed by people with experience. In this sense, it would be necessary to scientifically explore the competencies, relationships, and types of intergenerational learning between mentor and student during the implementation of the WBL. It seems that transactional intergenerational learning would benefit both groups because young people come with new values, knowledge, and information, and older people have experience and skills. For example, Mohabuth and Ahmad (2015) showed that in a mentoring relationship in WBL, trust is key, followed by empathy and openness, respect, honesty, care, and loyalty. Nevertheless, numerous personal and social dimensions remain unexplored that would clarify the best ways of intergenerational learning during WBL but also at work after completing formal education.

After an individual gets employed, informal intergenerational learning becomes an integral part of introducing a younger person into the labor market. Yet, the concept has not been sufficiently researched, especially from an andragogical perspective. Ropes (2013) defines intergenerational learning in institutions in the field of the labor market as an effective way of dealing with increasingly older workers in a positive and constructive way in the workplace. However, in this process, one should keep in mind the transactional approach that is characteristic of contemporary society. Baily (2009) states that generational differences in the business world can be a big problem and points to the importance of applying the reverse model of intergenerational learning. At best, the relationship should be mutual, which means that the main criterion is not only the amount of information, knowledge, and skills that members of one generation bring, but the quality of what they have learned in different generations and the quality of their relationships. Polat and Yilmaz (2020) studied barriers to intergenerational learning in the workplace in Turkey and found that intergenerational learning is influenced by personal, relational, and managerial factors. In this research, personal factors related to different generations were expressed primarily through the understanding of knowledge and experience as a source of power and lack of motivation and commitment. The same research showed that communication problems are the most important predictor of the relational factor, while insufficient support or not being supported or encouraged by management were the most significant factor at the managerial level and proved to be an obstacle in the implementation of contemporary intergenerational learning.

#### *Intergenerational learning in the context of non-formal programs and the formal education system*

Intergenerational learning has been most studied in the framework of the success of various projects aimed at determining and examining the importance and effectiveness of intergenerational learning. Given the degree of formality for the purposes of this paper, we will distinguish between non-formal intergenerational programs and intergenerational learning in the context of formal education. Non-formal programs have a curriculum, are elaborated didactically and based on pedagogical and andragogical principles of learning and education, but do

not include acquiring a formal qualification. We distinguish such programs from IGL in the context of formal education, which is mandatory or leads to a qualification, and in which, for various pedagogical and andragogical reasons, participants in the learning and teaching process are members of different generations. Bostrum et al. (2000, p. 3) point out the importance of applying and researching intergenerational programs in the formal education system, stating that “intergenerational programs are vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations for individual and social benefits”. As stated in the previous passages, today this context certainly extends to the professional field as well.

### *Intergenerational learning in the context of non-formal education*

In the context of non-formal education and project activities, there is an increasing number of projects that include the implementation of programs whose at least one of the goals is to promote intergenerational learning. The implementation of such programs generally leads to success and well-being for participants of all generations (Bostrum et al., 2000; Hatton – Yeo et al., 2000; Yasunaga et al., 2016; Gualano et al., 2018; Guidelines on Implementing Intergenerational Learning Programmes, 2018; Gulyas and Kovacz, 2023). Such projects and programs should be didactically designed (Guidelines on Implementing Intergenerational Learning Programmes, 2018; Gulyas and Kovacz, 2023) and based on transaction rather than transmission, and active learning of all participants (Bostrum et al., 2000). Important features of such programs are flexibility, respect, trust, respect for the opinions and prior knowledge of all participants (Kaplan, 2002; Kaplan et al., 2017; Guidelines on Implementing Intergenerational Learning Programmes, 2018; Gulyas and Kovacz, 2023). The analysis of the relevant literature shows that the topics of intergenerational programs can be diverse and multidisciplinary but always useful and important to all participants in the learning process. Bostrum et al. (2000) see intergenerational programs as a solution to social problems in the form of connecting separated generations, encouraging active cross-generational working and social life including dealing with social problems, developing lifelong learning, and sharing experiences between different generations as fundamental features of intergenerational learning. The report Guidelines on Implementing Intergenerational Learning Programmes (2018) stresses that all participants should understand the importance of IGL, and that consequently intergenerational programs must become the norm, and not just an interesting and fun experience. It is extremely important that intergenerational programs are organized by professionals with appropriate competencies in the application and implementation of IGL (Hatton – Yeo et al., 2000; Guidelines on Implementing Intergenerational Learning Programmes, 2018). The results of the research suggest that the providers of intergenerational programs themselves experience a number of benefits (Yasunaga et al., 2016; Gualano et al., 2018). Some of the mentor’s key competencies and actions in the implementation of adult education programs are performance and skill in motivating participants, creating a pleasant and supportive environment for learning, encouraging participants to engage in activities, effectively leading a group so that no one feels excluded and so that no one dominates the learning process (Wlodkovsky, 2003; Gulyas and Kovacz, 2023). Ultimately, in the implementation of intergenerational learning programs, all the basic rules for organizing adult education programs that are well substantiated in the literature apply, including respect for all

participants, respect for participants' diversity, prior knowledge, interests, experiences, needs, and opportunities, self-directed learning and learning in a team, linking learning content with practical examples, a quality learning atmosphere, applying non-traditional didactic strategies such as problem and project learning (Knowles, 1970; Wlodkovski, 2003; Jarvis, 2004).

### *Intergenerational learning in the context of formal education*

Intergenerational learning in the context of the formal education system is certainly an insufficiently researched topic in theory and practice. Previous research has mainly studied the application of IGL in the context of contemporary education showing how older volunteers are involved in student education programs. The results obtained from the research of various authors confirm many benefits of applying intergenerational programs in the system of formal education. Hatton – Yeo et al. (2000) state that one of the advantages of such programs is that it can reduce teacher overload in the teaching process and teaching administration provided that members of the older generation are well acquainted with their assignments. Cohen-Mansfield et al. (2016) also found that the quality of implementing intergenerational programs at school is influenced by the preparedness of all participants in the teaching process, especially members of the older generation. In the same study, the results showed positive effects of applying intergenerational programs on children with regard to the academic, emotional, and social domains (Cohen – Mansfield et al., 2016). Large meta-research conducted by Park (2015) also confirmed the benefits of intergenerational learning for all generations. This research showed that students generally exhibit greater prosocial behaviors and that the quality of the teaching atmosphere improves, but also that applying intergenerational programs reduces stereotypes towards older people, increases students' respect for them, and contributes to a better mutual understanding (Park, 2015). Similar results were obtained by Cumming et al. (2008) where it was shown that students who participated in intergenerational programs had, as expected, better attitudes towards the elderly, but also that they achieved better academic success compared to students who followed the same curriculum, but not within the intergenerational program. Hatton – Yeo et al. (2000) analyzed the numerous advantages of intergenerational programs in school and concluded how school-based intergenerational programs can contribute to the individualization of the teaching process, collaborative learning, but also improve material and social relations in school. The application of the intergenerational programs in the context of formal education including different generations evidently points to numerous benefits for all participants. Nevertheless, there is surprisingly little scientific literature on the features of the curriculum in formal education in which IGL is applied. Furthermore, although the authors suggest the importance of good preparedness of older volunteers, further research should certainly examine the age as well as educational and motivational structure of older participants in order to apply these programs as successfully as possible. Exploring the effects of intergenerational learning on many aspects of academic, emotional, and social life and examining the features of group dynamics in IGL would certainly contribute to better understanding and quality, and consequently greater application of intergenerational programs in formal and non-formal education. Such research results would also contribute to the quality of developing curricula that enable IGL.



Although the following type of intergenerational learning in the context of formal education is well-researched in the literature and extremely represented in practice, it is often not observed in the context of lifelong and intergenerational learning. This is because research on lifelong learning, comprising intergenerational learning as its integral part, mainly takes into account the population that has outgrown childhood. By analyzing the definition of generation in this paper, it was pointed out that the main criterion for defining generations is not only the age difference of participants or social groups when performing an activity, but also how in modern society a generation also means social differences between participants of different generations. Precisely in the formal education system we can find examples of organizing the school and teaching process including children of different ages. Although children in the formal education system are close in age, compared to the age differences between older and younger generations shown in the examples above, they are nevertheless generationally different in terms of their developmental characteristics. Such examples can be found in Montessori kindergartens and schools and the Jena plan concept (Matijević, 2001; Alwi et al., 2021). There are similar examples in early childhood education and care systems in many countries. Researches point to a number of benefits of this type of intergenerational learning with regard to better social skills, strengthening self-esteem and self-perception, better attitude towards educators, and many others (Whaley and Cantor, 1992; Gmitrova et al., 2009; Katz and McClellan, 2005; Alwi et al., 2021). Šindić et al. (2022) confirmed the importance of applying a constructivist approach in pedagogical work, the familiarity of educators with the concept of intergenerational learning, and in particular the importance of learning and thinking about ways of designing and implementing intergenerational programs in the context of non-formal and formal education and informal learning in order to achieve the full quality of applying intergenerational learning in early and preschool education institutions.

Ultimately, in non-formal education programs, which are often implemented within various project activities, it is noticeable that intergenerational learning is a relevant and research-intensive topic. Nevertheless, in the context of the formal education system, not all possibilities of applying intergenerational learning are sufficiently explored. The available research points to the well-being of all participants in this process, while still bearing in mind the importance of defining the roles of participants in the formal education process at the level student – teacher – adult. Furthermore, the competencies that teachers and elders should have in such programs should certainly be examined. Finally, in the school context, it is necessary to plan and organize the curriculum well and carefully plan in which activities, when, and to which students such ways of intergenerational learning should be offered, whereby it is crucial to prepare all participants for this type of education.

## **Conclusion**

Intergenerational learning has become an increasingly relevant topic in the context of lifelong learning, and as analyzed in the paper, it is possible to implement it within the framework of informal learning and nonformal and formal education. It is certainly a scientifically insufficiently researched topic, considering both the



characteristics of the participants in intergenerational learning and also the didactic characteristics of curriculum planning and realization of the learning process. It has been explained and confirmed that intergenerational learning is a dynamic field that depends on the social, economic, familial, personal, and professional context and that it is constantly changing and becoming more complex. Intergenerational learning is also the oldest way of learning and teaching. However, while it used to be characterized by the transmission of knowledge, values, rules, and culture in general from older generations to younger ones, transaction-based intergenerational learning is increasingly accepted in contemporary society. The amount and type of transactional learning are conditioned by the individual characteristics of the participants in the learning process, but also by the context in which intergenerational learning takes place. Furthermore, intergenerational learning can be unintentional as well as intentional and can be realized in leisure time, but also in the context of non-formal programs and projects and in the formal education system. The results of previous research on the impact of intergenerational learning interventions on different generations generally show numerous benefits for participants of all generations. Contemporary intergenerational learning can also be multigenerational, that is, several generations can participate in the learning process. Here, one should keep in mind the meaning of the term generation, which, in addition to the age difference, today also includes social differences between groups of people who are not necessarily very far apart in age.

Finally, based on the analysis of rich literature, the paper offers a contemporary classification of intergenerational learning, with regard to the type of formality of IGL application (in the context of informal learning; within programs and projects in non-formal education; in the context of formal education); the degree of intentionality (from completely unintentional to completely organized/intentional); the context in which intergenerational learning takes place (family, workplace, informal, formal); and social relations and communication dynamics (from transmission to transactional intergenerational learning). However, it is essential not to dichotomize or polarize the divisions (for example, regarding the degree of intentionality, one should consider the context, characteristics of the participants, etc., and not offer rigid options) and organize activities respecting the individual characteristics of all participants. Ultimately, researches suggest that successful IGL requires the pedagogical-andragogic-didactic training of moderators or facilitators of learning (mentors, teachers) and their constant professional development. We can agree with the authors of the *Guidelines on Implementing Intergenerational Learning Programs* (2018, p. 38), who pointed out that intergenerational programs should be viewed as a norm, not just an interesting, fun experience.

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## The Perception of Gender Diversity Toward the Construction Work Among the Construction Practitioners in The Construction Industry


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**Abstract:** The increase of gender diverse workforce can affect the reputation of an organization and help in fulfilling the employment shortage. Many construction organizations fail to recruit and retain female employees, and this has become one of the main reasons in causing the shortage of employment. However, limited studies were conducted regarding the importance and barriers of gender diversity in the construction industry. Therefore, this study aims to identify the importance and barriers to gender diversity among construction practitioners in the construction industry. The objectives of this study were (i) to identify the importance of gender diversity; (ii) to identify the barriers in improving gender diversity; and (iii) to determine the solutions in improving the gender diversity among the construction practitioners in the construction industry. Quantitative research method was adopted in this study and the data were collected through a questionnaire survey. A total of 103 construction practitioners in the Klang Valley, Malaysia involved in this research. The findings indicated that male respondents rated achievement of effective leadership, whereas female respondents rated drove of project performance as the most significant importance of gender diversity. Both male and female respondents rated negative stereotyping thinking as the major contributor to the barriers in applied gender diversity. Male respondents rated counter-negative stereotyping thinking, whereas female respondents rated organizational support as the most effective solution in improving gender diversity. Besides, this research also carried out an inferential test and found that there are no significant differences between male and female construction practitioners regarding the importance, barriers and solutions of gender diversity. This research provides a guide for the exploration of gender diversity in the Malaysian construction industry. This research also points to the need of construction organizations in engaging the solutions for improving gender diversity to assist the

employees in achieving a gender-diverse workforce.

**Keywords:** Gender diversity, Construction industry.

**Citation:** Lew, Y.L., Lee, K.L., Yap, J.B.H., Lee, W.P., & Yow, L.P. (2024). The Perception of Gender Diversity Toward the Construction Work Among the Construction Practitioners in The Construction Industry In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1035-1043), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Gender diversity was defined as the involvement of both male and female employees, without the domination of the male employees in construction industry. The diversification of the existing industry's recruitment base was relatively important in resolving the employment shortage which has historically relied upon men to form the vast majority of the workforce. A gender-diverse workforce in a workplace tends to enhance the feasibility and quality of a project. The increment of gender diverse workforce can be direct and in-directly affecting the reputation of an organization and help fulfill the employment shortage. But there were some organizations reputed to apply gender diverse workforce within their organization due to a lack of awareness of gender diversity. Nevertheless, according to Shibani et al. (2021), there were only around 10% of female employees involved in the construction field in the United Kingdom. Many skilled female employees do not involve themselves in the construction industry due to some reason such as lack of working opportunities.

## Literature Review

Gender diversity in the workplace tends to enhance the profitability of the organization by enhancing the ability to attract talented employees, improving customer satisfaction and orientation, and alleviating hostility as well as business-customer relationship (Amy, 2020). Companies with more women tend to outperform their competitors on a variety of financial metrics, including return on equity, sales, and return on capital, as well as share performance and stock price growth. Other than that, Kebede (2017) also found out that effective leadership skills can be achieved in the workplace with a gender-diverse workforce.

According to Petra (2017), dangerous, hard and difficult have been used to describe the construction workplace because in commonly almost all of the construction activities will be done outdoor. Thus, gender diversity is hard to accomplish in construction work due to some barriers presented in this modern era. The barriers in achieving gender diversity can be divided in terms of characteristics of construction projects and sexist attitudes.



The characteristic of the construction workplace was relatively tough. Construction often involves working at height, inside and outside of buildings. Thus, the construction workplace will be dangerous and difficult as there was a potential for risks coming from the roofs, scaffolds, ladders and stairways. Equipment failure, negligence, and harsh weather can drive the occurrence of risk in the construction workplace. Thus, least of the female practitioner will be given a chance in joining the construction site but only in construction offices. Besides, the working hours in the construction workplace were relatively long. The working hours may be extended due to late supplies, the occurrence of default in supplies, insufficient times allocated, bad weather and other issues. The arise of limited time-off and lack of flexible working shifts in the construction workplace as the tasks must be completed according to the schedule of the working plan will form the gender gap (Maikweyana et al., 2019; Khairul et al. 2017).

Other than the characteristic of the construction projects, the barriers which impede gender diversity in the construction workplace in terms of sexist attitudes included the bad job culture. First and most, sexual harassment plays the most unforeseeable barrier in hindering the gender diverse workforce among the construction practitioner in the construction workplace (Petra, 2017; Maikweyana et al., 2019; Khairul et al., 2017; Cathrine and Maria 2020; Adedeji et al., 2019). Unfortunately, sexual harassment in the construction industry is typical poses a greater threat compared to employee safety than many executives are aware. According to Debra et al. (2018), there were 66% of the targeted survey respondents from 1248 of the total respondents had experienced sexual harassment and gender bias in the workplace. Sexual harassment such as inappropriate personal requests, questions, jokes or innuendo which brings the uncomfortable feeling to the other practitioner is prohibited and may lead to the form of criminal cases.

## **Methodology**

In this research, information and perceptions regarding gender diversity among the construction practitioners in the construction industry were collected via questionnaires via online method. A structured questionnaire that allowed the targeted respondents to complete the questionnaire by filling out the form through the internet was applied. The targeted respondents for this research were construction practitioners who work in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Since the sample in the population is difficult to reach, the non-probability sampling method was applied for this research.

According to the concept of the Central Limit Theorem (CLT), sample sizes which equal to or greater than 30 are often considered sufficient for the CLT to hold (Akhilesh, 2021). Thus, the minimum number of the questionnaire required for this research was a number greater than 30 for each group (male and female).

## **Results and Discussions**

A total of 180 sets of self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the construction company located in

Klang Valley, Malaysia. The total number of questionnaires received from the targeted respondents was 103 sets. The detail of the response rate is shown in Table 1. The overall response rate for the research is 57.22%. According to Lindsay (2022), a survey response rate of 50% or higher was considered excellent in most circumstances. Thus, this research has obtained an excellent response rate. Most of the respondents involved in this research were contractors while the least of the respondents from developer companies.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Profile	Descriptions	N	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	56	54.4
	Female	47	45.6
Age	20-30	23	22.3
	31-40	40	38.8
	41-50	20	19.4
	51-60	14	13.6
	61 & above	6	5.8
Current job position	Architect	21	20.4
	Engineer	34	33.0
	Quantity Surveyor	46	44.7
	Others: Project Manager	2	1.9
Nature of the company	Consultant	33	32.0
	Contractor	46	44.7
	Developer	24	23.3
Working experiences	0 to $\leq$ 2 years	13	12.6
	>2 to $\leq$ 5 years	14	13.6
	>5 to $\leq$ 10 years	29	28.2
	>10 to $\leq$ 15 years	22	21.4
	>15 to $\leq$ 20 years	10	9.7
	>20 to $\leq$ 25 years	4	4.9
	> 25 years	10	9.7

The perceptions of male and female respondents toward the importance of gender diversity in the construction industry were ranked to investigate whether there is a significant difference in terms of gender. The six importance of gender diversity were ranked based on their mean value.

Based on Table 2, the data collected indicated that most of the male respondents ranked higher marks on the statement of effective leadership could be achieved if gender diversity was applied among the construction practitioners in the construction industry. While most of the female respondents ranked the highest marks

toward the importance regarding the performance of the construction project could be attained if gender diversity was applied among the construction practitioners. In short, all of the statements stated were agreed by the majority of the respondents. All of the statements obtained a mean value higher than 3.00. Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the significant difference between gender and the solutions to improving gender diversity. The significance level for this research was 0.05. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Rank on Statements of Gender Diversity in Workplace

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Overall Rank	Male (N=56)		Female (N=47)	
				Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Different view point	3.500	0.850	5	3.390	6	3.620	5
Attract more talents	3.650	0.813	1	3.570	2	3.740	3
Fulfil employee shortage	3.610	0.910	3	3.480	5	3.770	2
Drive project performance	3.650	0.882	2	3.540	3	3.790	1
Achieve of effective leadership	3.650	0.882	2	3.660	1	3.660	4
Better reputation	3.570	0.986	4	3.520	4	3.640	4

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U Test on Gender Verification for the Importance of Gender Diversity in the Workplace

Statements	Mean Rank		p-value
	Male (N=56)	Female (N=47)	
Different view point	47.34	57.55	0.064
Attract more talents	48.24	46.48	0.110
Fulfil employee shortage	47.62	57.22	0.081
Drive project performance	47.49	57.37	0.066
Achieve of effective leadership	51.56	52.52	0.862
Better reputation	50.50	53.79	0.556

All of the importance of gender diversity had a p-value more than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). This result supported the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) to be accepted that both male and female respondents have similar perceptions in recognizing the importance of gender diversity. Thus, this shows that the variance in the genders of construction

practitioners toward the importance of gender diversity has no significant difference. The ranking of means for male and female respondents' rate of agreement toward the barriers in applying gender diversity among construction practitioners was analyzed respectively and will be ranked.

Table 4. Rank on the Barriers in applying Gender Diversity in the Workplace

Barrier	Mean	Standard Deviation	Overall Rank	Male (N=56)		Female (N=47)	
				Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Dangerous and tough working environment	3.580	0.902	5	3.500	6	3.680	3
Long and inflexible working hours	3.680	0.807	2	3.660	3	3.700	2
Sexual harassment	3.550	0.936	6	3.610	5	3.490	5
Negative stereotypes thinking	3.790	0.893	1	3.750	1	3.830	1
Lack and unequal job opportunities	3.660	0.858	3	3.700	2	3.620	4
Bad organization culture	3.560	0.976	4	3.640	4	3.680	3

Both the male and female respondents ranked negative stereotypical thinking as the top barrier with a mean value of 3.750 and 3.830 respectively. The male respondents ranked lack and unequal job opportunities (mean = 3.700) and long and inflexible working hours (mean = 3.660) as second place and third place. While female respondents ranked long and inflexible working hours (mean = 3.700) and bad organizational culture (mean = 3.680) as second place and third place respectively. In short, all of the barriers stated were agreed upon by the majority of the respondents. This is because none of the barriers was ranked under the mean value of 3.000 as the mean value under the 3.000 was considered as disagreed by the respondents.

Table 5. Mann-Whitney U Test on Gender Verification for the Importance of Gender Diversity in the Workplace

Barrier	Mean Rank		Asymp. Sig p-value
	Male (N=56)	Female (N=47)	
Dangerous and tough working environment	48.34	56.36	0.146
Long and inflexible working	50.40	53.90	0.515

hours			
Sexual harassment	53.68	50.00	0.506
Negative stereotypes thinking	50.50	53.70	0.544
Lack and unequal job opportunities	52.87	50.97	0.728
Bad organization culture	51.63	52.44	0.886

The barriers to gender diversity stated in this research had a p-value of more than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). This result indicated the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which stated that both male and female respondents have similar perceptions in recognizing the barriers to gender diversity. Thus, this shows that the variance in the genders of construction practitioners toward the barriers to improving gender diversity has no significant difference. The ranking of means for male and female respondents' rate of agreement toward the solutions to improve the gender diversity among construction practitioners was analyzed respectively and was ranked.

Table 6. Rank on the Solutions to Improve Gender Diversity in the Workplace

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Overall Rank	Male (N=56)		Female (N=47)	
				Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Formulate flexible working options	3.720	0.857	3	3.700	3	3.740	3
Perceived organizational support	3.740	0.863	2	3.660	4	3.830	1
Counter negative stereotyping	3.790	0.946	1	3.790	1	3.790	2
Mentoring and networking	3.620	0.887	4	3.710	2	3.510	4

All of the solutions in improving gender diversity in the construction industry were agreed upon by the majority of the respondents by obtaining a mean value greater than three. The mean value greater than three would be classified as agreeable by the respondents. It also showed that majorities of male respondents had ranked counter negative stereotyping thinking (mean = 3.790) and organized program mentoring and networking (mean = 3.710) as first place and second place. While female respondents ranked perceived organizational support (mean = 3.830) and counter negative stereotyping thinking (mean = 3.790) as first place and second place respectively. These results have shown that both male and female respondents had a deep perception in agreeing the improvement of gender diversity in the construction industry could be achieved through the settlement of negative stereotyping thinking. The formulated flexible working options were ranked at the third place by both female respondents (mean = 3.740) and male respondents (mean = 3.700).

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the significant difference between gender and the solutions to improving gender diversity. The significance level for this research was 0.05.

Table 7. Mann-Whitney U Test on Gender Verification for the Importance of Gender Diversity in the Workplace

Barrier	Mean Rank		Asymp. Sig p-value
	Male (N=56)	Female (N=47)	
Formulate flexible working options	50.57	53.70	0.566
Perceived organizational support	48.96	55.62	0.208
Counter negative stereotyping	51.62	52.46	0.879
Mentoring and networking	54.73	48.74	0.277

Its shown that all of the solutions in improved gender diversity were obtained a p-value greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). This result revealed that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was shown in this research in which both male and female respondents have similar perceptions in recognizing the solutions in improved gender diversity. Thus, this shows that the variance in the genders of construction practitioners toward the solutions in improved gender diversity has no significant difference.

## Conclusion

For the importance of gender diversity, most of the male respondents rated achieved of effective leadership, whereas female respondents rated the drive of project performance as the most significant importance of gender diversity. There is no significant difference between male and female for all the rated importance of gender diversity. While for the barriers in improving the gender diversity, both male and female respondents rated negative stereotyping thinking as the major contributor to the barriers in applied gender diversity. There is no significant difference between male and female for barriers in applying gender diversity. Male respondents rated counter negative stereotyping thinking, whereas female respondents rated that provided of organizational support as the most effective solution in improved the gender diversity. There is no significant difference between male and female for solution in improved gender diversity.

## Recommendations

The recommendation for future research is to compare the viewpoint and perceptions of construction practitioners in the whole of Malaysia, even in other developing countries such as Thailand, Dubai and

Indonesia. Future research was also suggested to apply a mixed method by distributing the questionnaire. By doing so, the researchers could have an extra view for further understanding of comprehensive knowledge and evidence from various viewpoints. Besides, an in-depth exploration of the perceptions through the interview further enhances the findings on perceptions toward gender diversity. The future research aslo was recommdated to conduct in more focus on a particular profession such as focus on the quantity surveyor. Last but not least, the sample size for future research should be enlarged for more generalizable findings.


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## Education Outside the Classroom: Importance of Learning Self-regulation and Resilience in Graduates of Healthcare


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**Abstract:** Times are changing classes from in-person to online training. Students can or cannot be prepared for this new order of education. Self-learning regulation (SLR) is essential for upcoming students and graduates in professional development and training. In addition, psychology and medicine students are in a unique position as they start their education, which already consists of autonomous learning outside the classrooms, even in undergraduate settings. Therefore, both characteristics, resilience and SLR, are essential to study and develop for healthcare workers. This study aims to determine if there is a correlation between resilience and self-learning regulation among the medicine and psychology graduates in Metropolitan Lima. This study was conducted, and 100 (68 women) medicine and psychology graduates from private and public universities across Lima participated. Three questionnaires were applied: (1) a sociodemographic questionnaire, (2) the Walding & Young resilience scale, and (3) the International Test Commission self-regulation of learning scale, both scales validated for Latin America. Both scales showed good internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha = .87 and .77, respectively. The self-regulation scale was comprised of two subscales: autonomy and self-control. Both showed high consistency Cronbach's alpha .80 and .85. Pearson correlations were carried out. Results showed that overall scales of Self-Learning Regulation (SLR) and Resilience were not correlated ( $r(99) = .10, p = .32$ ). However, resilience was significantly associated with the subscale of autonomy even after controlling for age and years of experience ( $r(96) = .49, p < .001$ ). A hierarchical multiple regression, controlling for age and gender, showed that autonomy also explained a significant proportion of variance in resilience ( $R^2 = .25, F(3, 96) = 10.82, p < .01$ ). Understanding the dynamics present in the healthcare graduates will help us construct strategies to fulfill the necessities of this important population, crucial for strength healthcare system of the country.

**Keywords:** Self-regulation, Resilience, Autonomy, Health, and Mental health graduates.

**Citation:** Salazar, C.A.E., Giraldo, K.P.A., & Baertl, R.B. (2024). Education Outside the Classroom: Importance of Learning Self-regulation and Resilience in Graduates of Healthcare. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science*

(pp. 1044-1058), Antalya, Turkey. ISTES.

## Introduction

Learning outside the classroom used to be related to careers; nowadays, it is much more common and, therefore, an essential topic in education. However, medicine and psychology continue to be a group that takes a critical aspect of their careers into practice outside the classroom, often far from teachers. Thus, students should be able to self-regulate their learning and continue to find motivation regardless of the day they had. On the one hand, resilience supports the student in overcoming adversity, overcoming difficulties, and confronting them with confidence and optimism (Boekaerts, 1996). Lack of resilience is equivalent to the absence of a protective factor against stress (Bandura, 2005). Therefore, a higher level of resilience would have a greater capacity to respond to stress. On the other hand, developing the capacity for self-regulation of learning supports the student in leading their education by monitoring, controlling, and regulating themselves while studying (Bandura, 2005).

Some studies have explored the relationship between online learning, self-regulation strategies, and how learning guides can help higher education students act autonomously (Losoi et al., 2013). Al-Hawamleh (Losoi et al., 2013) conducted a quantitative study with 40 master students. They were distributed into two groups of 20 students each; the first group attended online classes with their instructor, and the second group received online classes alone and the learning guide to enhance their autonomy. The measurement instruments were a questionnaire and a performance test. The learning guide provided to one group aimed to help them identify specific learning strategies for online learning. Analyses were carried out to compare the estimated performance scores with the actual ones, and the study concluded that providing students with a learning guide helps regulate their learning effectively. This study shows the importance of autonomy for different learning environments, especially outside the classroom, such as training in health care settings or online learning. In both cases, students spend most of their time without the instructor supporting their decisions.

Research on students' self-regulation ability has revealed high correlations with academic achievement (Luo et al., 2022). However, although research findings strongly support the importance of students' self-regulation, there are few teachers or research studies that prepare students to learn independently (Menzin et al., 2020). Thus, it is crucial to understand the bigger picture and explore how these characteristics may impact learning in different educational settings, especially outside the classroom when teachers have less contact with their students.

This paper aims to explore the correlation that could exist between resilience and learning self-regulation. Both characteristics are usually attributed to doctors and psychologists. However, to our knowledge, this is the first paper to study this correlation in this population.

The existent studies show the validation of the presented scales in different countries and their application in diverse populations or the analysis of scale variants or shorter versions (Kang, 2021). Still, the application in health professionals was primarily related to the students of medicine or psychology but not after they graduated (Aguirre-Raya et al., 2016). Different factors, such as schedules, could be associated with the difficulties of studying these populations. The virtuality and the close contact with the studied populations allowed us to use this survey among the participants.

Furthermore, the article invites education professionals to reflect on these concepts, not only for mental and healthcare students but for every student who takes education outside the classroom and may be alone to make decisions and to motivate themselves. For example, it would be interesting to understand if virtual education and mentoring rely on resilient and highly motivated students who would appreciate deciding when to study (in asynchrony education, for example). These concepts involve intrinsic and extrinsic factors that can modulate how we mentor students or professionals and the probable consequences that could affect the learner. Understanding these concepts and their relation could prevent the spread of stress-related diseases among students and healthcare workers by providing knowledge and tools to educators (Matos-Fernández, 2009).

## Method

This quantitative study draws from a single group of participants at a single testing point. It seeks to explain the relation between two relevant factors for healthcare graduates to overcome stressful career and training situations.

The following sections describe how the participants were invited to the study and their characteristics, measurements, procedures taken, and ethical considerations.

## Sample

A non-probabilistic and intentional strategy was employed to access recent graduates, such as alum mailing lists, LinkedIn groups, and other databases. The snowball strategy was used to reach as many graduates as possible from different universities in Lima.

Power calculations were carried out using the G-Power (Kang, 2021); it was determined that a sample of 100 graduate students was required to carry out a Pearson correlation with a statistical power of 0.80, an alpha of 0.05, and a two-tailed significance test.

100 (68 women) graduate students from 14 universities in Lima-Peru agreed to participate, with a mean age of 27.92 years old ( $SD=3.85$ ), a mode of 26 years old, a minimum age of 21, and a maximum of 44 years old. 57% of the participants were medicine graduates, and 43% were psychology graduates. More than 50% of the

participants finished their studies on or after 2020. More than 60% of the participants studied at private universities. A summary is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. General Characteristics of The Studied Population

NUMBER (N=100)		
Gender	Male	32
	Female	68
Degree	Psychology	43
	Medicine	57
Born Town	Lima	87
	Outside Lima	13
Year of Graduation	Before 2020	41
	After 2020	59

*Measures:*

Three measures were used; two were scales validated in Spanish and applied to diverse student populations in other studies, usually involving groups of students and graduates of different careers, such as engineering and administration. To our knowledge, no previous studies have evaluated medicine or psychology alums.

*Sociodemographic questionnaire*

This questionnaire aimed to collect information such as age and years of experience, as these factors could influence resilience and self-regulation.

*Walding & Young resilience scale*

It was adapted by Aguirre-Raya and colleagues (Aguirre-Raya et al., 2016). It comprises 25 items presented as a Likert-type scale, each offering seven alternatives ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). All of them explore people's resilience by correlating the emotions and reactions of the surveyed. The scale is rated positively, with a maximum possible score of 175 and a minimum of 25. It can be applied individually or collectively to adolescents, adults, and older adults. Total application time: approximately 20 minutes. In this study, it was used separately for adults. For example, the first item of the questionnaire asks about the capacity of the surveyed to maintain interest in the subjects they are reviewing, questioning the individual's ability to react to his environment.

*International Test Commission Self-Learning Regulation (SLR)*

Adapted by Matos (Matos-Fernández, 2009) comprised autonomy and control subscales. For example, the first item of the survey questions the participation in classes to improve skills and comprehension of the studied

subject content. On the other hand, item number 4 comments about the person's drive to do things, asking about the possible underlying motivation or control of the person to participate in the class or subject. In this setting, items 1,2,3,6, 9, 11, and 12 are components of the Autonomy sub-scale; those not included in the previous numbers correspond to the control sub-scale.

Procedure: The survey took four months to be completed. First, graduates were contacted directly through different alum databases and LinkedIn groups. All participants were asked to participate voluntarily and were given information to agree and provide their consent to participate by voluntarily filling in three questionnaires. Their data will only be used for academic purposes and kept confidential.

#### *Procedures and ethics aspects*

The procedure that was developed was as follows: first, the instruments were designed to be applied through Google Forms, diverse diffusion media channels were selected, and informed consent was developed. Then, a pilot study was conducted to achieve the public's objective; four people were elected to review the wording and experience during the formulary resolution and evaluate the access and feasibility of filling out the questionnaires. In addition, contacts of the alumni were reached distributing the surveys among them with a snowball recruitment technique. Also, social media groups were selected as an alumni Facebook group, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp alumni groups. The total length of the data recollection was about five months.

#### *Data analysis design*

Once the participants' responses were obtained, it was verified that all the questions were answered. Then, the statistical process was done with the statistical program SPSS 24, achieving the descriptive analysis, the confidence analysis, and the inferential analysis.

## **Results**

This section presents descriptive results, including the scales' reliability and the means of each scale. The inferential analyses were Pearson correlation, a partial correlation controlling for age and gender, and hierarchical multiple regression.

### **Descriptive analysis**

#### *Reliability*

All measures showed good internal consistency; the resilience scale showed a Cronbach's alpha of .87 (25 items), and the self-regulation of learning scale led to a Cronbach's alpha of .77 (14 items). The self-regulation scale comprised two subscales of autonomy and self-control; both also showed high consistency in Cronbach's

alpha .80 and .85.

*Means and Standard Deviation (SD)*

The mean of the scales was calculated based on the Likert scale summative according to the responses. Table II shows the standard of the resilience scales comprising the 25 scale items. The SLR scale includes 14 items; first, the mean of the whole scale is presented, and then the means of the two subscales, autonomy and self-control, are shown.

The resilience represents a mean punctuation of 120.99 with an SD of  $\pm 11.84$ . The SLR scale had a mean punctuation of 59.66 and an SD  $\pm 10.57$ . A subscale analysis was performed. The mean for the autonomy subscale was 33.03 with an SD of  $\pm 5.56$ , and the control subscale had a mean of 26.64 with an SD of  $\pm 8.81$ , indicating the variability of the distribution of the means when the subscales are analyzed separated.

Table 2. Means of the Scales and Components of Them

Means	Scales		
	Scale or sub-scale	Minimum-Maximum	Mean (SD)
	Resilience	89-148	120.99 (11.84)
	Complete Scale of Self-regulation of learning (SLR)	34-88	59.66 (10.57)
	SR - Autonomy	14-42	33.03 (5.56)
	SR - Control	10-52	26.63 (8.81)

Normality analysis was conducted, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was done finding that the resilience, self-regulation, and the subtest of control accomplish a normal distribution. All the scales were converted to the Z-scores, with this, all of them represent a normal distribution. Non-parametric testing was done to corroborate the results and the same results were obtained.

*Confidence analysis*

The confident analysis of the instruments was presented, and then the results of this research at descriptive, normality, correlational, and comparative levels.

Both instruments had an adequate liability coefficient. The Resilience Scale had an alpha of Cronbach =.87 (20 items), and the Self-Learning Regulation (SLR) questionnaire had an alpha of Cronbach=.77 (14 items). The confidence of the autonomy subdimension had a Cronbach alpha=0.8 (items 1, 3, 6, 9, 11, and 12), and the control subscale obtained a Cronbach alpha=.85 (items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14).

*Inferential analysis*

*Correlations*

Two Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to find if resilience and self-regulation correlate among medicine and psychology graduates. The first correlation was between overall scales of SLR and Resilience; results showed these were not significantly correlated ( $r(99)=.10, p=.32$ ). Further partial correlations between resilience and self-regulation sub-scales controlling for age and years of experience showed that resilience was significantly correlated with autonomy ( $r(96)=.49, p<.001$ ). There was no significant correlation as per the Pearson coefficient for autonomy and control, showing a negative correlation between both variables ( $r(96)=-.19, p=.06$ ).

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Between Slr and Resilience

	Resilience	Autonomy	Control
Resilience	1		
Autonomy	.49**	1	
Control	-.19	.03	1

\*\* . The correlation is significant at the level 0.1 (bilaterally).

Due to the slight non-normal distribution of the autonomy subscale, an inferential analysis of Spearman was conducted. In this case, we did not include the control variables. The first results found similar findings to the Pearson correlation between autonomy and resilience, a significant correlation,  $r(99)=0.47, p<.001$ . All the results of the Spearman correlations are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Spearman Correlation Between Slr and Resilience

	Resilience	Autonomy	Control
Resilience	1		
Autonomy	.47**	1	
Control	-.23*	.01	1

\*\* . The correlation is significant at the level 0.1 (bilaterally).

\* . The correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (bilaterally).

*Hierarchical multiple regression*

A hierarchical multiple regression, controlling for age and gender, showed that autonomy explains a significant proportion of variance in resilience ( $R^2 = .25, F(3, 96) = 10.82, p < .01$ ).

**Discussion**

Results suggest that resilience and self-regulation of learning are not correlated; there are no previous



comparisons of these scales, neither with the original scales nor the validations. Although these were expected to be correlated, I would have been because of the correlation between resilience and autonomy due to the nature of doctors' and psychologists' daily decisions. Making decisions with autonomy would reassure their resilience, and vice versa.

The significant correlation between autonomy and resilience aligns with the hypothesis formulated by Glittell (Gittell, 2016), who proposes that autonomy could be correlated with resilience and that the development of autonomy in doctors will help increase resilience.

Worldwide research on the two study samples has included students from undergraduate and graduate levels. For example, Al Hawamleh et al. (Al-Hawamleh et al., 2022) studied the effect of online learning, self-regulation strategies, and how the learning guidelines help master students develop autonomously. The sample was 40 students, who were distributed into a team A and a team B of 20 students. The first group did an online course with an instructor, and team B did just online classes. The measurement instruments included a standardized questionnaire and a benchmark test. In addition, a study guideline was given to help them identify the specific strategies for each context. The results compared the benchmark scores with the real ones. The study concluded that providing a guideline helps students regulate their learning effectively.

Another study conducted by Gaxiola and Gonzales (Gaxiola Romero et al., 2019) states that the SLR is essential for academic success. The objective of this study was to evaluate the role of the received support, social and educational, and their relationship with the students' resilience and adolescent academic goals under the SLR. About 227 high school students were evaluated using a questionnaire with a Likert scale. They found that the perceived social and educational support correlated with a positive resilience attitude and better SLR.

Dias and Cadime (2017) explored whether the SLR is mediated by protective factors, such as the school, the family, the community, their contemporaries, and resilience. The sample consisted of 393 undergraduate school adolescents. The instrument used was the Healthy Kids Resilience Assessment. It evaluates four protective factors: environment (school, family, community, and contemporaries) and resilience. Also, the Short-Regulation Questionnaire was included, and they could evaluate two dimensions: self-regulation—established objectives and impulse control. They found that the students that had a good family environment, community and also predicted better resilience levels and impulse control. Regarding the mediator effect of the self-regulation dimensions related to the protector factors and resilience, the latter was a moderate effect.

The sub-scale of SLR control is not significantly correlated to resilience. This could be explained by analyzing the questions on the control scale. These questions were focused on grades and recognition in the classroom. However, most medical and psychology students are highly self-motivated; their intrinsic motivation may not be related to a distinction in class or grades (De la Fuente, Jesús et al., 2020). De la Fuente had as per objective to determine the association relation or interdependence between the personal autoregulation (self-management or meta capability) with other variables of strategic-motivational, affective-motivational or emotional nature, one

of them the resilience. The sample was composed by 121 students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class of psychology in an University of Spain. The instruments used were the Self-regulation Questionary (SRQ), in the Spanish version, CAR (De la Fuente, 2003) and validated by Pichardo et al. (2014) (Pichardo et al., 2014); Revised Two-Factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) by Biggs, Kemberm and Leung (2001) (Biggs et al., 2001) in the Spanish version by De la Fuente (De la Fuente, 2003); the resilience was measured with the CD-RISC inventory by (Connor & Davidson, 2003), also validated with Spaniard population sample. Finally, to evaluate the anxiety, they applied the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI 80). The results showed a differential significant relationship between personal self-regulation and each type of learning focus, positive for tenacity and resilient control, negative for worrisome. They conclude that the obtained result is correlative with the hypothesis that the lack of resilience is equivalent to the lack of a protection factor against stress. Therefore, if there is a major level of resilience, there will be a better response against stress. Also, they reported a strong association between the SLR and the resilience-associated factors.

Another Peru study by Tello Field (Tello Quispe, 2021) used a sample of 177 psychology students from a private university in Lima to find a high correlation between resilience and SLR ( $p=0.61$ ) and, specifically, with the executive processing, the cognitive process, the motivation, and environmental control. The specialist suggested that the students there is need programs that work on both concepts early in their careers.

On the other hand, Villalba and Avello Field (Villalba-Condori & Avello-Martínez, 2019) had as their objective to identify the level of resilience and satisfaction with the life of the students of a public university in Arequipa against unfavorable situations in their lives. They studied a sample of 40 participants (aged between 18 and 36 years old), with a resilience scale of (Wagnild & Young, 1993) and the satisfaction life scale of Diener et. Al (Diener et al., 1985). They found that the students had a mean above average and had a great capacity to upfront the problems that came by. There is a high significant resilience level and life satisfaction in these environments.

As per the review above, when SLR and resilience correlate, there is a relation between variables (Tello Quispe, 2021), and both are learning mediators. Also, there is a better resilient disposition, involving the planning capacity and facing life problems, using this to achieve educative goals (Romero et al., 2013). The studies were done with adapted or validated in the study context (Hernández Barrios & Camargo Uribe, 2017). The relation between the two proposed variables in the study is limited, and there is even less information on the physicians and psychologist population, as some of them approach the resilience and the burnout (Wang et al., 2022). Still, there is no analysis in the SLR.

It is essential to recognize that during their last year of studies and practice, medicine and psychology students are characterized by working independently, and autonomy is an appreciated asset (Hand et al., 2022; Suleimany et al., 2022). It is important to note that the past pandemic could have affected the results as the health workers developed a different perspective of life and the constant practice of resilience in their work and personal lives (Van Wert et al., 2022). Moreover, autonomous work was valued during the pandemic and could have been a priority to develop, adding to the constant resilience mindset. Considering the increase of

independence that graduate students must have, for example, online studies, which may have synchronic but asynchronous work, resilience, and autonomy, with intrinsic motivation, will become an essential topic for educators to understand and acknowledge within their students. As well as to support development. Thus, exploring and understanding ways of evaluating and promoting these characteristics among students is vital.

As a result, the present research is justified in the three areas. First, on the social, it offers scientific evidence, so the educative institutions generate policies that promote the actions to strengthen the SLR as it is the most crucial variable that supports academic success and the autonomy component in medicine and psychology formation, by the characteristics of their professional exercise, requires a better resilience. In addition, in the theoretical, the study offers new information about the involved variables, determining their association and characteristics in a population not well studied in the country or outside it. After the study is realized, this will be one of the first associations for SRL and resilience in the proposed population. Finally, in practice, it can be included in the medicine and psychology curriculums, as well as strategies to strengthen the abilities of the SLR and the resilience level.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that resilience and SLR were not significantly correlated among medicine and psychology graduates in Lima. There was a significant correlation between the sub-scale of SLR autonomy and resilience; it also accounted for a significant proportion of the variance of resilience. This provides empirical evidence for the theoretical proposal that autonomy and resilience are correlated concepts. It should be noted that more studies are recommended to continue studying these topics.

## **Recommendations**

It is suggested that studies be developed with graduate populations in larger samples; this will allow extrapolation of more conclusions, considering transcultural aspects. In addition, it is suggested to continue observing the described population along their development to observe the outcomes as their resilience changes in the following years or is affected during observation. It is suggested to do an independent analysis by career to identify proper characteristics among each of them.

## **Acknowledgments**

We are grateful to Manuel Francisco Rodriguez Villegas, leader and founder of the master's in education program at the Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC). We also thank our classmates for their friendship and support throughout our lectures. We are very grateful to the Direccion de Investigacion of Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC) for supporting this research.

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ANNEX 1  
SELF REGULATION QUESTIONARY

Las siguientes afirmaciones se refieren a las razones que tienes para participar en las clases. Las personas tienen distintas razones para participar y queremos conocerlas. Por favor, usa la siguiente escala para responder a cada una de las siguientes frases. Tus respuestas son confidenciales.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Nada verdadero para mi.			De alguna manera verdadero para mi.		Totalmente verdadero	
1. Yo participo activamente en las clases porque siento que es una buena manera de mejorar mis habilidades y la comprensión de los contenidos de los cursos.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Yo participo activamente en las clases porque otros pensarían mal de mí si no lo hiciera.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Yo participo activamente en las clases porque una comprensión profunda de mis clases es importante para mi crecimiento intelectual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Yo participo activamente en las clases de mi carrera porque me sentiría mal conmigo mismo si es que no lo hago.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Yo sigo las sugerencias de mis profesores porque siguiéndolas, yo obtendré una buena nota.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Yo sigo las sugerencias de mis profesores porque pienso que me ayudarán a lograr un mejor aprendizaje.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Yo sigo las sugerencias de mis profesores porque quiero que otros piensen que soy bueno.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Yo sigo las sugerencias de mis profesores porque es más fácil hacer lo que me dicen que pensar acerca de eso.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Yo sigo las sugerencias de mis profesores porque es importante para mí aprender lo mejor que pueda.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Yo sigo las sugerencias de mis profesores porque probablemente me sentiría culpable si no lo hago.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. La razón por la que continuaré ampliando mis conocimientos es porque es interesante aprender más.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. La razón por la que continuaré ampliando mis conocimientos es porque es un reto comprender realmente lo que hacemos en los	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

cursos.

13. La razón por la que continuaré ampliando mis conocimientos es porque las buenas notas en los cursos se verían muy bien en mi consolidado de notas. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. La razón por la que continuaré ampliando mis conocimientos es porque quiero que otros vean que soy inteligente. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
-



ANNEX 2

RESILIENCE SCALE


Authors: Wagnild and Young (1993)

Instrucciones: En este cuadernillo te vamos a presentar unas frases que te permitirán pensar acerca de su forma de ser. Deseamos que contestes a cada una de las siguientes preguntas con una X la casilla que mejor represente la frecuencia con que actúas, de acuerdo con la siguiente escala.


	Nunca			Siempre		
1. Es importante para mí mantenerme interesado en las cosas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Dependo más de mí mismo que de otras personas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Me mantengo interesado en las cosas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Generalmente me las arreglo de una manera u otra.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Puedo estar solo si tengo que hacerlo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. El creer en mí mismo me permite atravesar tiempos difíciles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Tengo la energía suficiente para hacer lo que debo hacer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Cuando estoy en una situación difícil generalmente encuentro una salida	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Mi vida si tiene significado.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Me siento orgulloso de haber logrado cosas en mi vida.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Cuando planeo algo lo realizo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Algunas veces me obligo a hacer cosas aunque no quiera.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Generalmente puedo ver una situación en varias maneras.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Soy amigo de mi mismo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. No me lamento de las cosas por las que no puedo hacer nada.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Acepto que hay personas a las que yo no les agrado.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Tomo las cosas una por una.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Usualmente veo las cosas a largo plazo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Tengo autodisciplina.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Siento que puedo manejar varias cosas al mismo tiempo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Rara vez me pregunto cuál es la finalidad de todo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Puedo enfrentar las dificultades porque las he experimentado anteriormente.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Soy decidido(a)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. Por lo general, encuentro algo en que reírme.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. En una emergencia soy una persona en quien se puede confiar.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# The Psychological Resources of Special Educators in Preventing Burnout in Hungary

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**Abstract:** In our study conducted in 2022, we investigated the mental well-being and burnout levels among Hungarian special education teachers, with a sample size of N: 134. Our aim was to identify the psychological resources that positively influence coping with challenges. We employed various measurement tools including the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES), the Brief COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced) Questionnaire developed by Lazarus and Folkman, the Beck Depression Inventory-Short Form (BDI-SF), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MOS SSS-H), and the Psychological Immune System Scale (PIS) by Attila Oláh. The findings of our study support the conclusion that prevention interventions targeting burnout should primarily focus on alleviating depression. Purposeful action and seeking help coping strategies, as well as the Approach-Monitoring subsystem of the Psychological Immune System—indicating weak levels of understanding the environment and monitoring positive consequences—emerged as protective factors against burnout. Therefore, preventive programs should concentrate on enhancing realistic situation assessment, creative problem-solving skills, the ability to mobilize internal and external resources, emotional and cognitive control functions, and fostering a mindset tuned into potential positive outcomes.

**Keywords:** Special educators, Burnout, Prevention, Challenges

**Citation:** Di Blasio, B., Szigeti, M. V. (2024). The Psychological Resources of Special Educators in Preventing Burnout in Hungary. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1059-1077), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Our study undertakes a comprehensive examination of the factors imperiling the mental well-being of special educators, presenting the findings of our research conducted in 2022. Delving into the individual manifestations of burnout, our research aims to design workplace interventions tailored to the unique needs of these professionals. Given the multifaceted nature of special education work, it is imperative to delve deeper into the factors undermining well-being, which, in turn, impact personal and professional efficacy, constituting crucial

domains for psychological and pedagogical intervention.

Despite the proliferation of studies among educators over the past two decades, research on the mental health of special educators remains scant in the domestic literature. Conversely, on the international stage, there has been a marked increase in scholarly discourse addressing the mental health of special educators since 1979. Particularly from the mid-2000s, this discourse gained prominence, notably in the United States, where the success of initiatives like the No Child Left Behind (2001) program hinged significantly on the presence and preparedness of special educators. In Europe, the effectiveness of special educators is pivotal for the successful implementation of integration and inclusion in schools, highlighting the relevance of this profession. Notably, special educators operate within a uniquely challenging sphere, navigating anthropological, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical complexities.

It is an undeniable truth that educator attrition rates are on the rise both globally and domestically, posing multifaceted challenges to the educational landscape. Moreover, the compounding effects of global socio-economic shifts, 21st-century challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbate these challenges, necessitating nuanced and proactive approaches to safeguard the well-being of special educators and, by extension, the efficacy of the educational system.

Interest in psychological safety arises as a necessary response to the practical challenges of our time. Psychological safety has various levels: from a national security perspective, it can primarily be observed within the structure of society, secondarily within the social environment—such as family, immediate surroundings, reference groups, and workplace communities.

The literature offers specific interpretations of the concept: national, educational, organizational, and other security functions. Chen et al.'s (2018) research shows that these layers of security interact with each other, meaning that a psychologically safe organizational environment significantly influences a person's satisfaction with their work and career, and experiencing success and fulfillment in their work and profession leads to psychological well-being (Chen et al., 2018). According to Singh et al. (2018), the organization and community serve as sources of social support for the individual, and the need for belongingness is crucial, indirectly affecting the individual's psychological safety. From a societal perspective, safety contributes to the development and survival of individuals and communities. However, from the individual's side, characteristics such as will, determination, mindset, and behavior potentially protect the individual from external and internal threats. External threats are risks associated with the environment that hinder human life, violate fundamental rights and freedoms, and impede the realization of vital needs. Internal threats include risks related to the individual's (community, society) abilities and capabilities, manifested in the absence of individual motivations and interactions among members of the community and society. The lack or loss of psychological safety weakens an individual's adaptability, making it difficult to adhere to the rules of social coexistence or, in more severe cases, violating them.

The psychological safety of the educational environment lies in preserving the well-being of participants and creating safe working and learning conditions. Psychological safety entails maintaining a positive self-image, emotional, intellectual, personal, and social well-being within specific social and psychological circumstances, as well as the absence of situations that cause psychological harm.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **The Characteristics of Burnout Syndrome**

According to the framework proposed by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), burnout among educators, including both general educators and special educators, can be understood as a phenomenon resulting from the interaction of prolonged stress, individual personality traits, emotional regulation, and coping mechanisms.

Among the causative factors leading to burnout among educators are:

1. **Excessive Administrative Obligations:** Demands for administrative tasks beyond the scope of teaching responsibilities can contribute to feelings of overwhelm and exhaustion among educators.
2. **Challenges in Time Management:** Difficulties in balancing work and family expectations, exacerbated by the high frequency of stressful situations, can lead to heightened stress levels and emotional exhaustion.
3. **Imbalance Between Effort and Reward:** When the efforts invested in teaching exceed the rewards received, educators may experience a sense of disillusionment and emotional depletion.
4. **Overcommitment:** A tendency to take on excessive responsibilities and work beyond one's capacity can exacerbate stress levels and contribute to burnout.

These factors are further complicated by the socio-economic environment, which presents numerous challenges for individuals and communities, emphasizing the detrimental effects of globalization.

Christina Maslach's (2003) multidisciplinary approach characterizes workplace burnout as a psychological syndrome resulting from prolonged responses to workplace stressors. Maslach traces the concept of workplace burnout back to the novel "A Burnt-Out Case" (Greene, 1961), which depicts an architect who resigns from his job due to emotional turmoil and retreats to the African jungle. This literary depiction resonates with similar psychological phenomena described in the literature, such as extreme fatigue, loss of idealism, and passion for work.

The approach to burnout as a societal problem was recognized by social scientists long before psychologists acknowledged it as a phenomenon. The vulnerability of educators to burnout is not a new issue. Over the past decade and a half, the topic has intermittently surfaced in the literature, yielding numerous scientific findings. Previous research predominantly focused on burnout among helping professionals, with educators receiving comparatively less attention. Burnout syndrome entails a change in one's relationship with work, manifested in

clinical symptoms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. It primarily affects individuals engaged in emotionally demanding human interactions in their work, including doctors, healthcare professionals, clergy, social workers, and notably, teachers. However, university students undergoing teacher training, who are preparing for similarly demanding careers and spend significant time in educational settings, have not received adequate attention. They encounter similar stressful environments, where feelings of professional incompetence may further hinder their ability to maintain emotional balance.

Research on burnout addresses the phenomenon from individual, interpersonal, and organizational perspectives. The individual approach focuses on personality traits predisposing to burnout and individual symptoms of burnout. Interpersonal perspectives examine the relationships between helping professionals and their clients, while organizational research emphasizes the specific characteristics of the workplace, job roles, and organizational context.

#### *Challenges Faced by Special Educators in the Classroom*

The level of burnout is associated not only with stress management and emotional regulation but also with another factor: the effectiveness of teachers in coping with students' behavioral difficulties (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Often, students' behavioral problems lead to teacher burnout (Hastings & Brown, 2002), and the ratio of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in the classroom correlates with higher levels of burnout (Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002). Interestingly, research by Pullis (1992) indicates that teachers dealing with emotionally and behaviorally disturbed students did not perceive their students' behavior as a significant challenge, nor did they identify it as the primary source of stress. Ruble et al. (2011) found that the quality of classroom management was associated with burnout among teachers of students with autism spectrum disorder, but there was no correlation with the amount of administration or support received from colleagues.

Notably, Irvin et al. (2013) found a reverse relationship between the number of adults allocated to students with autism spectrum disorder and burnout, suggesting that higher levels of burnout are more prevalent in models with multiple teachers. Embich (2001) found that high levels of burnout were observed among teachers co-teaching for one hour daily, indicating potential challenges between special educators and mainstream teachers that may strain the workplace environment. It is likely that smoother professional collaboration occurs with students facing more severe issues (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2013). In domestic professional circles, the possibility of a two-teacher model is becoming increasingly prominent. However, experiences suggest that the methodological background of this collaborative form must be meticulously developed to ensure the success of integration.

Given the diversity of results, it would be worthwhile to examine how factors such as the type of disability and environmental variables (e.g., administrative support, inclusive pedagogical environment) influence the mental well-being of special educators.

### *Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict*

Role ambiguity refers to situations where the job role and expected responsibilities do not clearly align (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014). On the other hand, role conflict arises when an individual's responsibilities clash with the tasks to be fulfilled, or when it is not possible to fulfill them in a reasonable time and manner. Both role conflict and role ambiguity significantly contribute to the burnout of special educators, considering factors such as teacher age, gender, professional experience, and qualifications (Crane & Iwanicki, 1986).

The age of students also influences the extent of teacher burnout. Longitudinal studies spanning five years have shown that special educators working with students aged 13-19 experience higher levels of burnout, characterized by depersonalization and emotional exhaustion (Weber & Toffler, 1989; Carlson & Thompson, 1995; Frank & McKenzie, 1993). Another study found that working with intellectually disabled and autistic students can be taxing for teachers, even when the number of support adults allocated to the students is higher than average (Irvin et al., 2013). Additionally, resource shortages exacerbate the increasing burden of administrative tasks, organizing parent meetings, collaborating with parents, and performing tasks outside of school (Embich, 2001).

Other studies have focused on the emotional needs of special educators. These needs include feelings of security (both personal and broader dimensions), social support, feelings of appreciation, autonomy, and opportunities for self-realization (Carlson & Thompson, 1995). Concerning burnout, the frequency and variety of stressors particularly endanger novice special educators, often leading to attrition (Fimian & Blanton, 1986). This phenomenon has already been hinted at in domestic contexts.

Leadership attitude also influences the level of burnout among colleagues. Several studies have shown that supportive leadership in the workplace and the quality of collegial relationships are inversely correlated with burnout (Weber & Toffler, 1989; Zabel & Zabel, 2002; Embich, 2001; Ruble & McGrew, 2013). Typically, parents of children with disabilities visit teachers less frequently with their problems. However, if parental relations are supportive and cooperative, they can act as factors against teacher burnout (Zabel & Zabel, 2002).

Internationally, there is scarce scientific evidence regarding proactive prevention of burnout among special educators. Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) designed a targeted intervention focusing on stress and colleague support. They included a control group in the experiment, where no targeted intervention took place during this period, only participation in measurements. The intervention lasted for ten weeks, consisting of two-hour sessions weekly. For five weeks, the focus was on coping with stress, aiming to develop the following skills: (a) problem identification and solution, (b) physiological coping (e.g., muscle relaxation), and (c) cognitive coping (e.g., self-awareness and positive meaning-making). In the second phase, over five weeks, teachers practiced problem-solving related to school in pairs in a four-step process: (a) clarifying the problem, (b) summarizing the problem, (c) planning intervention, and (d) evaluating the outcome of the intervention. Participants in the

intervention group experienced significant positive differences in emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, workplace satisfaction, and organizational commitment. In contrast, teachers in the control group did not experience any change in emotional exhaustion or workplace efficiency. In another study, Jennett, Harris, and Mesibov (2003) found that teachers' commitment to targeted supportive interventions was inversely correlated with emotional exhaustion and personal achievement. Commitment also explained 17.8% of the variability in personal performance, indicating that teachers who commit to a (psychoeducational) training may achieve greater success in reducing burnout. As burnout arises from the interaction of long-term stress, individual characteristics, and coping strategies (Maslach et al., 2001), research on burnout among special educators may identify certain characteristics, emotions, or perceptions as important targets or aspects for interventions (Brunsting et al., 2014).

The literature on teachers' emotional states and burnout has generally suggested that emotional regulation may be a promising target for interventions. Given the results of Cooley and Yovanoff's (1996) task-oriented coping and emotional regulation-focused intervention, experts call for further research on teacher emotional regulation to improve the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing teacher burnout (Park & Shin, 2020). In the future, studies should be conducted to generalize the results for teacher and educator training, as well as training for teachers and leaders' professional development.

## **Method**

### **About the research**

In our research endeavor, we engaged with the cohort of special educators, assessing various dimensions pertinent to their psychological well-being. Data acquisition was conducted through meticulously structured online surveys, predominantly targeting educational support services and unified special education methodological institutions, albeit not exclusively so. Participation was solicited anonymously and voluntarily, predicated on self-disclosure. After data collection, a rigorous regimen of statistical analysis was undertaken to derive meaningful insights.

Our research inquiries were tailored to delineate the post-pandemic landscape of burnout prevalence among special educators, discern the emergence of depressive symptomatology, identify salient psychological immune competencies amenable to preventive interventions, and unravel the repertoire of coping strategies employed by this cohort. Of particular interest was the correlation between burnout indicators obtained through the Maslach Burnout Inventory and other measurement parameters.

By elucidating the mental health dynamics of special educators, we endeavored to chart a course towards tailored interventions aimed at bolstering their psychological resilience and professional efficacy. This included envisaging burnout prevention workplace training initiatives, strategically designed to align with the psychological needs discerned from our empirical findings.



### *Sampling*

The number of respondents was N: 134. The survey was conducted in 2022. In terms of age, the majority were between 39 and 60 years old, with an average age of 46 years. Among the respondent special education teachers, 85 worked in Pedagogical Services, 8 in primary schools, 38 in Special Education Needs Resource Centers and 3 as psychologists in kindergartens. The respondents worked in Southern Transdanubia region, Hungary. In terms of residence, 42% of the respondents lived in county seats, 32% in cities, and 26% in villages.

We asked whether they engage in other supplementary employment besides their main job, to which 49% or 65 respondents answered yes. Forty-three percent of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, while 57% had a master's degree; none had a doctoral degree.

### *Measurement Instruments*

In addition to collecting demographic data, in our structured questionnaire-based cross-sectional study, we used the following tests:

Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES): This questionnaire assesses emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. It consists of 22 items and provides a measure of burnout among educators. Items inquire about the perceived stressfulness of one's work and the frequency or intensity of experiencing various physiological states (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Brief COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced) Questionnaire: This instrument, developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), explores coping strategies. Coping is the result of the dynamic interaction between personal characteristics and environmental factors, indicating the effort required to implement the chosen coping strategy.

Beck Depression Inventory-Short Form (BDI-SF): The BDI-SF measures psychological status and depressive symptoms. It assesses emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral reactions to everyday stress (Purebl, Rózsa, & Kopp, 2006).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MOS SSS-H): This questionnaire measures perceived social support, which plays an important role in maintaining psychological well-being (Sz. Makó et al., 2016).

Psychological Immune System Scale: This instrument assesses the development and efficiency of the psychological immune system, identifying abilities that aid in coping with stress. It comprises 80 items and 16 subscales (Oláh, 2005).

Finally, we examined the relationships between various measurement data, particularly regarding factors influencing burnout. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28.

## Results

In response to our first research question, our measurement results are depicted in Figure 1. Those suffering from burnout syndrome tend to be less tolerant of challenging situations, displaying impatience, negative attitudes, and cynicism. These characteristics can also hinder cooperation within their environment (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

RQ1: What is the extent of burnout among special education teachers following the concluded pandemic?

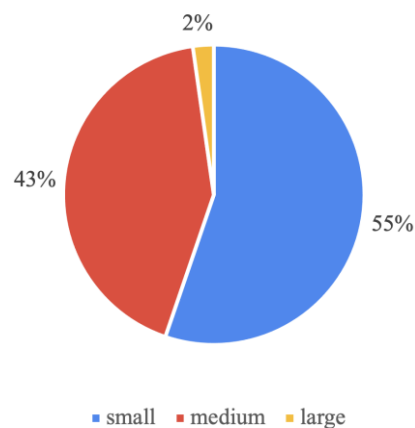


Figure 1. The extent of burnout among special education teachers (Maslach)

The examined sample demonstrates mild to moderate levels of burnout, with three individuals experiencing high levels of burnout, indicating the typical presence of burnout symptoms, often referred to as the epidemic of our time, among responding special education teachers.

The normalized (divided by the number of relevant questions) average score for burnout is 1.85 (SD=0.77), slightly high. The normalized average scores for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment subscales are 2.50 (SD=1.18), 0.76 (SD=0.82), and 1.80 (SD=0.79) respectively. The average age of the group with moderate burnout is 44 years, while that of the group with mild burnout is 48 years. No trend between years of professional experience and the overall burnout score was observed in our sample ( $r=-0.016$ ;  $p=0.858$ ), and marital status did not affect the level of burnout.

RQ2: What level of depression characterizes special education teachers?

11% of the respondents are in a moderately severe state of depression, with no one characterized by severe depressive conditions, and the largest group (93 individuals) is characterized by mild depressive conditions (see Figure 2). 20% of the respondents fall within the normal range. In our sample, there is a slight negative correlation between depression and age ( $r = -0.16$ ).

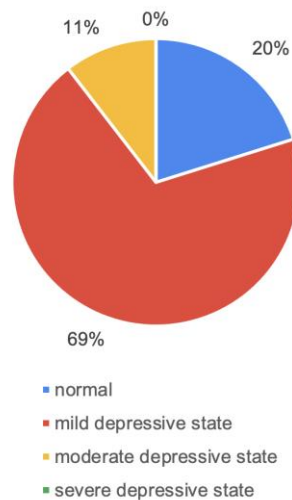


Figure 2. Severity of Depression according to the Beck Depression Inventory

Depression significantly reduces an individual's ability to perform their work and makes it difficult for them to cope with the tasks of everyday life (Ádám–Nistor–Nistor–Cserhádi–Mészáros, 2015). Both genetic and environmental factors play a role in the development of depression (Hidaka, 2012). Among environmental factors, high job demands, low control over work, and lack of social support are noteworthy, significantly increasing the risk of depression (Bonde, 2008). In terms of symptom similarity, it can be observed that both conditions are characterized by a decrease in emotional responses to others' problems, significant anhedonia, social withdrawal, difficulties in recalling information, and making decisions (Ádám et al. 2015; Kulcsár 1998). The decrease in activation level is not as pronounced in burnout as it is in depression. People experiencing burnout appear more vital than those with depression (Shirom–Ezrachi, 2003). They have a more realistic perception of their responsibility in specific situations, and their guilt is also less than that of those struggling with depression (Benninkmeyer, 2001). In terms of symptom differences, those experiencing burnout only have impaired feelings of reciprocity in workplace relationships, while those with depression have all their intimate relationships affected (Bakker et al. 2000). Furthermore, burnout is specifically linked to the work environment, while depression is context-independent and extends to all areas of life, including the workplace (Leiter–Durup, 1994).

RQ3: How do special education teachers cope with environmental challenges?

Special education teachers tend to respond to challenges with higher levels of coping strategies, and they perceive difficulties less as attacks (see Figure 3). Emotionally driven actions as coping strategies are less effective in dealing with challenges and are less characteristic of the surveyed special education teachers. However, it appears that even high-level coping strategies do not sufficiently protect against the development of burnout and depression. This could be because problem-focused strategies may not function effectively in the current complex educational environment, and negative reactions from interaction partners may also hinder their implementation. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that among special education teachers, goal-directed action,

seeking help, and problem analysis are more characteristic coping strategies, as reflected in previous research. Thus, if we operationalize the problem as an obstacle rather than a barrier, we may be more successful in coping with it psychologically.

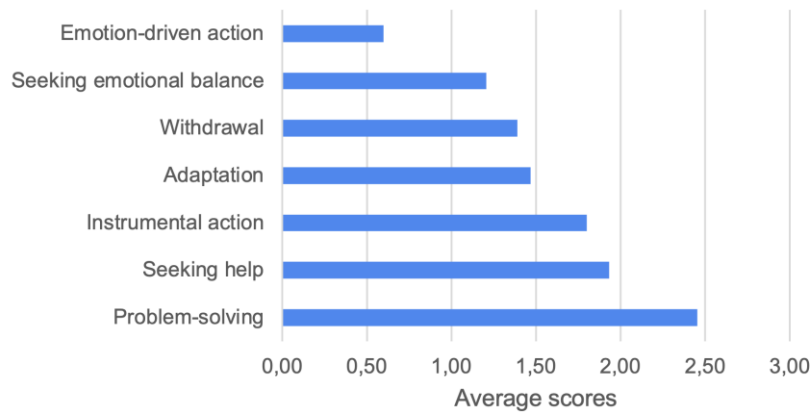


Figure 3. Lazarus Coping Modes

RQ 4: What are the characteristics of seeking social support among special education teachers?

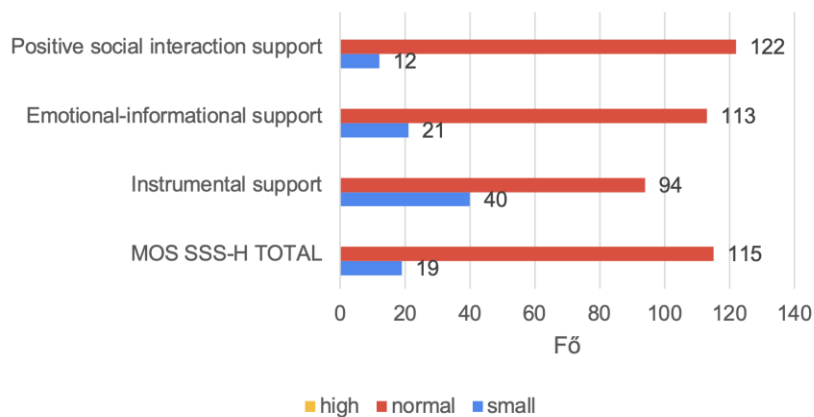


Figure 4. Attributes of Social Support

Attributes of social support are depicted in Figure 4. Forty individuals feel they lack instrumental (tangible) support, meaning they have no one to assist them when they need support or physical help. Relatively few, 12 individuals, feel they lack sufficient positive human relationships, lacking someone to unwind with or share their emotions. Finally, according to the global index of social support, 19 individuals have low support. Overall, the special education teachers in our sample exhibit varied patterns of seeking support, which can be significant in coping with burnout. Higher social support is moderately associated with higher psychological well-being, positive affectivity, and lower formation of depressive and anxiety symptoms (Sz. Makó et al., 2016).

RQ 5: What are the characteristics of special education teachers' psychological immune system?

Using the shortened version of the Psychological Immune System Survey, we can characterize the components of an individual's psychological immune system along three dimensions: Approach Subsystem, Self-regulating Subsystem, and Mobilizing-Creative-Executive Subsystem (Oláh, 2005). The measured values pertain to the special education teachers we surveyed, while the other dataset represents the national standard (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Components of PIS

In each component, the deviation is significant at a significance level of  $p=0.05$ , except for “Challenge, Flexibility”, “Social Creativity”, “Persistence” and “Inhibition of Excitation”. In fact, in the other cases, except for "Social Monitoring, Empathy," the differences are significant even at a significance level of  $p=0.01$  (see Figure 6).

Among the scores of the immune competence scale, there is a deviation from the Hungarian average in the following components: Emotional Control, Persistence, Social Creativity, Challenge-Flexibility, and Growth Sense. However, the following components perform better than the national average: Impulse Control, Synchronicity, Social Mobilization Ability, Self-Efficacy, Ingenuity, Social Monitoring Ability, Empathy, Self-Esteem, Sense of Coherence, Sense of Control, and Positive Thinking (see Figure 5). These latter components can serve as significant resources against burnout.

A weaker level of these abilities compared to the average suggests that these components are less effectively mobilized in coping with stress:

**Emotional Control:** Indicates how well an individual can control anxiety caused by threats, dangerous situations, and failures. Individuals with lower scores find it more challenging to control their negative emotions and invest less energy in constructive behavior.

**Persistence:** Measures how well an individual can delay gratification of needs and continue determined behavior in the face of obstructive factors. Individuals with below-average scores are less assisted by lower frustration tolerance.

**Social Creativity:** The scale measures how well a person can discover abilities in oneself and others that are not necessarily obvious but useful in coping with stress. Individuals with lower scores tend to try to solve their difficulties alone.

**Challenge-Flexibility:** Refers to the inclination to follow changes and sensitivity to them. Individuals with lower scores are less open to change and less receptive to novelty.

**Growth Sense:** Measures the perceived extent of a person's own psychological development. Individuals with lower scores find it harder to define themselves as capable of renewal.

On the other hand, the following components, in which the scores are higher than average, indicate the following abilities:

**Impulse Control:** Individuals with high scores rationally control their behavior and choose the most appropriate behavior for the situation.

**Synchronicity:** The individual with a high score is able to concentrate his or her mental energy on his or her activity. He or she can control his or her attention and consciousness.

**Social Mobilization Ability:** Indicates how successful a person is in persuading, motivating, and directing others. Individuals with high scores are able to control others and persuade them to support their goals.

**Self-Efficacy:** Indicates how well a person can actualize learned or self-produced plans and solution proposals. The individual with a high score feels capable of carrying out behavior conducive to achieving the set goal.

**Ingenuity:** Measures the creative, innovative capacity of the personality and the propensity for constructive and original relationships.

**Social Monitoring Ability, Empathy:** The scale measures social openness. Individuals with high scores can selectively perceive and use environmental social information.

**Self-Esteem:** This scale measures how much we value ourselves. Individuals with high scores appreciate themselves, are proud of themselves, and their achievements.

**Sense of Coherence:** The ability to understand events. The scale has three main components: perception, management of resources, and meaningfulness. The individual with a high score treats life's difficult moments as challenges to be overcome. He or she seeks the meaning of a given situation and does not flee from trials and challenges.

**Sense of Control:** The scale measures how much control we have over our lives. Lower scores indicate that the individual is less able to activate his or her psychological strength to maintain or acquire control.

**Positive Thinking:** Refers to how well an individual can anticipate favorable changes. The individual with a high score is optimistic and success-oriented, even in difficult situations (Oláh,1996).

The various components can be classified into three subsystems. Among the educators, particularly low levels are achieved in the Proximity-Monitoring subsystem, meaning that their understanding of the environment and monitoring of positive consequences is weak, while in the Self-Regulatory and Mobilization-Creative-Executive subsystems, their indicators significantly exceed standard values (see Figure 6).

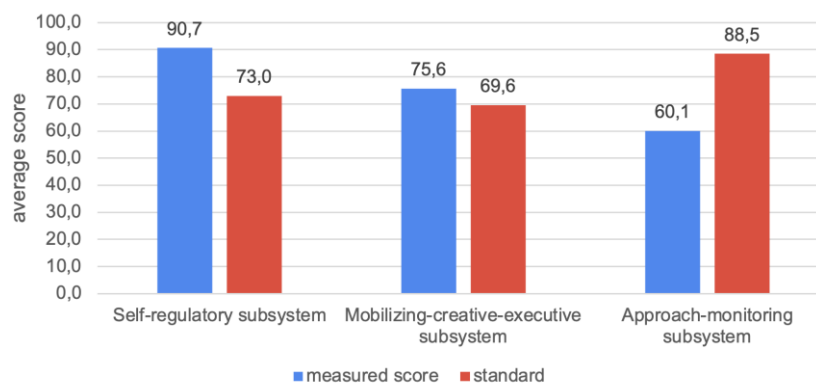


Figure 6. Subsystems of PIS

Based on the results of the other measurements, predicting the extent of burnout highlights the need to design prevention training with a problem-focused approach rather than conducting interventions of uncertain efficacy. Our sixth research question addresses this issue.

RQ 6: What factors should prevention training focus on in terms of burnout prevention?

Using multivariable multiple linear regression with the Stepwise technique, we examined to what extent the Lazarus coping strategies, the shortened version of the Beck Depression Inventory, the MOS SSS-H, and the Psychological Immunization Inventory could predict the total score of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The



regression model fitted to special education teachers (sixth model) is globally significant based on the F-test results ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 1).

Table 1. Fitted multivariate linear regression model.

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	<i>p</i>
6	Regression	132,466	6	22,078	31,589	<0,001 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	88,762	127	0,699		
	Total	211,228	133			

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	St. error of the estimate
6	0,774 <sup>a</sup>	0,599	0,580	0,83601

a. Predictor variables: Depression (0-10), Approach-monitoring subsystem (0-10), Goal-oriented action (0-10), Adaptation (0-10), Help-seeking (0-10), Emotional-informational support (0-10)

Based on the variables included in the model, such as Depression (0-10), Approach-Monitoring subsystem (0-10), Goal-oriented Action (0-10), Adaptation (0-10), Seeking Support (0-10), and Emotional-Informational Support (0-10), the multiple determination coefficient of the explanatory variables is 0.774, meaning that these variables collectively account for 58.0% of the variance in the Maslach Burnout Inventory score among special education teachers. According to the standardized beta values, Depression has the greatest impact on the burnout score, followed by the Approach-Monitoring subsystem as the second most influential among coping methods, Goal-Directed Action as the third, Seeking Support as the fourth, Adaptation as the fifth, and Emotional-Informational Support from the MOS SSS-H as the sixth most influential factor (see Table 2).

Table 2. Fitted multivariate linear regression model.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized B	Standard error of coefficients	Standardized beta coefficient	t	<i>p</i>
	Depression (0-10)	,535	,069	,541	7,744	<,001
	Approach-monitoring subsystem (0-10)	-,247	,065	-,263	-3,797	<,001
	Goal-oriented action (0-10)	-,117	,036	-,200	-3,262	,001
	Adaptation (0-10)	,099	,037	,154	2,644	,009
	Help-seeking (0-10)	-,083	,031	-,162	-2,707	,008
	Emotional and informational support (0-10)	,100	,043	,152	2,305	,023

a. Dependent variable: Burnout (0-10)

Therefore, it can be stated regarding special education teachers that if the Depression total score increases by 1

point, the burnout total score increases by an average of 0.54 according to the model, with all other factors in the model remaining constant. If the Approach-Monitoring subsystem score increases by 1 point, the burnout total score decreases by an average of 0.25 according to the model. If the Goal-Directed Action coping mode score increases by 1 point, the burnout total score decreases by an average of 0.12 according to the model. If the Adaptation coping mode score increases by 1 point, the burnout total score increases by an average of 0.10 according to the model, assuming all other factors in the model remain constant. If the Emotional-Informational Support score increases by 1 point, the burnout total score increases by an average of 0.10 according to the model (*ceteris paribus*). Finally, according to the model, if the Seeking Support coping mode score increases by 1 point, the burnout total score decreases by 0.08 on average.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The methodological limitation of the study lies in the non-representative nature of our sample. The research participants predominantly reside and work in Somogy County, in Hungary. It is possible that the measurement outcomes could be influenced by regional factors that have not been accounted for in this study. Additionally, a significant factor impacting the research was the COVID-19 pandemic, as data collection occurred immediately after its abatement. This is likely to result in a decreased willingness to complete surveys, as individuals returned to their regular routines with potentially depleted psychological resources. Consequently, our measured data may reflect a heightened level of exhaustion. Thus, it would be valuable to conduct future follow-up surveys with participants and expand the study to encompass organizational functioning in educational and workplace settings.

Conversely, given that our primary objective was to investigate the antecedents of burnout and identify key influencing factors, the substantial proportion of “burned out” special education teachers could be construed as advantageous. This affords us a larger sample size of individuals experiencing burnout.

### **Conclusion**

The level of burnout among special education teachers showed no correlation with the demographic factors we examined, including age and years of work experience. The results of the conducted studies support the conclusion that prevention interventions against burnout should primarily focus on reducing depression. The Emotion-Centered coping mode of Adaptation also increases the level of burnout, so supportive techniques should also focus on strengthening the ability of self-assertion among special education teachers. Based on the literature, we expected that any form of social support would counteract burnout; therefore, our result that stronger Emotional-Informational Support leads to an increase in burnout level - albeit to a lesser extent - is somewhat surprising. Despite our findings, we believe that prevention training should continue to reinforce the role of social support in promoting well-being. Goal-Directed Action and Seeking Support coping modes emerge as protective factors against burnout, as well as the Approach-Monitoring subsystem of the PIS.

Accordingly, preventive programs should focus on enhancing realistic situation assessment, creative problem-solving, the mobilization of external-internal resources, emotional and cognitive control functions, and tuning into possible positive outcomes. With these results in mind, targeted planning of preventive interventions for the mental health preservation of special education teachers can be realized. The management and prevention of burnout can be planned at both individual and organizational levels. The initial steps of prevention can already be implemented at the level of teacher training: through self-awareness groups, the application of self-awareness practices, and clarifying professional motivational goals. In organizational settings, the reduction of stress levels can be achieved through the establishment of a supportive network of relationships, case discussions, and consultations (Fekete, 1991; Vári, 2020). Self-care in mental hygiene, stress reduction, sharing responsibility, and revaluing the role of the community can play an important role in prevention, and reducing the level of depression will be a key task of prevention in our present day.

## Acknowledgements

„Prepared with the professional support of the Doctoral Student Scholarship Program of the Cooperative Doctoral Program of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology financed from the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.”

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## **Employers' Requirements for Bachelor Graduates of English Translation and Interpretation Program: A Case in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam**

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**Abstract:** Universities need to capture the current status of graduate employability from both the graduates' and employers' perspectives if they are to effectively respond to industry skill and knowledge requirements. Graduate employability is a concept that is gaining traction in the higher education sector around the world. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate what employers' requirements for bachelor graduates of English translation and interpretation, as well as employers' and alumni's personal perspectives on the constraints of the current curriculum framework. As a result, shortcomings of the current curriculum framework were discovered and solutions to bridge over them were suggested. A mixed quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaires and interviews with 23 employers at various companies, offices or other places and 48 English translation and interpreting alumni of a university in the Mekong Delta reveals the attributes that are important for the job market, are emphasized in curriculum, and those that graduates need more training on. The findings will provide light on whether present approaches in translation and interpretation student training bridge the gap between professional market concerns and academic studies, as well as instructional consequences and implications for future study.

**Keywords:** employer, employability, translation, interpretation, graduate attributes

**Citation:** Tran, M.T.D. (2024). Employers' Requirements for Bachelor Graduates of English Translation and Interpretation Program: A Case in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1078-1094), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### **Introduction**

In today's modern society, the expansion of the global economy, globalization, as well as the expansion of higher education (HE) provision are influencing employers' hiring demands (Al-Harthi, 2011; Cai, 2013). Students and universities alike have recognized the changing nature of employability patterns and are attempting to incorporate employability attributes into degree program provision (Cai, 2013). As a result of this awareness, studies have been conducted to determine which employability attributes (EAs) are sought by employers in a given context. Employers' concerns about GE attributes have grown more pronounced in Vietnam, as they have elsewhere (Hager & Holland, 2006; Tran & Swierczek, 2009; OECD, 2012). Although employers in Vietnam have expressed concern about the lack of EAs among graduate students, no research has been conducted to



investigate the EAs that are important and necessary for job performance; those attributes that should be included in curriculum; and those in which graduate students require additional training. As a result, the goal of this research is to examine the demand for graduate attributes (GAs) in Vietnam as perceived by English Translation and Interpretation (ETI) alumni and employers. This is the gap that the current study is attempting to bridge. This study aims to investigate the employability attributes employers require for bachelor graduates of an ETI program in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. In addition, it also explores the suggestions of these employers for the ETI program in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.

## Literature review

### Employer

Employer has been defined in various ways. According to Heathfield (2019), an employer can be an individual, an agency, a small business, a store, an institution, a professional services firm, a government entity, or a non-profit association. The employer is also the organization or company which puts to work, employs or hires the services of the employee. They are entitled to rights and bound to perform duties. An employer is a purchaser of labor and uses his/her power in a workplace to control the labor process (Edwards, 1986; Braverman, 1974). Managerial, supervisory, or executive employee is also frequently considered part of an ‘employer’ as they often act as an agent of their employer in controlling or managing the other who is called a staff member or an employee.

### *Translation and Interpretation (T&I)*

T&I are familiar topics to many researchers and there are numerous conducted relating to these two topics. Besides, there are a lot of websites, articles as well as books about translation and interpretation, in which many definitions of T&I are given out.

### *Definition of Translation*

As according to Wilss (1982), translation is a transfer process that aims at the conversion of written source language text into the equivalent target language text and that requires the semantic, syntactic, analytical processing and pragmatic understanding of the source language. In the same vein, Bell (1991) defines it as an expression in another language (the target) of what has been presented in one language (the source), preserving stylistic and semantic equivalences. This author continues to make problems of equivalence very plain. Text in many different languages can be equivalent in many different degrees (partly or full different), in respect of many different levels of presentation (in respect of semantics, grammar, lexis, context, etc.) and at many different ranks (word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase, or sentence-for-sentence). Translation, ultimately, by dictionary definition, including changing from one form or state to another, to turn into another’s language (The Merriam – Webster dictionary, 1828).

### *Definition of Interpretation*

Similar to translation, interpretation can have a wide range of meanings for many people based on their training, experience or background in the interpretive profession. According to Nolan (2005), interpretation as a process of transmitting message in which meaning of a speaker is best expressed in his/her mother tongue but is best understood in listeners' languages. Besides, MacFarlane (1994) suppose that interpretation is a “process of communication” (cited in Hall & McArthur, 1993). The author also emphasized that as a bridge-builder between languages, the interpreter supports speakers make them understood as well as satisfy the demand of understanding what is being said from listeners.

### *Employability*

Employability skills are in vogue in higher education (HE) context and have intensely been the center of attention in literature since 1980 (Zaharim et al., 2009). However, there is no common definition of this term in the literature. The term "employability" have been defined differently in various studies. Some studies focus more on student ability to get and maintain a job after graduation. As Yorke (2010) supposes that the term "employability" as the ability of graduate students to find and retain a graduate-level job as well as the ability to move between jobs if required.

### *Graduate attributes (GAs)*

In literature, GAs are variously referred to as generic attributes (Wright, 1995), employability skills, and soft skills (Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council [BIHECC], 2007), key competencies (Mayer, 1992), transferable skills (Assiter, 1995), key skills (Drew, Thorpe, & Bannister, 2002). In the rapid change of the information and knowledge-intensive economy, workers not only need to maintain and develop skills and knowledge, which are specific to their own discipline and occupation, but also have to achieve "generic" skills, attributes and dispositions that are transferable to lots of occupational situations. These generic skills are defined as “those transferable skills which are essential for employability at some level for most” (Kearns, 2001). Generic skills have also been variously known as ‘core skills’, ‘key competencies’, ‘transferable skills’ or ‘underpinning skills’ (Mayer, 1992).

In short, GAs are emphasized in HE as incentives to attract both employers and learners. GAs are viewed as increasingly essential in the changing context of contemporary life. Moreover, they are considered important to make graduates prepared and ready for success in the rapid change of working environment today.

### *Graduate employability (GE) in the world and in Vietnam*

In Western countries, employability is still a complex and controversial issue without an obvious solution in higher education institutions (HEIs) (Rae, 2007, p. 605). In the UK, USA, Australia, and in other developed

countries in Europe, employability is still high on the agenda for HEIs, and many students in the countries become more selective in choosing their courses and institutions (Rae, 2007). Enhancing GE seems to remain a challenge to HE culture and curriculum as well as has not yet received the support of most HE scholars (Harvey, 2000; Yorke, 2006). Nevertheless, Rae (2007) claims that, these activities are “unconnected” in the students' minds (p. 608). Furthermore, the higher educational system (HES) focuses more privilege theory and conceptual knowledge than practical application (pp. 608-609). Many academics remain see the university mission is not relevant to the adoption of the employment agenda. (Bates, 1999; Harvey, 2000; Rae, 2004; Billett, 2009). However, according to Mason, William, & Cranmer (2009), under the requirement and pressure of governments, there has been more evidence of the cooperation between enterprises and HEIs with the purpose to shorten the "learning curves” of graduate students when they start profession after graduation. Most importantly, the nature of learning and teaching practices in developed countries is aimed to develop students to be effective learners and workers, with interactive and personal attributes (e.g., teamwork and interpersonal skills or communication) on the agenda (Harvey, 2000, 2005).

On the other hand, in Vietnam, the recent issue has emerged when HEIs respond to the demands from the internal economy. Besides, the number of unemployed or underemployed graduate students has become alarming (Pham, 2008; Tran & Swierczek, 2009; Tran, 2010b). According to George (2010), although Vietnam has performed the economy liberalization policy (Doi Moi policy) for more than 20 years as well as economy of the country has moved on to the market economy with the socialist orientation, the progression of both its economy and higher education system (HES) is at a much lower stage. "Work-readiness" is the concern of most stakeholders: students and their families, employers, HEIs; however, there seems to be no connection between enterprises and HEIs in the country.

#### *Employability in Translation and Interpretation*

Obtaining a university diploma is not eligible to get an occupation (Harvey, 2002). Rather there are a range of external and person-centered factors which provide a conceptual foundation of employability: gender or ethnicity, age, personal attributes as for instance open-mindedness, empathy, flexibility, etc., and external factors like the sector- or region-specific economic situation that have a strong impact on recruitment and employability. Turning specifically to the issue of employment in the field of T&I, the above-mentioned factors should not be ignored, is influenced by the discipline area. According to Harvey (2002), program areas tend to be more active in promoting employment because their aim is to enhance particular employability attributes or because of a demand to ensure engagement with the world of profession. In addition, many researchers (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Sewell and Pool, 2010) also suppose that some other important aspects: knowledge, attitude and skills; that is to say more accurately, disciplinary content knowledge, generic (transferable) competencies, soft skills (personal attributes), disciplinary competencies and skills. These employment assets are complemented by job finding as well as job-getting skills or profession management skills. According to Schnell & Rodríguez (2017), applying the above-mentioned employment assets to the domain of T&I as well as drawing on the specific and generic competencies will help graduates to find occupations in T&I field.

## Method

In order to investigate employers' requirements for bachelor graduates of ETI Program in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, the researcher attempted to find out the answers for the following questions:

1. Which employability attributes do employers require for bachelor graduates from ETI program?
2. Which suggestions for the university's curriculum framework do they have for the ETI training program at the universities?

The study was conducted at a university in the center of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Being a multi-disciplinary university, the institution provides 98 Bachelor programs, 45 Master programs and 16 Doctorate programs. The Bachelor Program of English Translation and Interpretation (ETI) is administered by the School of Foreign Languages of the institution and follows a credit-based system of 140 credits and consists of 3 main groups of knowledge namely general knowledge, fundamental knowledge, and domain-specific knowledge. There are 38 credits in the first group and consists of courses: Physical Education, Marxism-Leninism, National Defense Education, French and so on. In the second group, there are 48 credits and contains courses with the aim of equipping students with English language knowledge of grammar and pronunciation as well as language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. 54 credits in the last group are aimed to provide students with specialized knowledge of English language, literature, and culture as well as useful skills for future jobs and life-long learning such as translating, interpreting and researching.

The current study is designed as a descriptive survey which includes a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview for 71 participants (23 employers, 48 alumni). Among them, 7 employers and 8 ETI alumni were invited to participate in the interview. The employers include 10 males and 13 females in the current study work for various offices, enterprises, companies, etc. in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Most of them were from 41 to 50 years old and have more than 10 years of working experience. Aside from employer participants, 48 alumni (18 males, 30 females) of ETI training program at the institute took part in the study. Most of them are employees and their ages mainly range from 24 to 30 and have less than 5 years of working experience.

On the one hand, the questionnaire was the key instrument in the current study. The questionnaire was adapted from the study by Álvarez-Álvarez and Arnáiz-Uzquiza's (2017) research. The adaptations are in conjunction with the ETI curriculum framework used at the university being investigated. The version of the questionnaire, which consists of 9 items in the thirteenth sentence of the employer's questionnaire form and the eighth sentence of alumni questionnaire form of part 1, was delivered to 71-target population in the study (23 employers and 48 alumni). The collected data, then, were entered into the SPSS program to analyze for the scale reliability. The result showed that the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire is reliable ( $\alpha = .809$ ).

On the other hand, the semi-structured interview was based mainly on the questionnaire. The interview was employed to verify participants' answers of the questionnaire in the study, to gain more insights into participants' viewpoint toward EAs that employers require when recruiting in order to offer the most appropriate

solutions or strategies to improve the university's curriculum framework as well as the current social demands. This interview was carried out via two ways: face-to-face, and email interview.

## Results

### Translation and Interpretation employability attributes required by employers.

#### *Perspectives of employers*

Table 4 shows the tasks that the employers assigning for ETI students primarily focus on translation capabilities. In particular, "translation of original material in Vietnamese into the foreign language" task and "translation of original material written in the foreign language" task are two of the most assigned tasks for students (account for 82.6% and 78.3%) which shows that the employers consider these tasks are the two most important and necessary tasks. Otherwise, only a very small minority of the employers (4.3%) assign "review of translations performed are machine translation systems" and "language consultant" tasks to ETI students. Besides, 4 out of 23 employers (17.4%) have other tasks for ETI students (presented in the 'other' category) such as: selling, studying documents on diplomatic profession, working with foreigners in the field or attending international conferences and workshops.

Table 4. Tasks (per number of employers' responses) completed by ETI students during work placements

Tasks of ETI students at employers' workplaces	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Translation of original material written in the foreign language	18	78.3
Translation of original material in Vietnamese into the foreign language	19	82.6
Translation practices of already translated material	9	39.1
Review of texts in a foreign language	11	47.8
Review of translations performed are machine translation systems	1	4.3
Writing texts in foreign languages (reports, business letters, emails, etc.)	8	34.8
Communication with clients in a foreign language	10	43.5
Interpreter	6	26.1
Language consultant	1	4.3
Administrative tasks	12	52.2
Other	4	17.4

After surveying about the tasks that they assigned to ETI students, a broad majority of the respondents replied that they were satisfied (65.3%) or very satisfied (13.0%) with the performance as well as the working style of

ETI students.

As can be seen in Table 5 below, employers are satisfied and highly appreciate students who have "a studious and progressive spirit" and "a sense of responsibility to, complete assigned tasks" ( $M = 3.83$ ) at employers' companies. In contrast to this, ETI students' personal qualities (flexibility, dynamism, and capability to coordinate in activities) are rated slightly lower than others, it is also one of the ETI students' personal qualities are evaluated from "Fairly good" to "Good" ( $M = 3.52$ ).

Table 5. Employers' detailed assessment of ETI students' personal attributes

Items	Min.	Max.	Mean (M)	SD.
Students have a studious and progressive spirit	3	5	3.83	.650
Students have a sense of responsibility, complete assigned tasks.	3	5	3.83	.717
Students have flexibility, dynamism, and capability to coordinate in activities.	2	5	3.52	.790

In addition, according to the employers' viewpoints, English linguistic knowledge and computer skills for office work (e.g. excel, word, etc.) are focused frequently in the training process, followed by Vietnamese linguistic knowledge, and "knowledge and skills about revision and post editing". On the other hand, they supposed that two both "knowledge and skills about project management" and "knowledge on writing technical texts" that students are rarely taught in the curriculum. Therefore, regarding essential knowledge, and skills, employers stated that the following knowledge, and skills should necessarily be developed within the training program: Cultural knowledge (73.9%), knowledge and skills about revision and post-editing (65.2%), followed by knowledge about terminology and documentation, knowledge about strategies for interpretation, and social skills (teamwork, negotiation and dealings with clients, etc.) with the same percentage (60.9%). It is found that the overwhelming majority of the employers (17 out of 23 employers) would like to see Cultural knowledge developed within the curriculum. It is a significant factor for communication with people of diverse custom, race, and ethnicity (see Table 6).

Table 6. Employers' perceptions of the knowledge/skills needed by ETI students

Knowledge/Skills should be strengthened in the training program	Frequency	Percentage (%)
English linguistic knowledge	10	43.5
Vietnamese linguistic knowledge	12	52.2
Computer skills for office work (Excel, Word, etc.)	10	43.5
Knowledge and skills about specific software (software for localization, audiovisual translation, terminology management, etc.)	9	39.1
Knowledge on strategies for translation	13	56.5

Knowledge about strategies for interpretation	14	60.9
Cultural knowledge	17	73.9
Professional knowledge	13	56.5
Social skills (teamwork, negotiation and dealing with clients, etc.)	14	60.9
Knowledge and skills about revision and post editing	15	65.2
Knowledge and skills about project management	12	52.2
Knowledge on writing technical texts	11	47.8
Other	0	0.0

### *Perspectives of alumni*

Table 7 below shows the tasks that the ETI students have been required to perform in their job mainly focusing on writing texts in foreign languages (e.g. reports, business letters, emails, etc.)" (77.1%) and communicating with clients in a foreign language (75.0%). In addition, according to alumni's responses, "language consultant" is the least assigned task in employers' companies (12.5%). Apart from that, 4 out of 48 alumni are also given a number of tasks (presented in the 'other' category) related to support and serve customers as well as support new employees to translate and edit documents at their workplaces.

Table 7. Tasks (per number of alumni responses) completed by themselves during work placements

<b>Tasks of alumni at work placements</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Translation of original material written in the foreign language	32	66.7
Translation of original material in Vietnamese into the foreign language	30	62.5
Translation practices of already translated material	13	27.1
Review of texts in a foreign language	25	52.1
Review of translations performed are machine translation systems	15	31.3
Writing texts in foreign languages (reports, business letters, emails, etc.)	37	77.1%
Communication with clients in a foreign language	36	75.0
Interpreter	26	54.2
Language consultant	6	12.5
Administrative tasks	30	62.5
Other	4	8.3

Similar to employers, after surveying the tasks they have performed, when asking about their perspectives on their work placements, more than half of respondents acknowledged they were satisfied (56.3%) and very satisfied (8.3%) with their own working performance.

Besides, 39 out of 48 alumni participants supposed that they possess enough the necessary knowledge to work in the employers' companies/units. In addition, alumni also suggested that "English linguistic knowledge" is one



of the most fully provided knowledge in ETI training program. Knowledge and skills about project management, knowledge on writing technical texts, and knowledge about strategies for interpretation are supposed to be rarely provided in the training program. Therefore, they suggested that social skills (e.g. teamwork, negotiation and dealing with clients, etc.) are one of the most important skills, should be add in the curriculum (72.9%) followed by computer skills (e.g. excel, word, etc.) (accounted for 64.6%). Besides, they supposed that cultural knowledge is also essential in real life, particularly in ETI field (62.5%) as listed in Table 8. Apart from 12 strategies put in the questionnaire, one out of 48 alumni also offer a suggestion (presented in the ‘other’ category) that it should be based on the reality of the demands of ETI domain.

Table 8. Alumni’s perceptions of the knowledge/skills needed by ETI students

<b>Knowledge/Skills should be strengthened in the training program</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
English linguistic knowledge	24	50.0
Vietnamese linguistic knowledge	24	50.0
Computer skills for office work (Excel, Word, etc.)	31	64.6
Knowledge and skills about specific software (software for localization, audiovisual translation, terminology management, etc.)	29	60.4
Knowledge on strategies for translation	26	54.2
Knowledge about strategies for interpretation	28	58.3
Cultural knowledge	30	62.5
Professional knowledge	29	60.4
Social skills (teamwork, negotiation and dealing with clients, etc.)	35	72.9
Knowledge and skills about revision and post editing	25	52.1
Knowledge and skills about project management	27	56.3
Knowledge on writing technical texts	27	56.3
Other	1	2.1

### *Suggestions to improve the ETI program*

#### *Employers’ perspectives*

Twenty-three employer participants were asked to report their responses to each item on a five-degree scale ranging from 1 (Highly undesirable) to 5 (Highly desirable). Their responses were used for statistically analyzing via the software the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

The results in Table 9 show that employers come to a desire that suggestions involving curriculum design and development in order to make the ETI training program more compatible with the labor market needs. They suggested that the training programs should invite experts in the fields of ETI to come and talk in the classroom (M = 4.43), help students to take positions in translation and interpretation domain (M = 4.39) and have extra-curricular lessons to help students be confident and train them through practical practice (M = 4.39). Although, the use of electronic tools (mainly translation memory software) for translation teaching activities is desired, it is

one of the least concerned criteria ( $M = 4.09$ ). Besides, other criteria need to be added into the ETI training process, are listed in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Employers' desires for future English translation and interpretation training programs

The training program of ETI should	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD.
Strengthen academic subjects of professional translation on the market	1.00	5.00	4.35	.573
Employ professional translators/ interpreters as academic staff	1.00	5.00	4.22	.795
Use real-world texts for assessment activities	1.00	5.00	4.30	.703
Use electronic tools (mainly translation memory software) for translation teaching activities	1.00	5.00	4.09	.733
Help students to take positions in translation and interpretation domain	1.00	5.00	4.39	.656
Invite people from the profession to talk in the classroom	1.00	5.00	4.43	.662
Organize educational activities in collaboration with professional bodies	1.00	5.00	4.35	.647
Focus more on speaking skills for students	1.00	5.00	4.30	.765
Provide extra-curricular lessons to help students be confident and train them through practical practice	1.00	5.00	4.39	.891

#### *Alumni's perspectives*

With regard to the survey of desire for the future ETI training programs, a five-degree scale ranging from 1 (Highly undesirable) to 5 (Highly desirable) are also used in order to collect alumni's responses data. The findings in the current study showed that most alumni are highly desirable for the training programs which should have been added extra-curricular lessons to help students be confident and train them through practical practice ( $M = 4.77$ ). Besides, they also suggested the training programs should focus more on speaking skills for students ( $M = 4.65$ ), followed by strengthening academic subjects of professional translation on the market as well as helping students to take positions in translation and interpretation domain is also the criteria that alumni interested in, some others are also listed in Table 10.

In conclusion, participants in the current study pointed out the shortcomings of the training program and the employers also showed their own views on the strengths and weaknesses of ETI students in order to offer some aspects that should be changed or implemented in ETI training program. Particularly, both employers and

alumni suppose that communication and cultural knowledge are two of the most important aspects, which should be added into the curriculum.

Table 10. Alumni's desires for future English translation and interpretation training programs

The training program of ETI should	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD.
Strengthen academic subjects of professional translation on the market	1.00	5.00	4.58	.498
Employ professional translators/ interpreters as academic staff	1.00	5.00	4.40	.574
Use real-world texts for assessment activities	1.00	5.00	4.44	.580
Use electronic tools (mainly translation memory software) for translation teaching activities	1.00	5.00	4.17	.859
Help students to take positions in translation and interpretation domain	1.00	5.00	4.54	.504
Invite people from the profession to talk in the classroom	1.00	5.00	4.46	.713
Organize educational activities in collaboration with professional bodies	1.00	5.00	4.38	.640
Focus more on speaking skills for students	1.00	5.00	4.65	.483
Provide extra-curricular lessons to help students be confident and train them through practical practice	1.00	5.00	4.77	.425

#### *Qualitative data from interviews*

After collecting and analyzing the data from questionnaire, the researcher interviewed 15 out of 71 participants of two groups, 7 employers and 8 ETI alumni. This interview aimed to verify participants' answers of the questionnaire in the study, to gain more insights into participants' perspectives on recruitment, training of translators and interpreters as well as to find out employers' suggestions for the university's curriculum framework. The following 7-core interview questions were asked to seek the requirements of employers and find out some suggestions to have an appropriate training program for the labor market.

The data obtained from the interview question 1 revealed that most interviewees (nearly 80%) suppose that it is important and essential to possess a diploma in T&I. Nevertheless, the others have the opposite views and suppose that English proficiency is the one of the most important factors when applying for a job.

#### *Participants' perceptions for recruitment*

In the current study, possessing a diploma in T&I has two opposite views. a minority of respondents who suggested that there is no difference between a student with diploma in translation and interpretation and a

student who does not have, and the recruitment focuses on graduates' English linguistic competency instead of the diploma in T&I.

Employer 1 stated:

Most of the recruitment of translators or interpreters is based on language competence. It is also not required to graduate from T&I training program that is because graduates have to complete an exam before working in the company.

In contrast, for others who supposed that possessing a diploma is the most essential factor when looking for a job. Alumnus 3 stated:

The employers in my company only recruit graduates who have the diploma in T&I. I have been working with colleagues who possess the diploma in T&I (including me).

Regarding main criteria for recruiting ETI students, most respondents stated that English proficiency is one of the important criteria which is required by employers. In addition, the confidentiality is considered necessary in employers' criteria. As employers 1 and 5 said:

[...] the main criteria to ensure: information security, implementation time, and specialized knowledge. Besides, an ETI graduate need to have a good health and a solid social and cultural knowledge.

#### *Participants' perceptions for training of translators and interpreters*

To improve quality recruitment in the labor market, both employers and alumni point out that there are some contents missing in the undergraduate programs, which should be taught both at school and on the job. On the one hand, respondents consider that linguistic skills (foreign language), specialized translation contents and interpreting-related competences should be added to their curriculum in order to improve ETI students' employability opportunities. Specifically, employers 1, 3, 7 shared the same suggestions for ETI curriculum. They shared:

[...] At universities, lecturers should focus mainly on teaching specialized vocabulary, specific software skills (e.g. software for localization, audiovisual translation), computer skills (e.g. excel, word, etc.) at the proficiency level. At workplaces, translators and interpreters need to learn from shortcomings in their work, learn more about IT to support and develop their work.

#### *Participants' perceptions for interaction with translator and interpreter training institutions*

For the purpose of developing the training programs to improve cooperation with the labor market, employers 2, 3 and 7 highlighted:

[...] invite lecturers of professional interpreters and translators, design lectures in analyzing and commenting on approved translations, and create opportunities for final-year students to attend international conferences.

Altogether, both employers and alumni specified the general linguistic competence in their native and foreign language (especially English) and technological skills and subject field knowledge are important and essential aspects that should be added in the future training program. Furthermore, they supposed that this cooperation will help the labor market to be more competitive, expand job opportunities for students as well as reduce employers' training time when receiving a new graduate. Students will learn valuable practical knowledge and skills. At the same time, it creates opportunities for them to get more knowledge, experience and confidence in life.

## Discussion

### Employers' and alumni's perspectives on ETI curriculum

An overall look at the employers' and alumni responses provides a summary of their views about ETI curriculum, employers' main criteria in recruiting translators and interpreters as well as suggestions for ETI undergraduate training programs as in the following Figure 1

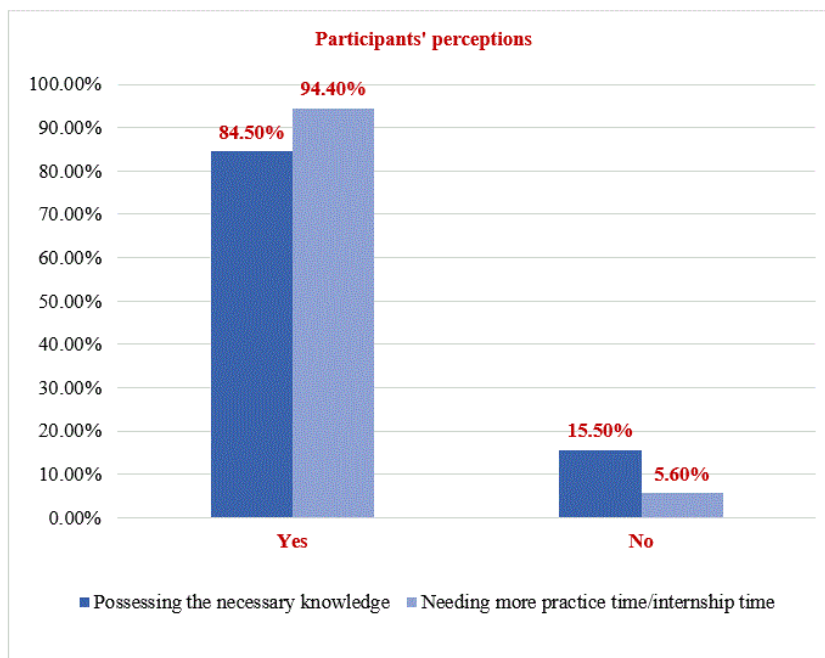


Figure 1. Employers' and alumni's perceptions on ETI students' capabilities

The results from FIGURE 1 reveal that there is no marked difference between employers' and alumni perceptions between knowledge and the practice time of ETI students. Although, more than half of participants

supposed that ETI students have enough knowledge to develop (84.50%), they still suggest that students should have more practice time or internship time to improve students' professional skills and knowledge (nearly 95%). These findings are similar to the research of Álvarez-Álvarez & Arnáiz-Uzquiza (2017). Almost 90% of the graduates in Álvarez-Álvarez & Arnáiz-Uzquiza's research (2017) are conscious of the demand to improve their professional skills which are very much aware of the relevance of employment in the (post)graduate training process. However, the findings of Schnell and Rodríguez' study (2017) indicated that possessing the disciplinary knowledge and specific competencies of T&I graduate students only moderately develop and there is even a minority thought that they are only slightly developed. All of the employers and T&I graduates in Álvarez-Álvarez & Arnáiz-Uzquiza's research (2017) were satisfied with the performance of ETI students/themselves, who were mainly assigned translation tasks. On the contrary, all employers in the current study were the same perceptions with those; however, alumni in this study were mainly assigned writing texts in foreign languages or communication with clients in a foreign language. Additionally, the current results are dissimilar to Schnell and Rodríguez' study (2017) in which most of employers focused on cultural and social knowledge rather than knowledge and skills of translation.

#### *Suggestions to improve the ETI program*

When surveying about employers' and alumni's suggestions of possessing a diploma when applying a job, the current study is compatible with Harvey, (2002,2005). Similarly, many researches previous studies (Wilss, 1982; Bell, 1991; Nolan, 2005) share the same findings with the present one, which suggest Vietnamese linguistic knowledge should be strengthened in the training program to help students transmit message accurately and clearly without violating professional ethics. By the way, knowledge on strategies for translation and interpretation is essential in the ETI curriculum (Bui and Dang, 1997) which the participants in the current study suggest to strengthen in the training process. Furthermore, cultural knowledge is one of the most essential criteria, which should be provided in the ETI curriculum. Participants suppose cultural knowledge diversities are significant factors for communication with people of diverse custom, race, and ethnicity. It is as the key to successful communication. Moreover, the employers in the current study are contrary to Gracés and Toudic (2012) who share the same findings with the alumni in the present one which suggest knowledge and skills about specific software (e.g. software for localization, audiovisual translation, terminology) should be strengthened in the training program to response the employers' needs.

## **Conclusion**

The current study was conducted to investigate the employability attributes which employers require for bachelor graduates from ETI program. Furthermore, participants also point out the shortcomings of the current ETI training program, and to give some suggestions for universities in order to have an appropriate curriculum to solve employment issues. The findings of the current study show that ETI students not only reinforce contents and knowledge learned at university (such as English linguistic knowledge, professional knowledge), but also

have to develop 'key' employability skills (e.g. social and cultural skills, as well as communication skills) which are not commonly included in the university curriculum (Chouc and Calvo 2011). In conclusion, training programs should cooperate with the labor market in order to solve employability issues.

## Recommendations

It is suggested that similar studies can be carried out with the subjects of a variety of universities in the Mekong Delta and even many locations in Vietnam so that results can be generalized for all students at universities. Because the study is just survey, moreover, its results will be more significant and more reliable if future experimental studies should focus on whether professionally oriented teaching methods are applied in other content categories in T&I curriculum or whether they remain restricted to professional contents category. The findings presented in the current study together with future results are expected to rise awareness about an importance of including professional competences in ETI curriculum to solve the challenges of employability.

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## Amount of Deposit Insurance System Scheme Based on “Risk” Scheme

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**Abstract:** Banking is the lifeblood of a country's economy. The government's role is urgently needed to maintain public trust in banking. Therefore, the Government issued Law Number 24 of 2004 and Government Regulation Number 66 of 2008 concerning the amount of deposit guaranteed by the Deposit Insurance Corporation. The risks faced by banks from the Risk Profile factors include among others: credit risk, market risk and liquidity risk. The risks faced by banks in "The Essentials of Risk Management", include Credit Risk and Market Risk. In addition to the risks faced by each bank, what needs to be emphasized is the level of soundness of each bank and the criteria for a healthy bank. The author will use normative legal research methods with a related statutory approach, with the hypothesis: the current deposit insurance system scheme, namely a flat premium system of 0.1% (one per thousand) with a guarantee limit of up to 2 billion rupiah, is no longer sufficient. This means that the premium amount does not cover the entire deposit amount. It is time to switch to a deposit insurance system scheme based on the “Risk” scheme. Each bank has different risks and the soundness level of each bank is also different. So, it is unfair for depositors, if the premium payment system scheme treatment is made flat at 0.1% (one per thousand) for all banks. It's time to switch to a deposit insurance system scheme based on the “Risk” scheme.

**Keywords:** Banking 1, Trust 2, Risk 3 Deposit Insurance Corporation 4.

**Citation:** Manurung, C. (2024). Amount of Deposit Insurance System Scheme Based on “Risk” Scheme. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1095-1113), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), the standard form of the word is risk. In KBBI, risk means an unpleasant (harmful, harmful) result of an action or action. In English, the noun "risk" means, danger; possible loss; risk. "Risk" verb (verb) means to take a risk. Conclusion: according to the Indonesian English Translation Dictionary, the meaning of the word risk is danger. Another meaning of risk is the possibility of loss. <https://kii.lektur.id/risk>

In addition, there are several definitions of risk according to some experts, including: Jorion (2007) defines risk as, "The volatility of unexpected outcomes, which can represent the value of assets, equity, or earnings." According to Uyemura and Deventer (1993) defining risk is, "The volatility (standard deviation) of net cash flows of a business unit." Meanwhile, according to Mun (2006) defining risk is, "Any uncertainty that affects a

system in an unknown fashion whereby the ramifications are also unknown but bears with it great fluctuations in value and outcome."

Of the three concepts described by the experts, the risk contains something that is uncertain in the future, can be measured, is also unknown and can be stated in research on assets, income and others.

Therefore, this risk can be defined as follows: "Losses experienced by an Institution due to unclear events will occur in the future where risks can be measured and minimized. According to Adler (2017) Banking Financial Risk Management, pp. 38-39.

The risks faced by banks from the Risk Profile factors include among others: credit risk, market risk and liquidity risk.

Meanwhile, according to the provisions on bank capital stipulated by Bank Indonesia which refers to the provisions of Basel II, particularly in Pillar 2 which emphasizes that the amount of bank capital must be in accordance with the risks faced by the bank so as to enable the bank to cover its risks properly. This pillar encourages that the calculation of risk factors is not only credit risk, but also considers other risk factors, such as market risk and operational risk so that all of these risks are taken into account in calculating the minimum capital adequacy risk.

The risks are divided into two major groups, namely financial risk and business risk. Prior to 1997, prior to the financial crisis that hit Thailand, Korea, Indonesia and several countries in Asia, the types of risks that were always discussed were: (1) Interest-rate risk, which was the main risk that was most often faced by investors. The occurrence of this risk is due to an increase in the applicable interest rate. This risk is also often called market-risk; (2) Reinvestment risk, is the risk that must be faced as a result of investing on interest earned through the reinvestment strategy implemented. Interest-rate risk and reinvestment risk have an offsetting effect. The strategy based on this elimination is called immunization; (3) Call-risk, is the risk faced by investors, the bond issuer has the right to buy back (call) the bonds; (4) Default-risk, is the risk faced by investors or holders of financial assets because these financial assets are unable to pay the principal at maturity; (5) Inflation risk, is the risk faced by investors due to inflation so that the cash flow received by investors varies in purchasing power; (6) Exchange-risk, is the risk faced by investors due to changes in exchange rates, usually this risk is found in financial assets denominated in foreign currency; (7) Liquidity risk, is the risk faced by investors in order to sell financial assets as soon as possible in the market. The measure of liquidity can be seen from the difference between the buying and selling value of the financial asset; (8) Validity risk, is the risk faced by investors because bonds are associated with options that depend on interest rates. One of the influencing factors is the volatility of interest rates.

Investors should always view trading as a risky financial asset. Even though the financial assets of bonds issued by the government still have risks, they do not have the risk of default (default) so that investors also view all

financial assets as having risks.

Lam (2014) states that there are 7 types of risk, including: (1) Strategic risk is the risk where corporate and business strategies (mergers and acquisitions), growth strategies, product innovations are not executed effectively; (2) Business risk is the risk that the annual financial and operating results do not meet the expectations of management and shareholders of the Company; (3) Market risk is the risk that the price of interest rates will move which has negative consequences for a Company; (4) Credit risk is the risk that consumers, other parties or providers of goods and services will fail to fulfill their obligations; (5) Liquidity risk is the risk that a company cannot get cash to meet its demands in a timely and cost-effective manner; (6) Operational risk is the risk that humans, processes or systems will fail or events outside the company will have a negative impact on the company; (7) Compliance risk is the risk that the company does not comply with legal and regulatory requirements.

The risks disclosed by Lam (2014) are generally aimed at financial institutions (including banks, even microfinance institutions). There is even another risk that should be considered, namely "reputation risk" which is often not taken into account but is very much taken into account for these banks.

## Method

The author will use a normative legal research method with a related statutory approach. As for bank risk based on the Theory of Economic Analysis Of Law. According to Richard A. Posner, the terms "value" and "efficiency" are technical terms. "Efficiency" means exploiting economic resources in such a way that "value" - human satisfaction as measured by aggregate consumer willingness to pay for goods and services - is maximized.

We can see this if  $\text{Benefit} > \text{Cost} = \text{Efficiency}$ . This means that if the benefits obtained are greater than the costs incurred, it is called efficiency. Or  $\text{Cost} < \text{Benefit} = \text{Efficiency}$ , meaning that if the costs incurred are smaller than the benefits/benefits obtained. Efficiency (Efficiency) = Justice (Justice) means that if efficiency has been achieved it means justice is also achieved. Justice (Justice) = Social Welfare Maximization (Community Welfare), meaning that if justice is achieved, so will social welfare.

## The Risks Faced by Each Bank

The risks faced by banks (Chart taken from Michel Crouhy, Dan Galai and Robert Mark. 2006. The Essentials of Risk Management, page 26) includes Credit Risk and Market Risk, as shown in the following chart:

Due to the wide range of risks faced by banks, banks must place one director who is the controller, even the regulators also want this position at the bank. If observed carefully, a bank that is always faced with financial

risk will face two risks that become financial risks, namely Credit Risk and Market Risk.

**Bagan 6: Esensi Pengelolaan Risiko**

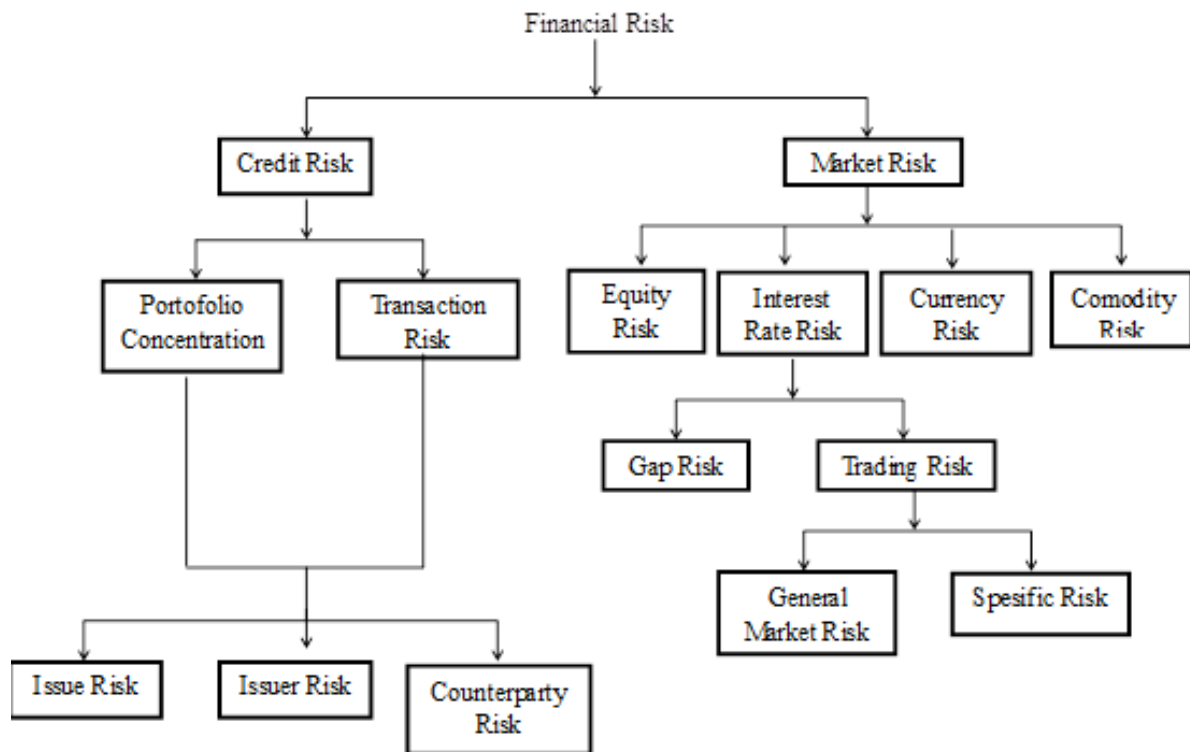


Chart 1: Essentials of Risk Management

*Development of Risk Management*

In the beginning, what was always discussed were two types of risk, namely financial risk and business risk. But over time, financial risk continues to grow. Company sales in the form of foreign exchange will have problems in terms of fluctuating foreign exchange prices, so the company will hedge, so that the value of the foreign currency does not decline. The cost of raw materials purchased with foreign currencies, the company will carry out forwards or futures or also options on these foreign currencies. The company enters into SWAP contracts with other parties to improve foreign exchange held either as income or debt or investment. However, it is realized that risk management by means of hedging with derivative tools such as forwards, futures, SWAPs and options, is not the best way. It is possible to do hedging but it does not generate benefits for the company. Because of this, the concept of risk management has been the choice for the last 10 years since the Asian financial crisis that occurred from 1998 to 2000, and America experienced it in 2008 due to the collapse of Lehman Brothers, which had existed for more than 100 years.

Waring and Glendon (1998) concept of Risk Management as follows: “As a field of activity seeking to eliminate, reduce and generally control pure risk (such as from safety, fire, major hazards, security lapses, environmental hazards) and to enhance the benefits and avoid detriment from speculative risk (such as financial investment,

marketing, human resources, IT strategy, commercial and business risk.”Adler (2017, pp. 44-45).

This concept aims to carry out risk management to reduce the risks that will be faced so that these risks are not as big as possible. To manage corporate risk, there are several stages of the process that will be carried out. Crouhy et al (2006) state the process of managing risk as follows: (1) Identify risk exposures that may occur; (2) Measuring and estimating the risk exports; (3) Assessing the effects of exposure; (4) Forming risk mitigation; (5) Evaluating performance.

When measuring risk, other activities are carried out, namely searching for instruments and moving facilities to transfer the risk. And when assessing the effects of exposure there are also actions taken, namely assessing the costs and benefits of the instruments that have been found in the previous stages.

*Risk Tools And Measures*

Table 1. Risk Measures by Assets

Number	Asset	Risk Measure
1.	Man	Number of errors
2.	Technology	The number of stops/stops
3.	Law	Number of disputes/disputes
4.	Bonds	Duration and Convection
5.	Credit	Ratings and Failed Models
6.	Shares	Volatility, Correlation and beta
7.	Derivatives	Delta, Gamma and Vega
8.	Foreign exchange	Target Zone

Companies or financial institutions have various assets. The question is how to measure it? One of the assets owned by the company. Humans can create risks, both intentional and unintentional. Humans who carry out activities can measure their risk based on the number of mistakes they make. Each mistake made can be measured in value so that the number of mistakes made can also be assessed in terms of money (monetary) value.

The company also has technology and it is often used for business purposes, in addition to support and for products. In the legal field, risk can also be measured through disputes that occur and activities carried out. Every activity in which a dispute occurs has a monetary value, so the loss from legal risks constitutes the total expenditure for resolving the dispute. Bonds as financial assets have risks that are calculated by duration and convection. Credit can also be measured the risk that will be experienced through the number of defaults paid even with this credit rating can be measured unpaid credit. Stocks as financial assets can also be calculated at risk where the size is well known, namely the standard deviation is expanded with volatility and beta both individually (single asset) and as a portfolio. Financial assets for hedging are known as Derivatives, where the



risk can be measured by various measures known as "Greeks". If an investor owns foreign currency, the risk can be calculated, which is known as the Target Zone.

Table 2. Evolution of Risk Management Tools

Number	Year	Method
1.	1938	Bond duration
2.	1952	Markowitz Mean-Variance Framework
3.	1963	Sharpe's Capital Asset Pricing Model
4.	1966	Multiple Factor Model
5.	1973	Black-Scholes Option Pricing Model, "Greeks"
6.	1979	Binomial Option Model
7.	1983	RAROC, Risk Adjust Return
8.	1986	Limits on Exposure by Duration Bucket
9.	1988	Risk-Weighted Assets for Bank Limits on "Greeks"
10.	1992	Stress Testing
11.	1993	Value at Risk (VAR)
12.	1994	Risk Metrics
13.	1997	Credit Metrica, Credit Risk+
14.	1998	Integration of Credit and Market Risk
15.	2000	Entreprise-Wide Risk Management

Source: Jorion Improvement (2007).

Furthermore, what is discussed is the development of measuring instruments of risk that exist today where these measures continue to develop gradually or evolve, from year to year up to 2000. Initially the risk measure started with the duration method for bonds and standard deviation for shares, which was introduced in in 1952. During this period, only two well-known products were known, namely bonds and stocks. The risk of these two products was raised by academics Harry Markowitz (Mean - Variance Framework) for stocks and duration by F. Macaulay (1938) for bonds. Beta as a measure of risk for financial assets was put forward by academics namely Sharpe (1964), Lintner (1965) and Mossin (1966), mentioning a measure of stock risk associated with variations in the movement of the stock market as a whole. If stock risk is associated with various factors, the Multiple Factor Model is used. There are also derivatives with option products that also have a measuring tool, namely "Greeks" and continued with the Binomial Option Model. In 1983, the rate of return on investment (Return) but adjusted for risk was known as RAROC (Risk Adjusted Return On Capital). Financial institutions that provide loans to their customers or other financial products and are always in contact with the market which consequently have risks. Market factors that can affect owned financial assets are known as stress testing. The size of the risk continues to grow with the failure of the credit provided. The measurement tools are: VaR, Risk Metrics, Credit Metrica and Credit Risk+. Furthermore, the development of measuring instruments for risk with the view that the company will face risks is due to the fact that companies or financial institutions have many

activities carried out with various strategies designed by company management. In order to understand this risk, a tool known as Enterprise Wide Risk Management was created in 2000. The development of this risk measuring instrument was mostly in credit extended by financial institutions.

The risks faced by companies can occur only once and can also occur repeatedly. The risk itself can be of fairly small monetary value and it can also be of enormous value. The risk grouping is based on the probability of occurrence and the amount of loss, so there are actions to be taken, namely: avoiding risk, reducing risk, transferring risk to other parties such as insurance and accepting or ingesting the risk.

<b>Frequency/ Probability</b>	Tall	<b>REDUCE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
	Low	<b>ACCEPT</b>	<b>TRANSFER</b>
		Low	Tall

**The Magnitude of the Loss (Consequences or Severity)**

Chart 2. Risk Management in terms of Frequency and Losses

Based on chart 2, decision makers can take action to deal with the risks experienced by the business being managed.

The risks faced can also be seen from the perspective of the Company's Economic Capital. Expected losses can usually be transferred to customers by increasing product prices or already being part of the product price.

*Soundness Level of Each Bank*

*Healthy Bank Criteria*

Bank Indonesia Regulation Number 13/1/PBI/2011 concerning Soundness Rating of Commercial Banks.

*A. Setting background*

(1) Changes in business complexity and risk profile, implementation of consolidated Supervision, as well as changes in the internationally applied approach to assessing the condition of a Bank affect the approach to assessing a Bank's Soundness Level; (2) In order to increase the effectiveness of the Bank's Soundness Level assessment to deal with the changes referred to in letter a, it is necessary to improve the Bank's Soundness Rating using a risk-based approach.

**Bagan 9: Model Financial Risk Management pada ERMCP (2016)**

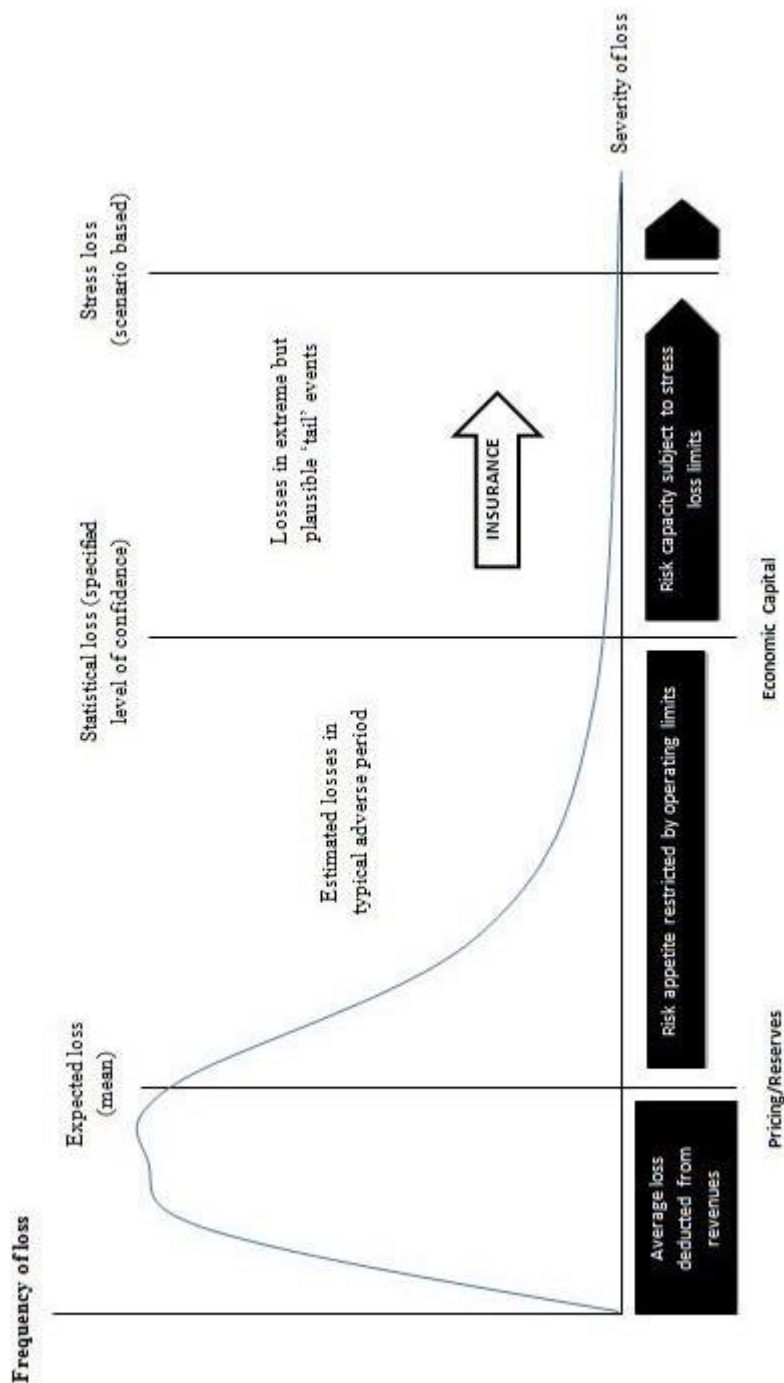


Chart 3. Financial Risk Management Model in ERMCP (2016)

*B. Regulatory Substance*

1. The main provisions in this PBI are as follows:

(a) Banks are required to conduct an assessment of the Soundness Level of the Bank both individually and in consolidation using a risk approach; (b) Assessment of Bank Soundness Level on a consolidated basis is carried out for Banks that exercise control over Subsidiaries; (c) The assessment period is carried out at least every semester (for positions at the end of June and December); (d) Factors for assessing the Bank's Soundness level consist of: Risk profile, Good Corporate Governance, Earnings, and Capital; (e) Each factor is ranked based on a comprehensive and structured analysis framework; (f) The composite rating is determined based on a comprehensive and structured analysis of each factor's rating by taking into account the materiality and significance of each factor, as well as considering the Bank's ability to deal with significant changes in external conditions; (g) Composite Rating Category is Composite Rating 1 to Composite Rating 5. A lower Composite Rating sequence reflects a healthier Bank condition; (h) In assessing the soundness level on a consolidated basis, the rating determination mechanism for each assessment factor and the determination of the Composite Rating as well as the rating categorization for each assessment factor and composite rating must refer to the mechanism for determining and categorizing individual Bank ratings; (i) The Board of Directors, Board of Commissioners and/or shareholders are required to submit an action plan to Bank Indonesia in matters based on the results of an assessment of the Bank's Soundness Level conducted by Bank Indonesia and/or a self-assessment by the Bank; (j) Time for submission of Bank Soundness Level self assessment; (k) Time for submitting the Bank Soundness Level action plan; (l) Action plan implementation report; (m) In preparation for the effective implementation of the Bank's Soundness Rating, the Bank is required to carry out a trial run of the Bank's Rating; (n) Bank Supervision.

2. This Bank Indonesia Regulation has been effective since 1 January 2012, namely for the assessment of Bank Soundness Level at the end of December 2011 and on the date of its entry into force simultaneously revokes Bank Indonesia Regulation Number 6/10/PBI/2004 concerning the Rating System for Commercial Banks.

## Results

Bank health is in the interest of all parties (stakeholders), namely bank owners, bank management, the community as users of bank services and the government as a regulator. This is intended as a benchmark for bank management, whether they run the bank's business in accordance with applicable regulations, so as to avoid problems that occurred in the past. Public trust and monetary stability in Indonesia are factors that are influenced by this. Permana (2012) A healthy bank is a bank that can carry out its functions properly such as being able to maintain public trust, being able to carry out the intermediary function, being able to help smooth payment traffic, and being able to carry out monetary policy.

The soundness level of a bank is a qualitative assessment of various aspects that affect the condition or performance of a bank through a quantitative and/or qualitative assessment of the factors of capital, asset quality, management, earnings, liquidity and sensitivity to market risk. After considering the element of judgment based on the materiality and significance of the assessment factors and the influence of other factors

such as the condition of the banking industry and the national economy.

Banks can assess the soundness of their own banks using the method recently issued by the government in Bank Indonesia Regulation Number 13/1/PBI/2011 article 2, it is stated that banks are required to assess the soundness of a bank using a risk approach (Risk Based Bank Rating) both individually or consolidation. This regulation replaces the previous valuation method, namely the method based on Capital, Assets, Management, Earning, Liquidity and Sensitivity to market risk or what is called CAMELS. The RBBR method uses an assessment of four factors based on Bank Indonesia Circular Letter Number 13/24/DPNP namely: Risk Profile, Good Corporate Governance, Earning and Capital (RGEC).

From the Risk Profile factor using the calculation of credit risk, market risk and liquidity risk. The GCG factor takes into account the assessment of the application of self-assessment. Earning factor or profitability is measured by indicators of profit before tax to total assets (ROA), net interest income to total assets (NIM). The Capital factor is measured by the CAR ratio. With the RGEC method as a whole it has a very healthy predicate.

## Discussion

In Bank Indonesia regulation No. 13/1/PBI/2011 article 2, it is stated that banks are required to evaluate the soundness of a bank using a risk approach (Risk Based Bank Rating) either individually or in consolidation. In this method there are several indicators as a reference, namely:

### 1. Risk Profile

According to Bank Indonesia Regulation No. 13/ 1/ PBI/ 2011 risk profile is an assessment of inherent risk and the quality of risk management implementation in bank operations carried out on 8 (eight) risks namely, credit, market, liquidity, operational, legal, strategic, compliance and reputation risks. This study measures credit risk using the Non Performing Loan (NPL) ratio and the Loan to Deposit Ratio (LDR) ratio to measure liquidity risk.

Credit risk using the Non Performing Loan (NPL) ratio is calculated by the formula:

$$\text{NPL} = (\text{Non-Performing Loan}) / (\text{Total Credit}) \times 100\%$$

Table 3. Criteria for Determining Risk Profile Rating (NPL)

Rating	Information	Criteria
1	Very healthy	NPL < 2%
2	Healthy	2% ≤ NPL < 5%

3	Healthy Enough	$5\% \leq \text{NPL} < 8\%$
4	Unwell	$8\% \leq \text{NPL} < 12\%$
5	Not healthy	$\text{NPL} \geq 12\%$

Source: Bank Indonesia Circular No. 6/23/DPNP of 2004.

Liquidity risk using the Loan to Deposit Ratio (LDR) is calculated by the formula:

$$\text{LDR} = (\text{Amount of Credit Provided}) / (\text{Third Party Funds}) \times 100\%$$

Table 4. Criteria for Determining Risk Profile Rating (LDR)

Rating	Information	Criteria
1	Very healthy	$\text{LDR} \leq 75\%$
2	Healthy	$75\% < \text{LDR} \leq 85\%$
3	Healthy Enough	$85\% < \text{LDR} \leq 100\%$
4	Unwell	$100\% < \text{LDR} \leq 120\%$
5	Not healthy	$\text{LDR} > 120\%$

Source: Bank Indonesia Circular No. 6/23/DPNP of 2004.

## 2. Good Corporate Governance (GCG)

By analyzing reports on Good Corporate Governance (governance) which are guided by Bank Indonesia Regulation No.13/1/PBI/2011 by searching for published annual reports and determining the assessment made by the bank based on a self-assessment system.

Table 5. Criteria for Determining GCG Ratings (Self Assessment)

Rating	Information
1	Very good
2	Good
3	Pretty good
4	Not enough good
5	Not good

Source: Bank Indonesia Circular No. 15/15/DPNP of 2013.

### 3. Earning (Rentabilitas)

Earnings (profitability) assessment is measured using the Return On Assets (ROA) ratio using the following formula:  $ROA = (\text{profit before tax}) / (\text{average total assets}) \times 100\%$ .

Table 6. Criteria for Determining Earning Rating (ROA)

Rating	Information	Criteria
1	Very healthy	$ROA > 1,5\%$
2	Healthy	$1.25\% < ROA \leq 1,5\%$
3	Healthy Enough	$0,5\% < ROA \leq 1,25\%$
4	Unwell	$0\% < ROA \leq 0,5\%$
5	Not healthy	$ROA \leq 0\%$

Source: Bank Indonesia Circular No. 6/23/DPNP of 2004.

### 4. Capital

Riyadi (2006:171) says that every bank operating in Indonesia is required to maintain the Minimum Capital Adequacy Requirement (KPMM). The level of Minimum Capital Adequacy Requirement or CAR of a bank will be influenced by 2 main factors, namely the amount of capital owned by the bank and the amount of Risk Weighted Assets (RWA) managed by the bank. This is because the assessment of the capital factor is based on the ratio of Capital to Risk Weighted Assets (RWA). Capital factor assessment is measured using the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) with the following formula:  $CAR = (\text{Bank Capital}) / (\text{Risk Weighted Assets}) \times 100\%$ .

Table 7. Criteria for Determining Capital Rating (CAR)

Rating	Information	Criteria
1	Very healthy	$CAR > 12\%$
2	Healthy	$9\% \leq CAR < 12\%$
3	Healthy Enough	$8\% \leq CAR < 9\%$
4	Unwell	$6\% < CAR < 8\%$
5	Not healthy	$CAR \leq 6\%$

Source: Bank Indonesia Circular No. 6/23/DPNP of 2004.

*Bank Risk Based on "Economic Analysis of Law" Theory*



Some of the fundamental concepts of economics are: rationality, value choice, efficiency, utility, game theory, and transaction costs. These concepts are related to one another and also complement each other. Example: efficiency, not stand alone. All of these concepts explain and complement each other, and the most important thing is to derive the following concepts.

The concept of rationality is the main framework for understanding human behavior. In economics human rationality is more emphasized on the equality of human desires. This desire is a human effort to meet their needs and achieve satisfaction so that humans are said to be rational maximizers. This human endeavor involves choices. Humans are able to calculate (according to their level of rationality) the available choices and then make the decision that they feel is best for them. The ability to choose like this is also said to be human rationality. Humans as rational maximizers tend to achieve their goals in the most efficient way.

In general, people want more of the resources that are available and possible to have. This is the concept of scarcity: the limited resources available because humans use them to meet their needs. Scarcity forces humans to make the most worthwhile choices. This emphasizes that if people cannot choose the right option, then humans will choose the next best alternative. The definition of a "right" choice varies from person to person, again based on their rationality and needs. From an economic point of view, an option can be said to be correct if it is right on target in economic activities that end with the most valuable results, in this case satisfying.

Legal and economic experts have differing descriptions of the concept of efficiency which are built based on different definitions. According to the Pareto theory, efficiency generally concerns individual satisfaction and preference as one of the concepts of efficiency that is widely applied in law and economics, and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency is also often used. Garner divides Pareto efficiency into two types, the first is Pareto superiority as an economic situation in which an exchange can be made that benefits someone and injures no one. When this economic situation cannot occur, it can be said that efficiency is Pareto optimality, namely an economic situation in which no person can be made better off without making someone else worse off. While the Kaldor-Hicks efficiency concept: a situation in which all possible wealth-maximizing changes have Occurred. Walth maximization is defined as: a situation resulting from a change in the allocation of resources if the change benefits the winner. Concepts of efficiency of this kind lead to elements of justice in law.

There is a very important relationship between efficiency and utility. For economists, utility reflects the benefits and benefits of economic goods. If someone believes that his actions were successfully efficient, then at the same time he concludes the results are satisfactory. This satisfying result signifies the effectiveness behind its actions. Satisfying results like this also reflect human satisfaction over the fulfillment of desires which also have a monetary and/or non-monetary nature. Human satisfaction can be categorized as monetary and/or non-monetary economic benefits.

The concept of utility in Law and Economics is used in a quite different sense, especially in its meaning in economics and utilitarian teachings. For most economists, utility is generally used to distinguish uncertain costs

from certain ones. Utility is also usually referred to as expected utility which results in risk analysis, while utility in the sense used by philosophers of utilitarianism is happiness.

In Law and Economics, utility in the elaboration of Economic Analysis on Law is narrowly defined as usability or function to seek uses or benefits from economic goods that produce or provide benefits, even broadly it can be interpreted as welfare. The diversity of definitions from various scientific perspectives has the same element, namely as a human effort to increase profits for the sake of self-satisfying prosperity.

The meaning of the word profit has a wide range of contexts, namely in terms of monetary and/or non-monetary terms. Utility is one of the economic considerations as a basis for making decisions by humans who basically want to get benefits or advantages, according to their expectations. The decision taken is said to be rational, because humans can clearly distinguish between definite and uncertain gains and losses. Something that is not certain this is economic risk as well.

To make decisions, comes game theory, which is basically the study of how people behave in situations where their actions can affect the reactions of others. This situation should be like a game, a game that requires strategy. This game theory has a much wider application, some economists say it is coordination theory. Wessels explained that game theory extends the tools of economic analysis to any situation where humans must coordinate their actions with one another, whether in the family, at work, in social groups, even in the relations of a country with other countries. Two important frameworks in game theory. First, the emphasis on human rationality in formulating strategies consisting of choices, so that this kind of rationality is categorized as a well-ordered human preference. Second, he connects the causality of these strategies, so that they cause reactions, impacts, and consequences for others.

All considerations of costs are scrutinized by humans. These costs are known as transaction costs or transaction costs. Generally, transaction costs are all costs incurred due to external factors in interacting or acting, in this case to make decisions. The word cost has the broad meaning as: monetary and/or non-monetary expenses, impacts, risks, deficiencies, weaknesses. The decision taken with all these considerations is a strategy.

According Richard A. Posner, The terms “value” and “efficiency” are technical terms. “Efficiency” means exploiting economic resources in such a way that “value” -human satisfaction as measured by aggregate consumer willingness to pay for goods and services - is maximized. Willingness to pay, the basis of the efficiency and value concepts, is a function of many things, including the distribution of income and wealth.

We can see this if  $\text{Benefit} > \text{Cost} = \text{Efficiency}$ . This means that if the benefits obtained are greater than the costs incurred, it is called efficiency. Or  $\text{Cost} < \text{Benefit} = \text{Efficiency}$ , meaning that if the costs incurred are smaller than the benefits/benefits obtained. Efficiency (Efficiency) = Justice (Justice) means that if efficiency has been achieved it means justice is also achieved. Justice (Justice) = Social Welfare Maximization (Community Welfare), meaning that if justice is achieved, so will social welfare.

“...that economics has both a normative and a positive role in the study of law and legal institution. The claim that economics is a tool of normative as well as positive analysis of law and legal institution – that is a source of criticism and reform as well as understanding – is only superficially inconsistent with the point stressed in the first chapter that the economist is not the ultimate arbiter of social choice.”

Instrumental Economic Analysis of Law are: (1) Risk Risk Analysis; (2) Cost Analysis; (3) Multi Criteria Analysis; (4) Sensitivity Analysis; (5) Fiscal Impact Analysis; (6) Regulatory Impact Assessment; (7) Cost Effective Analysis; (8) Cost Benefit Analysis.

### *Risk-Based Schemes in Other Countries*

Several methods are widely used by Deposit Insurance Corporations (LPS) in the world, in resolving bank bankruptcy, or managing troubled banks to bring the bank back to health, including: (a) Liquidation and payment of customer deposits' (b) Purchase-and-assumption transactions; (c) Open-bank financial assistance.

The first method, namely the liquidation and payment of customer deposits or often called the paybox system, is to pay bills for depositors after the bank's business license has been revoked. In this system has no responsibility for supervision and regulation or the authority to intervene. This paybox system, requires adequate authority to make payments immediately. This system also requires access to customer information and adequate funding.

The second method is the Purchase-and-Assumption transaction (P & A) method, which is a method that can minimize risk (risk minimized method). In carrying out this method, the deposit guarantor relatively must have broader authority. These powers include: the authority to grant and revoke membership permits, the authority to assess and manage risk and the authority to conduct or request bank checks. This system can provide financial assistance in solving troubled banks. This system is also authorized to issue regulations and carry out settlement activities for troubled banks. With this method, the deposit guarantor transfers ownership of the troubled bank to a healthy bank or a newly established bank. The bank that receives the ownership buys the troubled bank's deposits and takes responsibility for all of its obligations (except subordinated loans). The Deposit Insurance Corporation will then restore the troubled assets. The third method is open bank financial assistance, which is a method of providing financial assistance to troubled banks to restore the bank's health.

Table 8. Comparison with Other Countries, Amount of Deposit Protection System Schemes

No	Country	Premium	Strength	Weakness	Guarantee Limit
1	Indonesia	0.1 % (one thousandth)	-	a. Flat system premium. b. The	Rp.2.000.000.000,- (two billion rupiah)

				premium amount does not cover the entire deposit amount.	
2	United States of America	Max Insurance Coverage is: US \$ 5.000 (1934) US \$ 10.000 (1950) US \$ 15.000 (1966) US \$ 20.000 (1969) US \$ 100.000 (now)	a. Premium Based Risk. b. From year to year, there has been a significant increase in the premium amount. c. All deposits are covered/guaranteed	-	The FDIC allows banks to cease their business activities and <b>pay out all</b> FDIC-insured deposits.
3	Thailand	The highest is 0.5% of the deposit amount.	a. Set the highest limit for the amount of premium. b. All deposits are covered/ guaranteed .	-	<b>Overall guarantee</b> (blanket guarantee) - 1997.
4	German	0,03 % from obligations.	a.. Set the highest limit for the amount of premium. b. The guarantee coverage limit is set at 90 million Euros.	-	All non-bank deposits are guaranteed a maximum of 30% of the capital obligation of troubled institutions.  The minimum banking capital is 5 million Euros, the maximum guaranteed is 1.5 million Euros (50x Germany's per capita income).  With the size of the Equity of a

					commercial bank of 295.5 million Euros, the guarantee coverage limit is <b>90 million Euros.</b>
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We can see the strengths and weaknesses of the "risk-based premium payment system" used in other countries compared to Indonesia, which uses a premium payment system with a "flat system", even though each bank's risk is different and each bank's soundness level also different.

Table 9: Systematically Compiled Formulation of Reformulation

No.	Current Formulations	Reformulation Formula	Information
1	Guaranteed deposits include demand deposits, time deposits, certificates of deposit, savings, and or other equivalent forms	Idem	
2	Article 11 of Law Number 24 of 2004 concerning LPS: The guaranteed deposit value for each customer at one bank is a maximum of IDR 100,000,000.00 (one hundred million rupiah).	Guaranteed deposit value for <b>all deposits.</b>	
3	PP No. 66 of 2008 concerning the amount of deposit guaranteed by LPS, Article 1 Guaranteed deposit value for each customer at one bank which was originally based on Article 11 paragraph (1) of Law no. 24 of 2004 concerning LPS, it is determined that a maximum of Rp. 100,000,000.- (one hundred million rupiahs), based on this PP, is changed to a maximum of Rp. 2,000,000,000.00 (two billion rupiahs);	Guaranteed deposit value for <b>all deposits.</b>	
4	a. Determination of the amount of premium, membership contribution is set at 0.1% (one per thousand) of the bank's paid-up capital and must be deposited into the LPS account no later than 90 (ninety) calendar days from the time the bank conducts operational activities.  b. According to the LPS Law, Article 1 paragraph (1) The premium for each period	Some suggestions that could be considered include:  a. Determination of premiums based on Risk.  b. For deposits up to <b>2 billion rupiah</b> , the premium rate is set at <b>0.1%</b> (one per thousand), a flat rate.	

	<p>referred to in <b>Article 12 is set the same for each bank at 0.1%</b> (one per thousand) of the average monthly balance of total deposits in each period; paragraph (2) The premium rate as referred to in paragraph (1) can be changed if at least one of the following criteria is met: (a) there is a change in the value of guaranteed deposits for each customer at one bank as referred to in article 11 paragraph (1); (b) <b>the accumulation of guarantee reserves has exceeded the target level of 2.5%</b> (twenty five percent) of total deposits in each bank; or; (c) there is a change in the level of risk of failure (exposure) in the banking industry; (3) Changes in the premium rate as referred to in paragraph (2) are consulted with the House of Representatives; (4) The results of the consultation as referred to in paragraph (3) shall be further stipulated by a Government Regulation.</p>	<p>c. For deposits above <b>2 billion rupiah</b>, the premium amount is determined based on <b>risk</b> (risk based premium), taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- health of each bank.</li> <li>- risks faced by each bank.</li> </ul>	

## Conclusion

The current deposit insurance system scheme is a premium payment using a flat system of 0.1% (one per thousand) with a guarantee limit of up to 2 billion rupiah. This means that the amount of the premium does not cover the entire amount of customer deposits. Each bank has different risks and the soundness level of each bank is also different. So it is unfair for depositors, if the premium payment system scheme treatment is made flat at 0.1% (one per thousand) for all banks. It is time to switch to a deposit insurance system scheme based on the “Risk” scheme, for deposits above two billion rupiah. Of course plus considering: the health of each bank and the risks each bank faces.

## Recommendations

I recommend the results of this research to be applied to the Deposit Insurance Corporation (LPS) in Indonesia.

-Each bank has different risks and the soundness level of each bank is also different. So it is unfair for depositors, if the premium payment system scheme treatment is made flat at 0.1% (one per thousand) for all banks.

-It is time to switch to a deposit insurance system scheme based on the “Risk” scheme, for deposits above two billion rupiah. Of course, plus considering: the health of each bank and the risks each bank faces.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to honorable Prof. Dr. Suharingsih and the whole kind team.

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## Fundamentals of an Integrated Performance Management Model in The Public Sector

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**Abstract:** Performance management is nowadays a very popular topic in the international arena. In my article I will attempt to present the basics of a possible conceptual framework. Among other things by using models that are already known from the literature. I will seek answers to the question which areas are important for the implementation of an effective system and which elements can be used to increase efficiency. After all, a valid performance management model should provide the expected efficiency, both for the owners (management) and for the users. In my article, I have chosen publicly funded hospitals as the sector specification, as healthcare is a priority area both domestically and internationally. It is essential to use models that have an established basis and can be adapted to the chosen specification. In my written work, I will not only cover the literature, but also areas that I believe are necessary to create a methodology that can be of help in practical application. In my article, I look for solutions that could be the basis for a possible conceptual model.

**Keywords:** Performance management, framework model, hospital area

**Citation:** Mihalik- Kucsma, D. (2024). Fundamentals of an Integrated Performance Management Model in The Public Sector. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1114-1131), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The key role of performance assessment and management was first recognised by large companies (Bass, 1972), which achieved significant success, effectiveness and efficiency by operating processes and implementing appropriate systems. This is reflected in the growing body of literature and publications on the subject. The importance of the topic is also demonstrated by the fact that several publications (Gergely, 2011; Révész, 2015; Imreh 2002; Gaál, 2012) have also examined the performance management systems and tools of the public service sector. My choice of topic and its relevance is justified by the importance of the health sector and the increasing prominence of the quality of its services, which means that, like the business sector, the public sector needs to adapt successful methodological solutions from the business sector.

A well implemented and operated performance management system not only results in customer satisfaction, but can also provide a competitive advantage, organisational competence and capability over peers that has a positive impact on the management and positioning of the organisation. In my view, a structured analysis of this

sector can provide information and methodologies that can help performance management to become a management philosophy for these organisations (Kucsma, 2021, Dózsa, 2010; Csákvári, 2012).

The focus of my research is to present the advantages and disadvantages of performance management systems in the public sector, the mapping of which can provide important results for improving efficiency. In addition, it can serve as a starting point for defining research questions and identifying elements that can be adapted to a new support model. Krasz (2008) has focused on the existence of fairness in the study of performance systems, and has concluded that the role of trust and impartiality is important, and I will address this factor.

All of this identifies a research gap that can be specified for organisational performance management in healthcare institutions. Following the literature review, it can be concluded that there is no comprehensive synthesis study that focuses on performance measurement and evaluation and comparative analysis of the effectiveness of publicly funded health care institutions. There are, of course, some studies that describe the basics of a possible system, but the full analysis is not presented. Thus, the basics of this model concept are presented in this article.

### **Literature Summary**

I will first systematise the understanding and approaches to performance and performance management in the public sector. In reviewing the literature for my research, I have sought to provide a comprehensive overview of performance management, which will also help to go into more detail. I also consider it important to present the general and public sector-specific characteristics of performance management. During the review of national and international literature, I will consider theoretical and practical issues that contribute to the logical structure of my research. The backbone of my dissertation is performance management, but due to its link to strategic management, I will also cover this topic area in the theoretical basis of my research / The source of sustainable competitive advantage is not only financial indicators or innovative technology, but also people (Veresné Somosi et al,2023), so it is worthwhile to integrate qualitative factors into my analysis based on these ideas. In this part of my research, I will also focus on health systems.

In this chapter, I systematise the understanding and approaches to performance and performance management in the public sector. In the literature review for my research, I have sought to provide a comprehensive picture of performance management, which will also help to go into more detail. I also consider it important to present the general and public sector-specific characteristics of performance management. During the review of national and international literature, I will consider theoretical and practical issues that contribute to the rationale and understanding of my research. The source of sustainable competitive advantage lies not only in financial indicators or innovative technology, but also in people (Veresné Somosi, et al. 2023), so it is worthwhile to integrate qualitative factors into my analysis based on these ideas. In this part of my research, I will also focus on health systems.

### *Performance Definitions*

Based on the literature screening (PRISMA) carried out, the definition given by Szűts (1983) is that performance is nothing more than the achievement of objectives and the amount of effort that has been expended to achieve the expectations set. In this concept, it is not only the desire to achieve something that is reflected but also the calculation of the economic indicators that are at the forefront of how much effort is required to achieve it.

In conclusion, there is no generally accepted definition, and even those authors who deal with performance measurement or performance management in the literature do not define the concept, assuming its meaning to be common knowledge (Wimmer, 2001). However, because of the topic of this dissertation, it is necessary to talk about the concept of performance in the public sector. After reviewing the literature on performance definitions, it can be stated that there are two approaches to performance in the public sector (Van Dooren, 2006). One approach is that performance is seen as a value, and the other approach is that it is intended behaviour. In my work, the value approach is better suited to the understanding of performance, so an overview of performance management is the next step.

### *Approaches To Performance Management*

The defining concepts of performance management are presented in Table 1. For comparability, I have tried to present each approach according to the same factors, but here the dimensions and novelty were not clear, as with the performance approaches, so I have only included the definitions and limitations. This conceptual presentation is also a conceptual typologisation of performance management and performance appraisal, which I have prepared using the PRISMA method. If I look for correlations between performance management, I can identify two important elements: effectiveness and efficiency. In the health sector, the economy is not a top priority, but the efficient management of public funds is the focus of operations.

The three components of performance management are:

- performance,
- performance management,
- benchmarking.

Table 1. Performance Management Approach

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Key content elements of the definition</i>	<i>Barriers</i>
Cleveland (1989)	There are four criteria that a performance management system must meet. Comparability of individuals, the availability of individual information.	Competency-based assessment is not considered. It is difficult to compare everyone based on the same elements.

	Human Resources system maintenance and compliance with the administration.	
Randell (1994)	Performance measurement and evaluation is a tool that forms the basis for pay and is also used to assess future potential. It is a process whereby the work done by an employee is observed, assessed, recorded, and reported on.	The focus is on examining processes; it is not certain that the performance of an employee is uniform.
Neely, Gregory and Platts (1995)	Performance measurement is the process of measuring the effectiveness and economy of an activity.	-
Statterfield (2003)	It is a strategic position, with alignment with the business or organisational strategy as its primary responsibility. He also aligns culture shaping with this.	A well-designed model contributes to the achievement of the organisation's objectives, but not in an individualised way.
Szakály (2005)	A complex multi-factorial process based on performance planning, where the manager receives feedback on the employee, department and organisation being evaluated. On the other hand, it is a feedback process for improvement.	The representation of future possibilities does not consider possible current errors.
<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Key content elements of the definition</b>	<b>Barriers</b>
Bokodi (2007)	It is based on the objectives and levels set by the organisation within an agreed framework.	Employees are encouraged to maximise their competences and are not optimised for organisational performance.
Root, Finna (2008)	Measure the extent and manner of contribution to the performance of the organisation.	The organisational goals appear as the main objective.
Juhász (2013)	It has three main objectives: feedback, the effectiveness of selection, relative merit rating.	He considers human relationships to be the most important.
Gulyás (2012)	It is a measure of the performance and perception of an employee in an organisation over a given period, which is one of the key elements of the organisation's effectiveness.	It does not show continuity, it focuses on a specific period.
Government Decree 10/2013 (I.23)	A process for establishing performance based on specific metrics, results, and indicators.	In public services, it is not just the specific metric that is important.

Source: own editing based on Kucsma (2018)

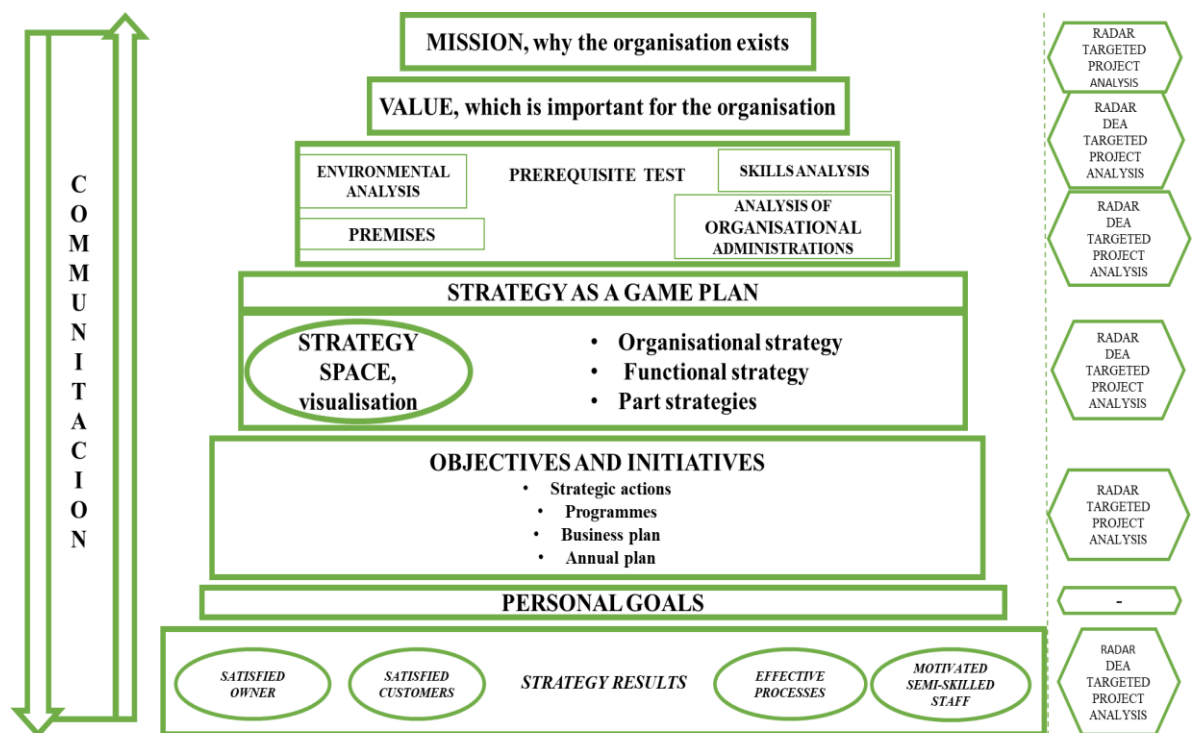
Strategy

Because of the complex approach used in my research, in addition to the basics of performance management, it is necessary to examine the strategic trends and schools of thought. The relevance of this line of thought is that performance management, transferred from strategic management, can eliminate self-serving.

For an organisation to fit properly into both its economic and legal environment, it must have a reasonable start-up strategy. Most generally, therefore, the strategy defines the directions of adaptation to anticipated changes and the long-term objectives to be achieved. "Strategy" means the long-term objectives set by the company and the ways and means of achieving them. Strategic management, on the other hand, is management based on strategy formulation, implementation, and feedback" (Bartek-Lesi, et al. 2007 58pp.).

When we talk about health, it is important to mention that the strategy sets out how we intend to contribute to meeting the needs of users and society in each of the organisational units.

I have tried to depict the structure of the strategic process in a way that is well-aligned with the objectives I have set, and I have shown the methodological combinations I have used to investigate them in each phase of my research.



Fi

Figure 1. Structure of the strategy

Source Own editing based on Balaton, (2018);Laáb (2007);Veresné Somosi,(2013)

### *Strategy And Performance Management*

Until the late 1980s, the theoretical literature on strategy formulation and strategic management, and the practical problems it addressed, focused on considerations of competitive advantage, and hence on consumer value. The corporate practice and theoretical literature of the 1990s turned to the value of ownership, exemplified by the work of Rappaport (Rappaport, 2002). What should be mentioned is that many authors try to integrate and link strategy and performance management into their work, based on organisational strategy. This can be seen in the books of the authors Kaplan– Norton, where the Balanced Scorecard integrated metrics system forms the basis of organizational strategy (Kaplan, Norton 1998, 2002). It can also be seen in the work of Nelly et al. on Performance Prism (Bartek-Lesi et al, 2007). In recent years, there has been a welcome increase in the number of research, publications, and practical applications of the relationship between organizational strategy and performance.

### *Comparison Of Performance Management Models*

I have formulated the following elements as criteria for comparability:

- efficiency
- relevance and core elements of models
- applicability of models
- clarity and consistency.

These elements have been formulated based on my studies, but they need to be supplemented for better comparability. When we come across the word "barrier", we assume that some element or factor stands in the way of something being achieved. Since the performance evaluation models, I have used tend to come from the business management field, this implies a constraint and requires a transformation. In the following, I am looking for an answer to the question, if I want to investigate model comparability or to define a limit, which elements I should add to the elements I have already summarized above? When considering the model application, I think one of the fundamental elements is the issue of playability, how this factor appears in parallel with implementation and use, and what is it that needs to be looked at.

Table 2. Comparison of performance management models

	Efficiency	Relevance of the model, key elements	Model applicability	Clarity and consistency	Playability
Balanced scorecard model	There is an increasing emphasis on well-	The organisation can see its processes, see	Through the "balance dimensions", the performance	Since performance evaluation is linked to	The need for perfection in metrics can make the

	Efficiency	Relevance of the model, key elements	Model applicability	Clarity and consistency	Playability
	structured organisation. It can manage many elements and processes, so the issue of efficiency is paramount.	what kind of customers or clients it has. It is aware of the value of its human capital and has a realistic view of its financial situation. Apply perspectives such as financial, customer, operational, and learning perspectives.	indicators of important areas of the company cannot be kept in balance.	hierarchy levels, and performance expectations are linked to these levels, this shows an uncertainty. Moreover, the issue of consistency is also affected by poor assessment of results. Translating the strategy into indicators. Exploring the impact relationships between indicators	system opaque.
Power prism	The focus is on stakeholder satisfaction, so this is also the focus of effectiveness.	Involve stakeholders in the organisational performance review. A central element is stakeholder satisfaction, processes,	Insufficient management of the needs and expectations of and from data subjects.	Performance indicators are not aligned with the needs of stakeholders, but neither are processes and strategies. Random choice of	The use of indicators that do not track the chosen strategy cannot track it. The use of indicators will thus present a



	Efficiency	Relevance of the model, key elements	Model applicability	Clarity and consistency	Playability
		strategies, and capabilities.		performance indicators linked to internal processes.	distorted picture within the strategy.
EFQM	The focus is on efficiency, and to this end they try to make the best use of all existing resources.	The most efficient use of resources is the main objective, reaching stakeholders, and pooling resources to increase effectiveness. Focus on capabilities and results.	Commitment has not been established, so the lack of it is rather detrimental to the effectiveness of the model.	Self-assessment is cyclical, hence there are periods of outstanding performance.	There are very subjective factors involved in the construction of the questionnaire and in the textual assessment.
RADAR	It analyses the organisation along a strategic process. 3 main elements play a role. Approach, application, and evaluation.	Key Performance Indicators are used instead of business performance.	To design the governance (management) system of an organisation.	It assesses the start-up company against a set of criteria, so that individual institutions can be compared against the same criteria.	The assessment is based on a list of criteria defined by the organisation.
DEA	Achieve the highest possible output value with the lowest possible input consumption.	Can be used for organisational comparability. Organisation with specified elements.	Continuous monitoring of the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of company operations,	It is characterised by input and output criteria aligned to strategic guidelines,	To ensure comparability of input and output criteria, a framework for analysis

	Efficiency	Relevance of the model, key elements	Model applicability	Clarity and consistency	Playability
			providing information for various company decisions.	which serve as a basis for comparability.	should be provided.
Virginia Performance	Building consensus. Adapting to a planned strategy.	An adaptive system that considers the significant or limited influence of the state on each indicator.	Be accessible to local levels, the public and legislators to be properly informed and to make informed decisions on local issues.	The system automatically inserts the necessary data from the Performance Budgeting system and other databases.	The results-based approach implies a fundamental change of approach, which is the task of the current management.
Scotland Performance	To be a constantly evolving yet transparent source for evaluating government performance.	At its apex is an overarching vision, a vision that government action and state resources should serve the goal of becoming an even more successful country become.	From a methodological point of view, it is important to note that both the individual objectives (e.g.: economic growth) and the national indicators (e.g.: increasing exports) are structured in a coherent way.	From the value factor (positive or negative) assigned to the indicators expresses an assessment of the direction of change.	The indicators are validated by an evaluation team of senior civil servants and analysts.

Source: own editing

A well-implemented performance management system not only results in customer satisfaction, but also provides a competitive advantage over peers that affects the management and the market position of the

organisation. The key role of performance management was first recognised by large companies, which have achieved significant success, efficiency and effectiveness by operating the processes and systems associated with it. This is reflected in the growing body of national and international literature and publications on the subject.

However, the effective use of these management systems is less common in public service organisations. This is due to a number of factors, such as compliance with legislation, the specific characteristics of public service bodies and, not least, their management. There are a number of issues that arise in this context which also form the basis of this chapter. What are the keys to success? What factors contribute to the implementation and use of effective performance management in public service organisations? Can a performance management system become a management philosophy? In thinking about these questions, I asked myself how much of a role performance management plays in the life of a healthcare organisation and how it can be linked to customer needs. I looked at which framework models are applicable in the healthcare sector, which models have innovative elements, and what are their advantages and disadvantages. This is presented in detail in Table 2 above as a basis for literature research, but in a summary figure it is worth reviewing the models I have already analysed and compared.

Of particular importance to me were flexibility, the parallel treatment of organisational and individual values, and implementability.

What stands out is that all models have novel features that suggest that any model could be applied in a hospital's performance management system. However, this choice required more investigation, as it was not only the analysis of advantages, disadvantages and novelty content that determined the choice, but also good practices. The implementation of a system, both in time and economically, leads to high indicators, so I also conducted an international and domestic review, as the systems already implemented and the criticisms against them helped me to make the final choice.

#### *Adapting performance models to a hospital*

The performance management models and methodologies I have examined have relevance for the adaptation of a performance management system in a publicly funded hospital. My primary goal is to select a model that can be the basis for a combination of methodologies that will allow a hospital to choose performance indicators that are adapted to the nature of the institution. Thus, the Balanced Scorecard's balanced scorecard system of indicators was chosen as the primary basis for a future "indicator bank". The development of a framework model also adds complexity, so additional methodologies were subsequently incorporated into the framework model.

The BSC system, when properly selected, provides clarity and at the same time measurability of the strategic directions of the organisation's strikes (Lipták, Musinszki 2022). In parallel, it utilises the correlations supported

by motivational theories that goals influence the behaviour of the organisation (Horváth- Partners, 2007). Strategic goals are composed of two important elements, the vision and core strategic objectives, and are therefore considered key and critical elements for success in the organisation. To ensure that these objectives are met and can be monitored, financial and non-financial indicators are assigned to them and the planned and actual values of the indicators are compared. The name of the model developed by the Kaplan Norton authors is revealing, as it assumes a balanced set of indicators that clearly sets out to demonstrate the performance of an organisation. The four perspectives of the method:

- Financial perspective,
- customer perspective,
- operational process perspective,
- learning and development perspective.

The fundamental question is what the owners expect from the organisation, i.e. what needs to be done to make the company successful in the owners' perception. The other question is how the customers expect the organisation to perform, and here we need to look at success from the customer's perspective (Szívós, 2007). The learning and development perspective is also important, as it is important to focus on how we can achieve customer satisfaction, what are the key processes in which the organisation needs to excel, and what are the areas where the organisation needs to optimise. And by this perspective, we also mean how to sustain the improvement in the future, what the company needs to improve, what the organisation needs to learn. Performance improvement and management is emphasized, as this perspective helps the organization to achieve excellent results in other segments (Jarjabka, et al 2010) This not only emphasizes the role of the organization, but also the individual, and the role of motivation is emphasized, as it increases organizational effectiveness. All four perspectives are important, because if we want to define an effective organisation, all elements contribute to achieving this, but if we look at what areas are covered and what indicators can be placed under each pillar, the model needs to be completed.

According to the OECD statement in 2010, social innovation has a crucial role to play in improving public sector performance (OECD, 2010). (OECD, 2010) Furthermore, in 2018, the OECD has taken on the task of developing a set of indicators to help assess the performance of services and the organisation, however, this set of indicators is still under development, i.e. in the pilot phase. A number of articles and studies mention to us that public sector processes are not the same as those in the competitive sector. It is worth mentioning the contribution of performance, both to individual development and to organisational goals, in both the competitive and the public sector (Dajnoki, 2007) The concept of New Public Management is often mentioned in innovation studies in the public sector, and in this field the following elements have also been given a prominent place: effectiveness, quality, economy and competitiveness. (Halász, 2016) Based on the elements formulated, one could say that it is easy to define metrics based on these elements, but it is not so trivial.

The main objective is the GoodLife Impact, as it is necessary to provide a high quality service to society, but what does this mean? In my research I set out to assess what this might mean from a user or patient perspective,

but repeated attempts were not successful as everyone defined this element(s) differently. In my opinion, the most important are quality health promotion and health restoration services (Kocziszky et al. 2015)

In addition, effectiveness and efficiency were also included, although these concepts are very general, according to Gajduscek (2011), effectiveness is a concept of a measure of how well an organisation has achieved its goals. Efficiency, on the other hand, is nothing more than the amount of resources that are put into the goals, i.e. the effort required to achieve these goals. Thus, these concepts are also the key ones in my research (Gajduscek, 2011).

The third level includes both soft and hard factors, which can be associated with the development of an indicator system, so these factors are also important in the goal hierarchy.

- Limited use of resources: the potential of public service bodies is limited, as they use public money, but it is worth noting that in this sector the ultimate goal is not to maximise profit, but as they use public money, they should focus on efficient and economical operation (Csath, 2016)
- Lean thinking and approach is very important, as optimising the sequence of care and examining patient care pathways is important and essential for an institution.
- Raising service standards: although we are talking about public service organisations, one of the characteristics of public service organisations is that their clientele is the whole population, so they must not only serve a certain segment of the population, but almost everyone comes into contact with this type of organisation in some way during their lifetime (Lannert, 2004)
- Leveraging organisational capabilities, as performance management systems focus primarily on these elements, this should also be given priority as it is important in defining the vision and also in achieving the elements defined at the first two levels.

I have attempted to draw a hierarchy of objectives that could be a possible solution in a publicly funded hospital, illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Possible hierarchy of objectives for public service enterprises

Source: Own editing based on Kocziszky-Veresné Somosi (2015)

### *Relationship between the framework model and strategy*

A framework should provide an objective way for hospital managers to measure the hospital's performance. It is a complex task, involving both content, quantitative and qualitative indicators. To achieve this, the framework should allow the hospital's mission and strategy to be broken down into specific indicators according to different aspects, and the evaluation of the indicators should provide feedback to the hospital's managers on the functioning of each department. The benefit of this lies in the fact that the strategic objectives and indicators help to ensure that the objectives are accompanied by quantifiable results (Bakó, 2021).

### *What should the framework provide?*

It must include meeting the demands of taxpayers and patients on the organisation to varying degrees (Hollósy, 2017). This is where the issue of efficiency and effectiveness, mentioned earlier, comes in, i.e. what resources are used and what results are achieved. All taxpayers want to know how the tax they pay is being used, and this is coupled with the concept of transparency, in addition to the two key definitions at the second level of the hierarchy already mentioned above. Sustainable development can be seen as a broader social requirement, of which environmental awareness and respect for the natural environment as far as possible are an integral part.

Patients' basic expectation of a hospital is that they should receive the high quality, state-of-the-art care available there. Ensuring equal opportunities and the enforcement and protection of patients' rights is not only a professional but also a legal obligation under the provisions of Act CLIV of 1997 on health care. Patients should prefer to spend as little time as possible in hospital and have their basic comfort needs met during their stay.

The question is how performance management can help and contribute to this. The framework used must answer the question of which processes to focus on and in which areas an institution needs to excel. The framework should take account of opportunities for improvement. For example, the hospital should organise training courses for its own staff, or conferences where medical professionals can share their expertise and experience (Takács, 2014), including the possibility of clinical research in the hospital, the need for continuous IT development with the advent of digitalisation, and aspects of increasing staff motivation. To define the strategic objectives, I consider it useful to use the strategic map often used today. In the following I will present the basics of a framework model, which can be the basis for a multilevel framework model and to which indicators can be linked.

## **Conclusions, Results**

My summary of the literature illustrates that performance management without strategy does not work. Thus, it is essential to create a model and represent it at one level of a multi-level model that can also map a strategy. However, the existence and development of a strategy in health care institutions is not straightforward, since the

link to the hierarchy of objectives is not comparable to that of a competitive sphere.

And comparing performance models is a challenge in this area because specifications often affect both the goals of the organisation and the effectiveness of the organisation. However, in order to measure the implementation of strategy in a functioning institution, it is worth looking for a methodology that shows us that there is goal-oriented management in the institution, i.e. that operations are aligned to goals and have a strategy. One possible solution could be to use the model I have designed first almost when performing a parametric analysis of the organization, both at the strategy and organizational level, as shown in Figure 3 below.

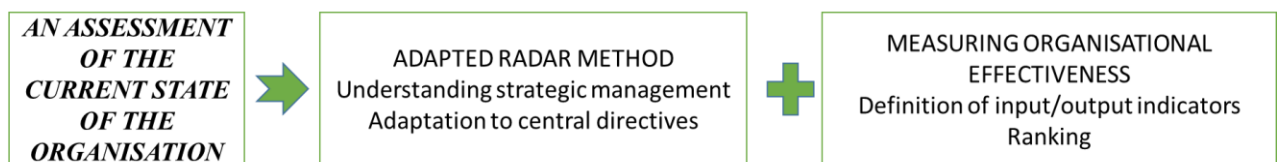


Figure 3 First level of a multi-level model

Source: Own editing

This level is what is known as an exploratory level, which shows how the organisation relates to the objectives, how it should adapt to the performance indicators formulated, and helps to select a performance management methodology for the given institution that best measures the organisation in relation to its environment and its capabilities.

This is particularly important in the holistic sector, as the parameters of institutions vary, both in terms of the number of beds and the number of wards, so there is a need to provide a choice that seeks to measure the most efficient way. In what follows I will present the specifics of the second level of my model, which focuses on the models identified in the literature base, so it is worth seeing how each model specification can be assigned to each of the individual properties, following of course the preliminary first level analysis. Figure 4 shows us.

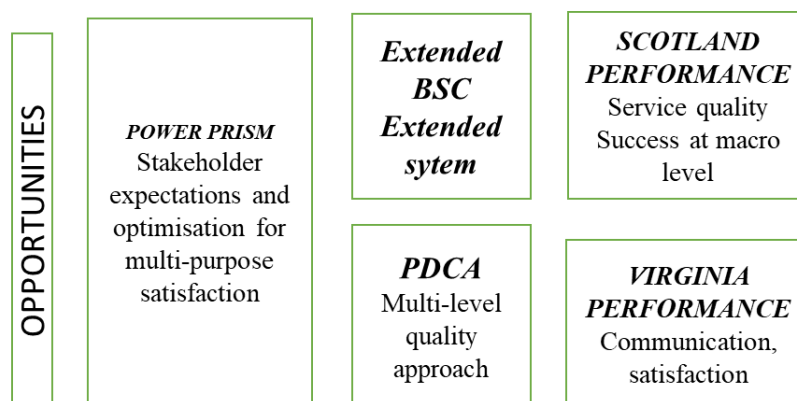


Figure 4 Modell Summary

Source: Own editing



My plan is to link to this level a so-called indicator bank, where the hospital management can select specific indicators for their institution and thus be able to measure them within the organisation.

## Conclusion

In the context of this research, I focused on the challenges of managing healthcare institutions. My research had its difficulties, as in many cases the data was limited and the process took longer. It was necessary to filter by the parameters of the institutions in order to have the same research conditions. My aim in writing this article was primarily to show that performance management in the public sector, and specifically in the life of public hospitals, is as much an area of focus as it is in a competitive sector. I think this deeper rather literature insight is in part a demonstration of the primary steps of a model to justify what I have set out to do.

A hospital will always have a prominent role in the life of a society, a country, a city, since all members of society encounter the institution during their lifetime, so it is worth focusing not only on measurability and improvement, but also on the possible need for a management system management philosophy in the life and functioning of an institution.

## Acknowledgements

The study was carried out within the Thematic Programme of Excellence 2021 – National Research sub-programme, as part of the Creative Region III project TKP2021-NKTA-22, with the support of the NKFIH.

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## Strategy for Improving Marketing Skills Through Internship Program in the Property Industry

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**Abstract:** The property industry is one of the economic sectors that is growing rapidly. To face increasingly fierce competition in marketing, development companies must have a competent team. Internship programs have emerged as an effective way to improve marketing skills in this industry. This research aims to analyze strategies for improving marketing skills through an internship program in the property development industry. The results of this research show that the internship program has become an integral component in the marketing skills development strategy in the property industry. This strategy includes several stages. First, choose internal candidates who have the appropriate interest and background in marketing. Second, provide intensive training that involves in-depth understanding of property products, market understanding and communication skills. Third, place it in an active marketing team, so you can apply knowledge in real situations. Fourth, provide ongoing guidance and feedback to internals throughout the program. The results show that the internship program is effective in improving internal marketing skills, to increase the company's ability to market property more efficiently. The program also provides additional benefits in the form of networking and valuable practical experience. The strategy of increasing marketing skills through an internship program is a smart step for developer companies to face challenges in the dynamic property industry.

**Keywords:** Internship, Marketing, Strategy, Property industry

**Citation:** Manurung, C. (2024). Strategy for Improving Marketing Skills Through Internship Program in the Property Industry. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1132-1148), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The property industry is one of the economic sectors that is experiencing rapid growth in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. In recent decades, demand for residential, commercial and infrastructure has driven the growth of this industry significantly. Along with this growth, competition in the property industry is getting tighter, forcing developers to innovate in various aspects, including marketing.

Marketing is a social and managerial process in which individuals and groups get what they need and want by creating, offering, and exchanging valuable products with others (Kotler, 2005). According to W. Stanton, marketing is a business unit that aims to design, evaluate and market goods and services that can satisfy the

needs of buyers and potential buyers. WY Stanton explains that marketing is a comprehensive system of business activities that aims to design, evaluate, promote and distribute goods and services that can satisfy the needs of buyers and potential buyers. The American Marketing Association (2009) explains that marketing is an organizational function that aims to benefit the organization and its stakeholders by creating, communicating, and providing value to customers in order to manage customer relationships. Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that marketing is an activity to offer goods or services and create individuals or groups whose aim is to obtain reciprocity in the form of profit.

Marketing has a very important function in business activities. With marketing, business actors sell their products and services to consumers. By understanding the function of marketing, business people can make maximum use of it so that it can benefit their company. According to Kotler (2001), marketing functions are: (1) Collecting potential information in the marketing environment regarding current customers, competitors and other forces; (2) Attracting buyers by developing and disseminating persuasive communications; (3) Agree on the price and other terms so that the transfer of ownership of the goods can be carried out; (4) Marketing assumes the risks of carrying out marketing channel functions; (5) Manage product movement to customers and storage.

Apart from marketing, there is also marketing communications. Marketing communication is the process of disseminating messages, the process of disseminating information and messages to communicators through communication means and channels. In accordance with their nature, humans always communicate to perfect their knowledge so they can adapt to their environment. Communication is the process of transferring information from one person to another and vice versa (Cangara, 2015). Promotion is part of the entire marketing communications process. Advertising helps marketers improve information sharing relationships with others. Feedback is another part of the communication process. This feedback shows the effectiveness of your communications and provides an opportunity to adjust your promotional efforts to market preferences.

Marketing is a key element in property business success. The ability to market a property effectively creates opportunities for profitable sales. Therefore, it is very important for developers to have a qualified and skilled marketing team. One method implemented by developer companies to improve marketing skills is through an internship program.

There are several kinds of understanding of strategy from experts. Marketing strategy is a way of dealing with changing environmental and competitive conditions by establishing a series of policies, rules and objectives that can provide direction to help companies carry out marketing efforts from time to time (Assauri, 2013). Meanwhile, according to Kotler, 2002, marketing strategy is to achieve profitable relationships with customers through the value created by the company for customers. From this understanding it can be concluded that marketing strategy is the establishment of policies or rules that are created to help companies gain or achieve profits.

The internship program is an opportunity for students or individuals who want to gain practical experience in the world of work. In the context of the property industry, this program allows students or interns to engage in property marketing activities, learn about the property market and develop their communication skills. The use of internship programs as a strategy to improve marketing skills in the context of the property industry still requires deeper understanding.

At the same time, there are several problems that need to be overcome in using internship programs to improve marketing skills. First, developers often face difficulties in selecting internal candidates who have interests and backgrounds that suit the property industry. Appropriate criteria in internal selection are crucial so that the internship program can provide maximum benefits. Second, development companies need to ensure that interns actually gain valuable practical experience, not just carry out routine tasks. Good practical experience, helping them develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the property industry. Third, there is a need to align internship programs with ever-changing market needs and continuously developing technology. This means that these programs must be constantly updated and adapted to be relevant to the latest developments in the industry. Apart from that, another problem that may arise is the lack of adequate guidance and feedback to interns during the program. This can hinder their development and reduce the benefits of the internship program. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the strategy and implementation of internship programs in the property industry holistically.

The Special Region, which is known as a city of education and tourism, has its own charm with its rich culture, arts and culinary delights which can attract new arrivals who want to visit, study and even open a business. This causes a large demand for houses, both as private residences and to open businesses. The need for housing has led to the rapid development of the property industry. Many property developers and sales individuals have emerged who are marketing houses in the area. However, there are also many property developers who collaborate with property sales to market their products. Because many property sales sell several similar housing units, this often leads to unhealthy competition between salespeople. The pandemic has increasingly caused the housing industry's performance to decline, causing competition to become increasingly fierce.

Given these problems, we can identify ways to increase the benefits of internship programs in this industrial context. This research will attempt to explore effective strategies in improving marketing skills through an internship program in the property industry. It is hoped that this research can provide valuable insight for developer companies, educational institutions, and the government in developing more effective and relevant internship programs in the future.

## Goals

This research aims to investigate in depth strategies for improving marketing skills through an internship program in the property development industry. The property industry has become one of the most dynamic and significant economic sectors in many countries, including Indonesia. This rapid growth has given rise to



increasingly fierce competition, and has encouraged developer companies to look for innovative ways to increase their competitiveness. In this context, the role of marketing in communicating and marketing property products becomes very crucial.

The main objectives of this research are:

*Identify effective internal candidate selection strategies.*

One important aspect of the internship program is the selection of the right intern candidates. Therefore, it is necessary to create criteria and methods used by developers to select internal candidates who have appropriate interests and backgrounds. The aim is to help developer companies find interns who have the potential to develop in the marketing field.

*Analyze internal practical experience.*

It is important that internship programs provide valuable practical experience to interns. This aims to understand the types of tasks and projects given to interns during the program, as well as how these experiences contribute to the development of marketing skills. This is useful to help evaluate the effectiveness of existing internship programs.

*Evaluate the program's relevance to market and technological needs.*

As the property industry continues to change, it is important to ensure that internship programs are aligned with evolving market needs and changing technology. It is necessary to identify how the development company maintains the relevance of its programs by ensuring that internals gain an accurate understanding of the latest developments in the property industry.

*Study the factors that influence the success of an internship program*

It is necessary to analyze the factors that influence the success of the internship program in improving marketing skills. This includes factors such as guidance support and feedback to internals during the program, work environment, as well as collaboration between developer companies and educational institutions that organize internship programs.

*Provide recommendations for improving the internship program.*

Based on the research results, the final goal is to provide concrete and practical recommendations to developer companies, educational institutions and the government to increase the benefits of internship programs in developing marketing skills in the property development industry.

Through achieving these goals, it is hoped that we can provide a deeper understanding of the role of internship programs in developing marketing skills in the property industry. It is hoped that this research can make a positive contribution to the development of this industry and help developer companies to compete more effectively in an increasingly tight market.

## Method

This research will use a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore and understand strategies for improving marketing skills through internship programs in industry. Qualitative research is very helpful for digging deeper insights into internal experiences, the views of developer companies, and the dynamics of internship programs.

### **a. Place and time of research.**

This research was conducted at several property development companies in Indonesia. The selection of companies is made by considering various factors, including company size, reputation in the industry, and the diversity of projects being carried out. This research was conducted for six months, starting from the beginning of the year to the middle of the year, covering various stages of the ongoing internship program.

### *b. Sample selection.*

Sample selection was carried out purposively. Selected were developer companies with a reputation in Indonesia, which had an internship program in marketing. Those selected were a number of interns who had participated in the program. This provides multiple perspectives for analysis.

### *c. Research sample.*

The research sample consists of several leading developer companies that are actively implementing internship programs in the marketing field. In each company, interns will be involved who are undergoing a property marketing internship program during the research period. Those selected are interns who have diverse backgrounds and interests to obtain a more holistic view. In addition, interviews were conducted with marketing managers, internal supervisors and related staff to get a more comprehensive perspective.

### *d. Data collection technique.*

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with interns, marketing managers, internal supervisors and related staff at each developer company. Participatory observation was carried out to understand the intern's practical experience during the program. Also given the opportunity to access documents and training materials

provided to interns. All interviews will be recorded and analyzed by transcript.

*e. Data analysis*

The collected qualitative data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This analysis will involve identifying the main themes that emerged from the interviews and observations. Data will be compiled, categorized and analyzed to identify patterns, similarities and differences in strategies for improving marketing skills through internship programs at various developer companies. Data analysis will be used to answer research questions and achieve the stated research objectives.

*f. Validity and reliability.*

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, triangulation techniques were used by comparing results from various data sources, such as interviews with interns, marketing managers, and internship program documentation. In addition, a member-checking technique was used, and initial results were confirmed back to participants to ensure that the interpretation of the data was in line with their experiences.

This qualitative research method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of strategies for improving marketing skills through an internship program in the property industry. By exploring the views and experiences of various stakeholders, this research is expected to provide valuable insights and concrete recommendations for developing more effective internship programs in the future.

## **Results**

With the increasing need for housing in the form of decent housing, conducive, cheap to operate, and not limited to certain areas, this has encouraged more and more businesses and investors to emerge in the real estate sector. The property business is a very attractive business option for investors because this business sector serves the increasing needs and demand for land and housing. Real estate investment is a profitable and promising business because it grows every year.

Real estate investments are investments in land, buildings, parts of buildings, or facilities managed by businesses to generate rental income. Opportunities and challenges Real estate investment has the potential to support national development by increasing wealth both directly and indirectly (through contributions to national GDP) while generating income from central and regional governments. In addition, along with the increase in land and building prices, more and more buildings such as flats, apartments, access centers and other real estate projects are emerging. The increase in land prices after the property is built is also a profit that can be taken for these business people. It cannot be denied that the increase in land prices, which can double, is one of the sources of profit for property developers. In addition, the increasingly scarce availability of land causes

prices to increase.

## **Discussion**

### **A. Selection criteria for internship candidates**

In the context of the dynamic and competitive property industry, selecting the right internal candidate is a crucial first step in the strategy to improve marketing skills through an internship program. Good internal candidate selection criteria will ensure that this program provides maximum benefits for the developer company, students or individuals who participate.

This research discusses in depth the relevant and effective internal candidate selection criteria in the property development industry in the form of:

#### *Interest and passion in the property industry.*

One of the main criteria in selecting internal candidates is their interest and passion for the property industry. Intern candidates who have a strong interest in this industry are more likely to be dedicated and enthusiastic participants in undergoing an internship program. They have an intrinsic motivation to understand the dynamics of the property market, property products and marketing strategies used.

#### *Relevant educational background.*

Another selection criterion is the educational background of prospective interns. Preference is given to those with an educational background relevant to marketing or the property industry. Students who have completed related study programs such as marketing management, business management, or property studies have a more solid knowledge base to contribute to the internship program.

#### *Strong communication skills.*

Good communication skills are an important aspect of marketing. Therefore, prospective interns must have strong communication skills, including the ability to write, speak and communicate effectively with various parties. This is important because interns will be involved in marketing activities that involve interactions with clients, colleagues and the community.

#### *Analytical and creative abilities.*

In the property industry, analytical skills to understand market trends, property data and consumer behavior are invaluable. Internal candidates who have good analytical skills can help developer companies make decisions

based on data. Apart from that, creative abilities are also important in designing innovative and attractive marketing strategies.

*Adaptability and openness to learning.*

The property industry is always changing, therefore, prospective interns must have the ability to adapt quickly to changes. They must also be open to learning and personal growth. This includes a willingness to master ever-evolving digital marketing tools and new trends in the industry.

*Ability to work in a team.*

Property marketing often involves a multidisciplinary team. Therefore, the ability to work in a team is an important criterion in selecting internal candidates. The ability to collaborate, share ideas, and work together with other team members is a determining factor in the success of a marketing program.

*Problem solving abilities.*

The ability to identify a problem, analyze it and find a creative solution is something that is highly valued in the property development industry. Internal candidates who have good problem solving skills can make a positive contribution in overcoming complex marketing challenges.

The selection criteria for internal candidates that have been explained are very helpful for developer companies in selecting the most suitable individuals for the internship program. In this way, the program can provide greater benefits for all parties involved, and improve the quality of the marketing workforce in the property development industry.

*B. Practical intership experience*

Intern practical experience plays a central role in the success of internship programs in the property industry. In this context, practical experience includes various tasks, projects, and interactions experienced by prospective interns during the program period. This experience is invaluable as it provides interns with the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, deepen their understanding of the property development industry, and develop skills that are highly valued in property marketing.

One important aspect of an intern's practical experience is their involvement in the day-to-day activities of the developer's company. This includes participating in marketing team meetings, understanding the property's product offerings, and observing ongoing marketing strategies. Over the course of the program, interns are involved in collecting and analyzing market data, understanding consumer behavior, and identifying relevant

trends. In doing so, they will have the opportunity to develop the strong analytical skills that are essential in property marketing.

The intern's practical experience also includes involvement in concrete marketing projects. This includes designing property marketing campaigns, developing promotional materials, or designing digital marketing strategies. Interns can be directly involved in interacting with clients or prospective property buyers, providing a valuable opportunity to improve their communication skills and interpersonal skills. Practical experience can also enable interns to understand legal and regulatory aspects related to the property development industry, such as licensing regulations, zoning regulations, or environmental regulations. This knowledge is important because errors in understanding and complying with regulations can have a serious impact on a property development project.

The intern's practical experience also includes learning about the technology used in property marketing. This includes the use of marketing software, social media platforms, and data analysis tools. With the rapid development of technology in this industry, interns must be able to adapt to these tools to support effective marketing strategies. During the internship program, interns also have the opportunity to work with a diverse team in a developer company. This includes working with experienced professionals in marketing, sales, architecture, law, and other related fields. This not only provides a different perspective on the industry, but also helps in developing collaboration skills and team working abilities, which are highly valued attributes in the world of work.

Internal practical experience in the property industry internship program is an important stage in developing marketing skills. This provides a real-world context that cannot be simulated in an academic setting. This experience provides deeper insight into industry dynamics, allows interns to develop relevant skills, and prepares them for the challenges they face in the world of work after completing the internship program. It is important to ensure that the program is well designed and provides useful practical experience for prospective interns.

### *C. The relevance of the internship program to market and technological needs*

In the fast-growing property industry, it is important for internship programs to be in line with changing market needs and increasingly advanced technological developments. The relevance of the internship program to market and technological needs is key to ensuring that prospective interns gain an accurate understanding of industry trends and the skills needed in a dynamic world of work. Adjusting the internship program is necessary to make it relevant to current market conditions and technology as a priority.

The property market is constantly changing in response to changes in licensing policies, changing consumer trends and other external factors. Therefore, the internship program must be able to keep up with market developments. The internship program must provide opportunities for prospective interns to observe and

participate in marketing strategies that are in line with the latest trends. For example, internal candidates must be given a strong understanding of how online property marketing functions, because this is the dominant trend in reaching potential property buyers.

In addition, internship programs should also enable prospective interns to understand changes in regulations and permits that affect the property development industry. Government policies, such as zoning regulations or environmental regulations, can have a significant impact on property development projects. It is important for internship programs to cover legal and regulatory aspects in the training of prospective interns. With a strong understanding of these regulations, prospective interns can help development companies comply with the rules and avoid potential legal problems.

The relevance of the internship program to technological developments is also very important. Technology continues to advance in the property development industry, from sophisticated marketing software to powerful data analysis tools. Internship programs should provide opportunities for prospective interns to interact with these technologies. This may include training in the use of digital marketing software, social media platforms, or data analysis tools used in understanding consumer behavior. When internship programs reflect relevance to the latest technology, prospective interns will be better prepared to face challenges in an increasingly connected and digital world of work. They will have the skills necessary to design effective marketing campaigns online, track campaign performance, and make data-driven decisions.

The relevance of the internship program to technological developments also includes an understanding of the latest trends in property construction. For example, understanding the concept of sustainable buildings and green technology is very relevant in this industry. Prospective interns who gain exposure to these concepts will be more valued in a workforce that is increasingly concerned with sustainability.

In order to maintain the relevance of the internship program to market and technological needs, developer companies and educational institutions must collaborate closely. This allows the internship program to keep up with the latest developments in the property development industry and ensures that prospective interns gain an accurate understanding of market dynamics and technology. Internship programs can play an important role in preparing the next generation of property marketing professionals for success in a dynamic and changing world of work.

#### *D. Factors that influence the success of the internship program*

The success of an internship program in the property development industry is greatly influenced by a number of factors involving various parties involved in the program. These factors are determining factors in ensuring that the internship program provides maximum benefits for the developer company, students or individuals who take part in the program.



In this context, the factors that influence the success of the internship program can be described as follows:

#### *Leadership and commitment of the developer company*

The role and commitment of the developer company is very important in determining the success of the internship program. Company management must consider the internship program as an investment in human resource development and must be ready to provide the necessary support, both in terms of human resources and budget. The company's seriousness in supporting this program will be reflected in internal experience.

#### *Structured program design*

A structured and well-organized internship program design is the key to achieving success. The program should have clear objectives, a well-crafted training agenda, and assignments relevant to marketing skills. A clear guide will assist interns in directing their efforts and ensure that they gain a comprehensive understanding of the property development industry.

#### *Adequate guidance and support*

Adequate guidance and support from a mentor or supervisor is an important factor in the intern experience. Mentors must be prepared to provide guidance, provide feedback, and assist interns in overcoming challenges they may face. This mentorship will help interns feel valued and supported in developing their skills.

#### *Active internal involvement*

The success of an internship program also depends greatly on the involvement and motivation of prospective interns. They must be proactive in taking initiative, asking questions, and actively participating in all aspects of the program. Strong engagement from internals will increase the benefits they get from this experience.

#### *Accurate understanding of industry challenges*

Prospective interns must have an accurate understanding of the challenges faced by the property development industry. This includes understanding changes in regulations, competition in the market, and consumer trends. The better their understanding of the industrial environment, the better they can contribute to overcoming those challenges.

#### *Continuous evaluation and feedback*

Continuous evaluation and feedback during and after the internship program is important. This allows development companies to measure internal progress and provide necessary feedback for their development.

Constructive feedback will help interns identify areas where they can improve their skills.

#### *Collaboration with educational institutions*

Good cooperation between developer companies and educational institutions that organize internship programs is also a key factor in the success of this program. Educational institutions must provide support in the selection of suitable internal candidates and ensure that their educational curriculum is relevant to industry demands.

In order to achieve a successful internship program in the property industry, it is important for all parties involved to understand these factors and contribute actively to ensure that this program provides maximum benefits for all parties involved. The success of the internship program is not only in understanding and mastering marketing skills, but also in providing prospective interns with a deep understanding of this dynamic industry, which will be a valuable provision in their future careers.

#### *E. Recommendations for improving the internship program*

Increasing internship programs in the property industry is a very important step to ensure this program provides optimal benefits for developer companies, prospective interns, and also to support the growth of this industry as a whole

The following recommendations can help improve the quality and relevance of internship programs in this sector.

**First**, increasing closer cooperation between developer companies and educational institutions that organize internship programs is key. This includes the initial stage of selecting internal candidates which focuses more on criteria relevant to the property industry. With closer collaboration, development companies can provide input about the abilities and skills they need from prospective interns. Instead, educational institutions can integrate practical elements in their curriculum that suit today's industry demands. This will ensure that students participating in the internship program have relevant knowledge that can be applied directly in the work environment.

**Second**, monitoring and feedback needs to be improved during the internship program period. The appointed supervisor or mentor must be actively involved in supervising and guiding prospective interns. Providing regular feedback will help prospective interns identify areas where they need to improve their skills and knowledge. In addition, good monitoring will ensure that this program runs according to plan and provides maximum benefits.

**Third**, in order to maintain relevance with technological developments and market demands, the internship program must integrate a strong digital marketing component. The world of property marketing is increasingly shifting towards online, and therefore, aspiring interns must gain a solid understanding of digital platforms, data

analysis tools and online marketing strategies. Development companies can provide access to the latest marketing software and provide training in its use. Additionally, interns should be involved in designing and executing online marketing campaigns as part of their program.

**Fourth**, developer companies can consider increasing transparency and communication regarding the objectives and benefits of internship programs to prospective interns. This helps in motivating them and ensures that they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them during the program. This understanding will help interns manage their expectations and maximize the benefits of this experience.

**Fifth**, to ensure that the internship program has a long-term impact, developer companies can consider building a network of internship program alumni. This can create opportunities for interns who have completed the program to stay connected with the developer company and with their peers. This alumni network can be a valuable resource in a prospective intern's future career and assist them in identifying job opportunities or business collaborations.

In order to realize the full potential of internship programs in the property industry, collaboration between developer companies, educational institutions and prospective interns is key. By implementing these recommendations, internship programs can become a powerful instrument in developing marketing skills relevant to this industry and supporting the sustainable growth of the property sector. All parties involved must work together to create an internship program that provides optimal benefits for all parties involved.

#### *F. Challenges and opportunities*

Internship programs in the property industry have various challenges and opportunities, which can influence the success of the program and the benefits provided to all parties involved. Understanding these challenges and taking advantage of existing opportunities is key to optimizing internship programs in this fast-growing industry.

##### *Challenge*

###### *1. Dynamic changes in the property industry*

One of the main challenges is the rapid changes in the property industry. Market fluctuations, changing regulations, and rapid technological developments can make it difficult for internship programs to stay relevant. Intern candidates need to be able to adapt to these changes and internship programs must be flexible in responding to them.

###### *2. Selection of the right internal candidates*

Selecting internal candidates who suit the development company's needs can be a challenge. Identifying

students or individuals who have interests, skills and backgrounds that suit the real estate industry can be a complex task. Errors in selecting internal candidates can result in a lack of program benefits.

### *3. Providing adequate guidance*

Providing adequate guidance and supervision to prospective interns is another challenge. Supervisors or mentors who do not have enough time or knowledge can reduce the benefits of the internship program. Active involvement from the developer company in guiding internals is the key to overcoming this challenge.

### *4. Unrealistic expectations*

Sometimes, prospective interns or developer companies can have unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved during an internship program. This can cause disappointment and frustration. It's important to communicate clear and realistic expectations from the start.

## *Opportunity*

### *1. In-depth education*

The internship program provides opportunities for prospective interns to gain a deep understanding of the property industry. They can see how property projects are developed from inception to completion. This can create a strong knowledge base for their future career.

### *2. Professional connections and networks*

Internship programs also provide opportunities to build valuable professional connections and networks. Interns can interact with experienced professionals in the property industry and create relationships that can help them in their future job searches or business collaborations.

### *3. Significant work experience*

The internship program provides significant work experience for prospective interns. They can get involved in real projects, contribute to marketing strategies, and face real-world challenges. This gives them an edge in finding a job after graduation.

### *4. Improved practical skills*

The internship program provides the opportunity to develop practical skills in property marketing. By getting involved in the day-to-day tasks of the developer company, interns can strengthen their abilities in data analysis, digital marketing strategy, and interpersonal communication.

### *5. Positive contribution to the developer company*

The internship program also provides opportunities for developer companies to get positive contributions from prospective interns. They can assist in the implementation of marketing projects, provide fresh perspectives, and present innovative ideas. This can increase the effectiveness and creativity of the marketing team.

In facing challenges and taking advantage of opportunities in an internship program in the property industry, it is important for all parties involved to work together effectively. With a strong commitment to overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities, internship programs can be a powerful tool for developing superior property marketing talent and supporting the sustainable growth of the property industry.

## **Conclusion**

In the competitive and growing property industry, internship programs are one of the most effective strategies for improving marketing skills. This program opens the door for prospective interns to gain an in-depth understanding of how property marketing works in the real world, and at the same time gives development companies access to young talents full of potential. In this context, there are a number of key strategies that can be used to improve marketing skills through internship programs in the property industry.

First, the internship program must be well designed and structured. This means having clear goals that cover the key skills the prospective intern wants to improve. This strategy must begin with a strong understanding of what is required in the property development industry, such as an understanding of the market, marketing strategies and technology used. With the right goals and understanding, an internship program can direct a prospective intern's efforts in the most relevant direction. The internship program should include a variety of tasks and projects that reflect the developer company's daily needs in terms of property marketing. Intern candidates must be involved in designing marketing campaigns, managing social media, analyzing market data, and communicating with clients or potential property buyers. This practical experience will help them develop strong marketing skills.

The internship program should allow prospective interns to learn from experienced professionals at the development company. Mentoring by those who already have experience in the property industry is an effective way to transfer valuable marketing knowledge and skills. Discussions, feedback and direct guidance from mentors will provide valuable insight into how the industry works. The internship program must also include an understanding of the importance of technology in property marketing. Prospective interns should be involved in the use of digital marketing tools, data analysis and social media platforms relevant to the property industry. This will give them an edge in facing increasingly digital marketing trends.

Communication skills development is another important aspect of this strategy. Internal candidates must be given the opportunity to interact with various parties, from colleagues to clients or potential property buyers.

Training in interpersonal communication, presentation, and writing are important steps in improving these skills. Internship programs can also take advantage of innovative marketing projects. Intern candidates may be tasked with designing creative marketing campaigns, using the latest technology, or identifying new opportunities in the property development industry. This program can encourage creative thinking and innovation in property marketing. Throughout the internship program, ongoing evaluation and feedback should be an integral part of the strategy. This allows prospective interns to track their progress, identify areas for improvement, and receive constructive guidance from their supervisor or mentor. This feedback is an important instrument in the learning process.

In the dynamic property industry, a well-designed internship program is one of the best ways to improve marketing skills. With a strategy that includes a deep understanding of the industry, practical experience, mentoring, training in the latest technologies, and an emphasis on communications, this program can provide significant benefits to prospective interns and help development companies develop top-notch marketing talent. Through the implementation of this strategy, the internship program can become a platform for creating the next generation of successful property marketing professionals.

## Recommendations

I recommend the results of this research to be applied to improve the internship program in the future, in particular in property industry.

First, increasing closer cooperation between developer companies and educational institutions that organize internship programs is key.

Second, monitoring and feedback needs to be improved during the internship program period.

Third, in order to maintain relevance with technological developments and market demands, the internship program must integrate a strong digital marketing component.

Fourth, developer companies can consider increasing transparency and communication regarding the objectives and benefits of internship programs to prospective interns.

Fifth, to ensure that the internship program has a long-term impact, developer companies can consider building a network of internship program alumni.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to honorable coordinator and site supervisor internship and the whole kind team in company.

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## A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Teachers' and Students' Attitudes Towards Digitally-Mediated Reading Courses in The “New Normal” Landscape

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research was to gauge how COVID-19 has shifted the mindsets of students and teachers toward online education. In March and April of 2022, researchers at a university used Google forms to conduct a prospective cross-sectional online poll. A total of 265 students and 18 teachers from universities in Southern Vietnam participated in the online survey. The significant indicators of success are the students' levels of familiarity and satisfaction with digitally-mediated reading courses and their perceptions of the challenges they face in putting the technology to use. In contrast to the greater consensus among faculty members, most students had a poor impression of the ease with which digitally-mediated reading courses was used. When asked about the benefits and advantages of digitally-mediated reading courses, the vast majority of students responded negatively. Poor internet access (80%) and computer proficiency (74%), for example, are obstacles to online learning by students and educators. Most students (43.5%) would instead take their final written exams on paper in the study rooms. Paper exams in the classroom were favored by 32.7% of professors, while 30.6% chose online exams, and 34.1% wanted to postpone exams till the following year. Given the widespread disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, solid technological and institutional underpinnings are crucial for effective digitally-mediated reading courses, particularly during social distancing measures.

**Keywords:** Students, teachers, digitally-mediated, reading course, “new normal” landscape

**Citation:** Dang, L.N.D. & Dang, L.N.K. (2024). A cross analysis of teachers' and students' attitudes towards digitally-mediated reading courses in the “New normal” landscape. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1149-1159), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The use of the internet to further education implementation is a novel concept that is gaining popularity quickly. It allows students to study when and where it is the most convenient for them at a much more economical way. It enables students to make effective use of both offline and online resources. Studies indicate that the

appropriate combination of digitally-mediated reading courses, in conjunction with traditional classroom training is able to maximize the benefits of both learning environments (Shabila et al., 2021). As stated by Barteit et al. (2021), globalization and the unpredictable and digital transformation world have created urgent needs of a more flexibility of teaching and learning, serving to promote the educational process. More progress was made toward this goal especially in the “New normal” phase (Srinidhi et al., 2021). It may originate from the fact that students and teachers have getting accustomed to the online learning mode due to the eaducational mode shift during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Vietnam, this mode of learning reading has increasingly gained popularity, especially in the “New normal” landscape. Shaping into English language learning, digitally mediated reading courses are educational programs that incorporate digital tools and technologies to enhance and facilitate the teaching and learning of reading. Platforms such as LMS, Moodle, Blackboard are integral to digitally mediated reading courses. The purpose of this research was to assess the current level of understanding of digitally-mediated reading courses amongst teachers and students, as well as to identify any future needs for digitally-mediated reading courses implementation.

### **Research questions**

1. What are the students’ attitudes towards the digitally-mediated reading courses?
2. What are the teachers’ attitudes towards the digitally-mediated reading courses?
3. What are the differences between teachers’ and students’ attitudes the digitally-mediated reading courses?

### **Method**

The study employed a total of 265 students and 18 teachers. Participants in the study were informed of the objectives of the research and given assurances that their confidentiality would be maintained. An electronic invitation to take part in the survey was sent to a selection of students and instructors selected at random. In order to take part in the study, the participants were required to electronically provide their consent.

It was decided that a new study questionnaire was to be developed in order to facilitate the data gathering procedure and make it less difficult. Earlier surveys' responses were used to inform the development of this study's questionnaire, which was then sent out to respondents. A survey form hosted on Google was used in order to collect the necessary information. Once the material had been accepted by the researchers, who are professionals in the area of education, and assessed by those researchers, it was sent to the participants by email and many other social media platforms. This questionnaire was divided into five sections that are entirely distinct from one another. The demographic information of both the students and the teachers was the focus of the first section of the survey, which was meant to collect responses from both groups. The second section of the

test required the students to respond to four questions pertaining to digitally-mediated reading courses. The purpose of this section was to determine the students' overall level of knowledge on the topic. The third component of the survey consisted of seven questions, and its purpose was to study the techniques and motivations of respondents about digitally-mediated reading courses. A total of five questions were asked in the last phase of the survey to evaluate the respondents' familiarity with digitally-mediated reading courses platforms, their level of internet use, and the types of electronic devices they owned. In addition, we questioned them on the difficulties they anticipated coming across while putting digitally-mediated reading courses into action in their organizations. On a scale that went from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," students were given a variety of assertions and asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each of the claims. The appendices provide the findings of the survey that was carried out as part of this investigation.

A first test, or pilot study, was carried out in order to determine the most effective way to carry out the survey. It has been determined that the reliability of the questionnaire has an approximate value of 0.79, and that the amount of internal consistency it has, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, has an approximate value of 0.84. In order to complete the research project, the statistical software designed for the social sciences was used (IBM SPSS Statistics). The information was characterized based on the frequency of occurrence and the proportion of total occurrence, respectively. When calculating the totals for knowledge, practice, and attitude, the sum of the scores that respondents provided on the several test items for each category was added to the overall score for that category.

## Results

Figure 1 compares the students' and teachers' attitudes towards three primary factors including the digital literacy, strengths, and challenges. Generally, both students and teachers did not have positive attitudes towards their digital-mediated reading course experiences. The mean attribute scores for both groups are lower than 2.5. This implies a significant level of dissatisfaction and discomfort with the current implementation of these reading course. When comparing between the two groups, it can be recognized that teachers have more positive attitudes than their counterpart in both of the aspects. A detailed description of each participant group's attitudes towards specific aspects will be presented in the following parts.

It can be concluded in table 1 that the vast majority of students had a negative view of the ease with which they might learn to utilize and become proficient in digitally-mediated reading courses. The majority of respondents (77.6%) expressed their opinion that they did not find digitally-mediated reading courses to be simple to implement. The majority of students were not of the opinion that digitally-mediated reading courses has many benefits, including the ability to facilitate group discussion on complex topics (63.5% of students), the ease of access, the flexibility of course scheduling, the ease of acquiring new skills (63.1% of students), and the ease of gaining access to digitally-mediated reading courses materials (61% of students). According to Table 2, the vast majority of students who participated in the survey either strongly agreed or agreed that digitally-mediated

reading courses presents challenges. When asked about the most significant challenges, respondents cited issues with internet access (74.3%), computer literacy (72.4%), and access to computers and cellphones (68%) as the most common ones.

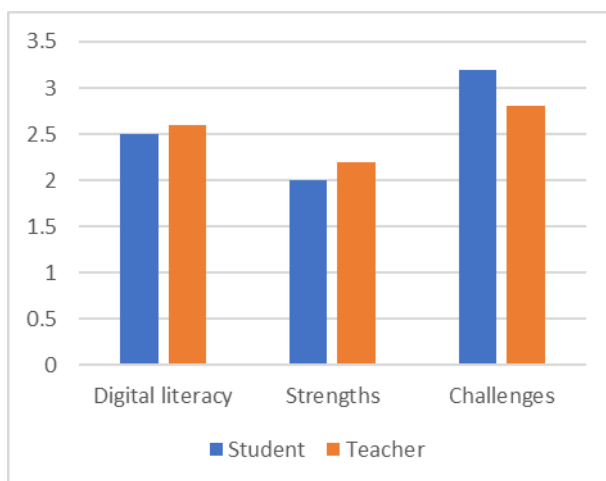


Figure 1. Comparison between students' and teachers' attitudes towards the digitally-mediated reading courses

Table 1. Perspectives on digitally-mediated reading courses amongst undergraduates (n =265)

Attitude	Strongly disagree/Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree/Agree (%)
<b>Digitally-mediated reading courses usage</b>			
Easy-to-use digitally-mediated reading courses	59.3%	27.3%	15.4%
Using digitally-mediated reading courses is simple to pick up.	55.4%	23.5%	23.6%
Acquiring expertise in the use of digitally-mediated reading courses is simple.	55.7%	22.8%	22.8%
Digitally-mediated reading courses is user friendly	77.6%	15.3%	10.6%
<b>Strengths</b>			
Courses are readily available online	56.4%	24.1%	20.9%
An interactive mode	60.7%	25.5%	14.5%
Cost-effective	38.9%	24.9%	36.8%
The accomplishment of a goal in a shorter amount of time	50.8%	26.8%	23.6%
Increase level of expertise	59.3%	24.6%	18.8%
Acquire better skills	63.1%	23.4%	15.2%
Easy accessibility, flexibility, and interactivity	61.0%	22.5%	16.4%
Group discussion on a complex topic	64.2%	22.8%	14.5%

A supplemental tool	55.6%	26.0%	20.6%
Prefer a blend of digitally-mediated reading courses and in-person instruction	52.3%	25.7%	25.2%

**Challenges**

Lack of computer and smartphone	21.6%	13.1%	68.0%
Poor internet connectivity	14.5%	11.3%	74.3%
Computer literacy	15.1%	14.9%	72.4%
Additional burden	22.8%	39.7%	39.9%
Time scheduling challenges between instructors and students	20.1%	17.3%	64.0%
Lack of understanding and information on digitally-mediated reading courses	17.7%	21.0%	64.7%

Table 2 depicts teachers’ perceptions towards the digitally-mediated reading courses. When asked about their thoughts on digitally-mediated reading courses, the vast majority of faculty and staff employees said that it was simple to pick up and start using. On the other hand, there was a more good discussion around the question of whether or not digitally-mediated reading courses was user-friendly (47.5%). About one-third of professors and workers were in agreement with the majority of views on e-strengths, while more than half of respondents regarded digitally-mediated reading courses to be a supplemental tool and pushed for a mix of digitally-mediated reading courses and face-to-face learning. The largest and most significant percentages of professors and staff members believed that digitally-mediated reading courses was cost-effective (47.2%), preferred to utilize it as a supplement to regular classroom training (51.3%), and chose to employ both digitally-mediated reading courses and traditional classroom instruction (58.1%). The majority of the teaching staff and administration are of the opinion that digitally-mediated reading courses does have certain drawbacks. The results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that the majority of respondents agree that low levels of internet access and computer literacy are a problem.

Table 2. Teachers’ attitude about digitally-mediated reading courses use (n = 180)

Attitude	Strongly disagree/Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree/Agree
<b>Digitally-mediated reading courses usage</b>			
Easy-to-use digitally-mediated reading courses	31.0%	41.6%	39.4%
Using digitally-mediated reading courses is simple to pick up.	22.3%	34.8%	44.7%
Acquiring expertise in the use of digitally-mediated reading courses is simple.	22.7%	35.3%	54.3%

Digitally-mediated reading courses is user friendly	47.5%	28.5%	35.5%
<b>Strengths</b>			
Courses are readily available online	25.7%	37.9%	39.1%
An interactive mode	32.2%	39.5%	31.8%
Cost-effective	19.6%	35.3%	47.2%
The accomplishment of a goal in a shorter amount of time	27.5%	43.2%	41.3%
Increase level of expertise	29.1%	35.8%	37.5%
Acquire better skills	32.0%	36.4%	34.2%
Easy accessibility, flexibility, and interactivity	33.4%	38.0%	35.7%
Group discussion on a complex topic	35.0%	35.3%	32.0%
A supplemental tool	19.8%	32.2%	51.3%
Prefer a blend of digitally-mediated reading courses and in-person instruction	17.2%	25.3%	58.1%
<b>Challenges</b>			
Lack of computer and smartphone	8.1%	14.8%	80.0%
Poor internet connectivity	10.6%	20.6%	72.5%
Computer literacy	14.9%	42.7%	45.2%
Additional burden	18.7%	24.8%	60.0%
Time scheduling challenges between instructors and students	10.4%	29.0%	62.6%
Lack of understanding and information on digitally-mediated reading courses	20.5%	22.3%	60.4%

## Discussion

Recent developments in digitally-mediated reading courses have significantly altered the traditional classroom environment, necessitating adjustments on the part of both students and teachers. The COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified this trend. This supports the claim that very little research has been done on online education. Multiple investigations have shown this to be the case (Dewi et al., 2021). This is the first research of its type to examine how online education is seen, understood, and felt by students, teachers, and administrators under a lockdown situation.

Most of our students have access to and sometimes use the internet, but less than half of them actually use laptops. This means that a solid grounding in information technology is necessary to launch an digitally-mediated reading courses program. The same results were found in another research, which digital natives should be able to guess (Pearrubia-Lozano et al., 2021).

More than a third of students were looking for information on how to get started with digitally-mediated reading courses, but only around a third were familiar with the idea. However, around two-thirds of pupils knew that their university had access to online learning materials. In keeping with the results of earlier research, less than one-third of its customers really made a connection this way. To wit: (Okocha & Odinko et al. 2021) One probable explanation is that the university, like many others, sees digitally-mediated reading courses more as a cool technological experiment than as a serious tool for teaching and learning. - (Erkinovna, 2022). (Despite the fact that two-thirds of them understood the potential advantages of digitally-mediated reading courses, they were not convinced that it would be beneficial for them to participate in it. These advantages included the fact that digitally-mediated reading courses could provide an interactive, approachable, and flexible platform appropriate for discussion on complex subjects and enhance their skills. Their negative views of the media did not shift. Numerous academics have investigated students' perspectives, and some have arrived at findings that are consistent with ours. Some have speculated that the study's less-than-satisfactory findings may have been different if only seasoned e-learners had participated. There's no reason to think that wouldn't have been the case with our findings, either. Studies that asked people who had plenty of past experience with digitally-mediated reading courses what they thought found that they were generally positive.

Most of our teaching staff was already familiar with and making use of the institution's electronic learning resources. When asked about the benefits of e-potential learning, faculty members offered a wide range of perspectives. Nearly 60% of participants indicated they would choose a program that offered both in-person and online instruction. On the other hand, a separate research found a more favorable reaction. It's possible that the faculty's ongoing attempts to provide new teaching materials, on the one hand, and the students' time constraints, on the other, have led to this seemingly paradoxical reaction. Respondents also cited more cognitive learning, more free time in class, and the possibility of covering more advanced material. Additionally, respondents noted that less time was spent on pre-lab explanations in laboratories and skills labs.

When questioned about their feelings regarding online and digital learning, the vast majority of college-level learners reported feeling uneasy. Students in higher education faced several challenges, the most important of which were insufficient technology, a lack of access to the internet, and a lack of suitable connection and involvement with other students and professors. The swift shift from traditional classrooms and studying face-to-face to online learning has resulted in a completely different educational experience for today's students. The great majority of students are unable to learn online because they lack access to fast, reliable internet connections. Limited funding meant that only a few of universitys were able to get their online courses up and running during the first few months of COVID-19. The research shows that students face additional challenges, such as a loss of campus community, challenges with group study, and slow responses from faculty. The majority of poll takers thought that traditional classroom settings were the most productive for students, as opposed to online courses or distance learning. One would assume that online education would not be successful in poor countries since the vast majority of students in these countries lack access to the internet owing to budgetary and technical restrictions. One of the most neglected aspects of online learning is the need of sustained interest and effort. Traditional classrooms encourage greater student engagement in classwork because



of the personal interaction students experience with both the instructor and their peers. Seventy percent of students preferred learning in a conventional classroom setting over learning online because they found it more inspiring to learn in a group setting. The vast majority of student's report feeling comfortable with online time management and completing assignments on schedule, yet they are unable to take full classes via this medium. Learning via online lectures requires not only the capacity to keep up with the quick pace of online courses, but also proficiency with computers and other technological tools. Only in this manner can we guarantee the efficacy and success of an online program. Students in this situation can and do manage their time for studying efficiently. Nonetheless, 45% of respondents reported that these same students had a hard time completing group tasks without regular in-person meetings amongst group members.

The study shows that there are several obstacles to the general adoption of digitally-mediated reading courses, including a deficiency in resources (such as money and human capital), expertise, institutional methods, and support. The biggest technological barriers to digitally-mediated reading courses were cited by both students and teachers, and they included poor internet connections and a lack of suitable technology. Others have come to similar conclusions. Multiple researchers in the field have (Almaiah et al., 2020) Digital libraries and learning management systems (LMSs) are two instances of technical roadblocks. In order to reference: (Shafiei Sarvestani et al., 2019) An up-to-date technology basis, ready access to qualified staff, and clearly articulated rules and procedures for both students and teachers are the pillars around which effective digitally-mediated reading courses may be built. To wit: (Rosenblit et al., 2018).

Disruption in universitys all across the world has been attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our faculty and students agree with that assessment. Because of the epidemic, universitys throughout the world have had to cancel courses. Even in the direst of situations, there is reason to hope. Because of the pandemic, teachers worldwide had to become inventive.

To secure the long-term viability of educational and assessment systems, many have resorted to the internet. Half of our students, according to research by Subashini et al. (2022), were doubtful that digitally-mediated reading courses could totally replace classroom education, particularly in the theoretical components. Sixty percent were receptive to taking part in practical exercises, whereas seventy-five percent were unconvinced that computer-based learning could be as effective as actual experience. Responses from faculty members were quite similar. Either our students and faculty have a generally negative outlook on digitally-mediated reading courses, or the immediate unpleasant effect of the pandemic is making for a muted response. Researchers found that 24% and 27% of their students were significantly affected by the epidemic's discomfort (Hasan & Bao, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

The majority of students expressed doubts about the usefulness of online education, in contrast to the majority of professors, who supported it wholeheartedly. Lack of access to the internet and a lack of computer skills were

the primary barriers that needed to be overcome in order to successfully adopt digitally-mediated reading courses. According to the results of the poll, the vast majority of students would rather take their final written examinations on paper and in the study rooms. The choices of the teaching staff, on the other hand, were fairly equally divided between giving paper examinations in the classroom, taking online assessments, and delaying evaluation until the next academic year. According to the findings of this study, neither our students nor our educators are equipped for online learning. The lack of preparation and support from institutions is one possible factor, as is the presence of technical impediments. Additional data indicating that the COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant influence on universities. In light of this, having solid technical and institutional frameworks for digitally-mediated reading courses is very necessary, especially when dealing with social distance measures.

The traditional teaching approach used in educational institutions all around the globe was significantly altered as a result of COVID-19. As an additional option for students to continue their education, the administrators of universities, colleges, and universities have elected to use online lectures and courses. Even if online learning is proven to be useful in protecting the health of students and faculty members during the COVID-19 epidemic, the effectiveness of online learning is not on par with that of traditional learning. Learning using the internet cannot provide the expected effects in developing nations because the great majority of students in these countries do not have access to the internet for a variety of reasons, including financial constraints and technological barriers. This research compared the efficacy of conventional classroom instruction with that of online instruction specifically for students enrolled in higher education.

Students reported experiencing a number of additional challenges in addition to those pertaining to technology and finances. These challenges included a lack of engagement with the teacher, an extended response time, and an absence of typical classroom interactions. 45% of students have said that the absence of opportunities for socialising on campus has made it more difficult for them to participate in group projects that take place via distant learning. The findings of this research also suggested that educational institutions have to work on enhancing the substance of their curricula and developing suitable material for use in online lectures. In light of the challenges outlined above, fifty percent of students voiced their opposition to the idea that it could be possible to successfully finish whole courses via online learning. 78% of students, when asked to compare the efficacy of traditional learning to that of online learning, believed that having face-to-face interaction with their teacher was vital for successful learning, which is something that is lacking in the distant learning mode. As per the directives of the WHO, we are now required to make adjustments to our day-to-day activities with COVID-19 for at least some period of time. This means that educational institutions are required to design content that is appropriate and effective, arrange an effective delivery system, and provide digital literacy training to their current faculty in order to achieve improved learning outcomes.

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## Emotional Containment of Children in Elementary School in Peru. A Qualitative Diagnosis


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**Abstract:** The objective of this research was to determine the factors and actors involved in the emotional support of children in Peruvian elementary schools. Based on a descriptive design with a qualitative approach, the system was analyzed with the participation of six educational leaders using a structural analysis and cross-impact matrices (a prospective tool for consensus building). The results show the system to be highly unstable, with the most driving and dependent factors being the institutional curriculum and the incorporation of emotional education (EE) in the academic content. Both factors show the importance of the dimension of the curricular proposal in relation to the socio-family environment or governmental policies. The most influential actor turns out to be the Ministry of Education of Peru as the one responsible for conducting EE, ensuring the well-being of children. This study provides elements of strategic curricular planning for local and regional children's EE from a systemic perspective.

**Keywords:** emotional education, emotional containment, educational planning, primary education, Peru.

**Citation:** Lázaro, F., Mendoza, A.P., Ruiz-Ruiz, M.F., & Sallandt, U. (2024). Emotional Containment of Children in Elementary School in Peru. A Qualitative Diagnosis. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1160-1177), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Globalization has significantly impacted education throughout history, sparking debates about educational models focused on students' cognitive and academic development until the late 20th century (Pérez-López et al., 2021). However, in a constantly changing society, it is challenging to establish a specific model due to scientific, technological, and social advancements, which complicates the determination of relevant content for future citizens (Viloria, 2005).

In response to this reality, in recent decades, a more comprehensive and holistic pedagogical approach has emerged, such as Emotional Education (hereafter EE), which enables the continuous development of emotional competencies as a fundamental complement to cognitive development (Bisquerra, 2000). This is based on studies demonstrating that knowledge, management, and emotional self-regulation are crucial for facilitating meaningful learning and mental processes (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Gardner, 1995; Goleman, 1995). This relationship between cognition and emotion enhances an individual's adaptive capacity to address various challenges in different areas of their life (Garcia, 2012).

However, due to the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, education was directly affected by the closure of schools and universities. In 2020, over 170 million students in Latin America and the Caribbean stopped attending schools to prevent the spread of the virus (World Bank, 2021). Governments implemented social distancing measures leading to school closures for periods of time in various regions (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021). Latin America and the Caribbean were among the most affected regions and took longer to resume in-person education. Countries in the region were tasked with establishing distance education models to mitigate the future consequences of school closures (Pinho De Oliveira, 2021).

In this vein, the pandemic has impacted students' nutrition, sleep, mental health, and social skills (World Bank, 2021). The relationships between teachers and students have been affected due to the limitations of the educational process and the lack of established face-to-face interaction between them (Albalá & Guido, 2020). Faced with these consequences, Emotional Education (EE) has emerged as a proposal to address this new post-pandemic reality and to pay greater attention to emotional support. In various contexts, EE has been directed towards working with teachers, school administrators, and education professionals, as well as students' experiences, with the aim of promoting personal and collective well-being (Milicic et al., 2013).

Emotional containment refers to individuals' ability to hold the emotions of others, especially children and adolescents, providing safe spaces to express emotions without judgment (Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas [CPEIP], 2020). This enables them to learn to manage their emotions properly and develop coping skills for the future. Additionally, it is considered the capacity to facilitate and promote emotional development in others, understanding the expression of their affections,

feelings, and distress (Slapak, 1998). Teachers, precisely, play a fundamental role in providing emotional containment in educational settings for students at all levels.

Emotional containment is achieved through two main components. Firstly, active listening involves paying attention to another person's message to understand its meaning and respond appropriately (Archundia, 2011). Therefore, it is important to respect each individual's pace when sharing their experiences, as not everyone is prepared in the same way. Secondly, empathetic attitude is highlighted, which involves putting oneself in the other person's shoes and interpreting their perspective and feelings. Lack of empathy can lead to rejection and misunderstanding; therefore, it is essential to create safe conditions and acknowledge fear or distrust as valid signals in vulnerable individuals.

In school settings, it is crucial to create a safe space for students where they can healthily release their emotions, individually or in groups. Saenz and Delfino (2022) propose working on various emotional competencies for relevant containment, such as emotional awareness, emotional management, emotional autonomy, social competencies, resilience, and a sense of purpose. To achieve this, playful strategies should be employed, such as psychoeducation, for emotional self-regulation and containment (Rosas, 2018). Research conducted in Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Spain, and Venezuela proposes approaches to preserve emotional stability in schools (Bolaños, 2018; Alfonso, 2020; Bächler et al., 2020). In Colombia, the correlation between emotional education, academic performance, and student development was demonstrated, highlighting the influence of emotions on personality construction, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships (Alfonso, 2020).

Studies conducted in Mexico highlight the importance of emotional competence in teacher education and how teachers' interventions affect the emotional climate and relationships among students (Bolaños, 2018). Additionally, there is mention of the need to reconfigure the school curriculum, emphasizing the affective-motivational domain and establishing standards for teachers and educational managers (Gaona, 2020). In Chile, new curricular guidelines were implemented in early childhood education starting in 2019, promoting a transversal and comprehensive approach focused on students' personal and social development. However, there is a scarcity of research on the initial emotional training of teachers, despite its importance in students' emotional development (Bächler et al., 2020). In Spain, intervention programs have been implemented in the Canary Islands, Catalonia, and the Balearic Islands, involving theoretical training and practical activities (Marrero, 2019). However, limitations in the understanding of basic EE concepts by teachers and students were revealed, highlighting the need to update and develop cross-cutting programs in the curriculum (Barrientos et al., 2019).

Based on the foregoing, Figure 1 presents a set of dimensions regarding emotional education, contextualized for the Peruvian case, along with the factors that constitute them for a better understanding of the system under study.



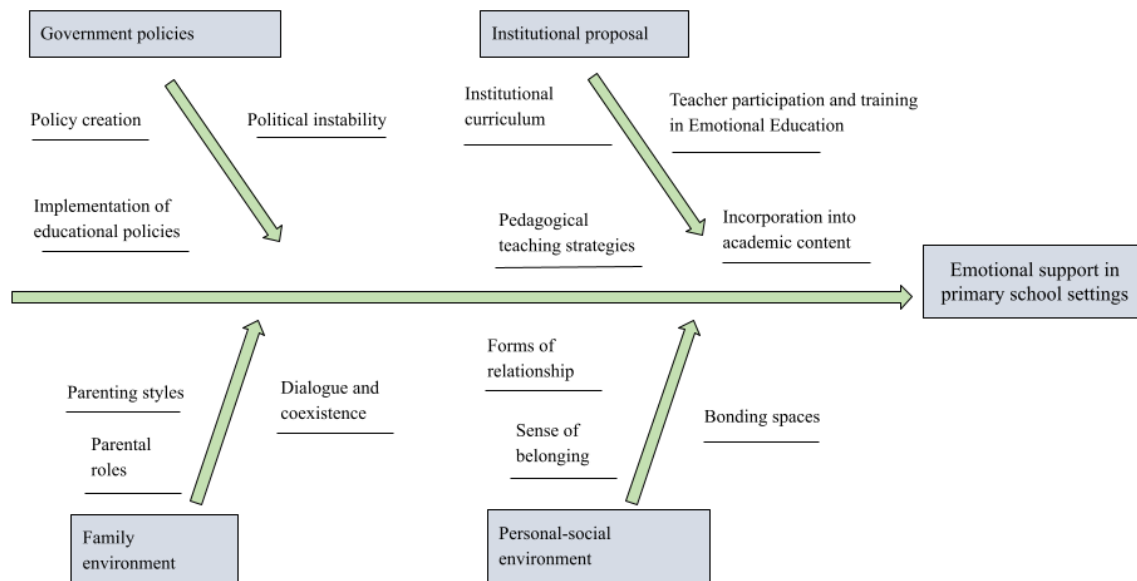


Figure 1. Dimensions and Factors of Child Emotional Containment (Author's own elaboration)

In 2020, the *Consejo Nacional de Educación* (National Council of Education) (CNE) of Peru updated the *Proyecto Educativo Nacional* (PEN) (National Educational Project) for 2036, establishing four purposes: citizenship, inclusion and equity, socio-emotional well-being, and productivity, prosperity, research, and sustainability. Indeed, the purpose of socio-emotional well-being has gained greater relevance today due to the challenges accentuated by the pandemic. Despite this framework, efforts to implement educational policies in Emotional Education (EE) have been limited and discontinuous in recent years (Congress of the Republic of Peru, 2018). In 2018, Bill No. 3523 was introduced, aiming to incorporate emotional and social education into the curricular content of Regular Basic Education. However, in 2019, the project's opinion did not acknowledge its relevance and requested its reformulation for ideological reasons. In the same context, political disagreements and governmental instability have hindered the implementation of various educational policies. Cabinet changes, corruption, and other factors have influenced the direction and approval of public policies, as evidenced in the case of Bill No. 3523 on EE.

The implementation of educational policies to foster emotional containment in the educational context necessitates curricular adaptation in each school institution. In 2021, the *Ministerio de Educación del Perú* (Ministry of Education of Peru) (Minedu) presented specific documents for schools with the aim of strengthening knowledge and pedagogical practices in EE. As part of this effort, materials were produced and distributed to state institutions in Lima, prior to March 1, 2021 (Cadillo, 2021). Additionally, the *Dirección de Formación Docente en Servicio* (DIFODS) (Directorate of In-Service Teacher Training) established partnerships with other directorates of Minedu and organizations to create the 2021 informational booklet, to facilitate the teacher's role in the new educational reality (Minedu, 2021). In 2022, Minedu published the socio-

emotional guidance booklet for teachers, entitled "My Toolbox for Well-being" (Minedu, 2022). Furthermore, a *Guía de Soporte Socioemocional* (Socio-Emotional Support Guide) for student care was published (Regional Directorate of Metropolitan Lima [DRELM], n.d.). Although there are documents and resources to dedicate spaces for emotional containment in schools, it is important to integrate this proposal across academic content in each institution (Mestre et al., 2017). While there is no specific information on curricular changes in Peruvian schools, it would be important to develop them to determine their relevance in students' lives.

Parents play a fundamental role in the development of their children's emotional competencies by teaching them about values, emotions, and the appropriate coping mechanisms (Huayamave et al., 2019). However, each family has its own dynamics and parenting style that define their behaviors and beliefs regarding important issues such as their children's health and education (Jorge & González, 2017). For the analysis of the Peruvian case, the results of the study conducted by Villacorta (2019) targeting university students in the city of Juliaca, Puno region, were contrasted. This study evaluated parenting styles based on three dimensions proposed by Darling and Steinberg (1993), determining the influence of commitment, psychological autonomy, and behavioral control.

Indeed, a relationship between the parenting style of psychological autonomy and the need for approval was evidenced, as greater autonomy provided by parents to their children leads to a reduced need for approval from others. Likewise, it was found to be associated with a decreased pursuit of perfectionism. Both findings underscore the emotional well-being benefits entailed by employing the aforementioned parenting style within the family dynamic (Villacorta, 2019).

Interpersonal relationships maintain a direct influence on the individual development of each student. Various studies have supported this assertion, demonstrating that the affective bond and the quality of relationships influence self-perception by 44.7% (Arias et al., 2018). Additionally, it fosters the development of social skills, which lead to emotional self-regulation and adaptation to the environment (Barrientos & Yamanija, 2018). In the specific case of education in Peru, schools play an important role as spaces for differential socialization due to existing diversity, where norms and values are adjusted to the culture and local context.

## Methodology

The research employed a methodology based on tools of strategic foresight from the French school (Godet & Durance, 2007; Arroyo & Ruiz-Ruiz, 2023). This technique analyzes the key factors of a system and develops strategies aimed at the most suitable future scenario (Munck & McConnell, 2009). Additionally, it focuses on the collective work and reflection of experts to find solutions and create the desired future. The research scope was descriptive, utilizing structural analysis to examine the key factors determining the studied system. The methodological design consisted of four subsequent phases, detailed in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Phases of the Research

Phase	Scope	Technique	Validation
Phase 1: Identification of factors and social actors associated with the child emotional containment system	Recognize the factors linked to governmental policies, institutional proposals, family environment, and social context that, along with the responsible actors, impact the studied system.	Documentary review and open interviews	Expert judgment and confirmation with interviewees
Phase 2: Expert panel invitation	Deepen the information based on the vision and expertise of experts regarding the study system.	Purposeful sampling	Review of professional and academic profiles
Phase 3: Structural analysis for determining key factors and actors in child emotional containment	Assess the motoricity and dependency relationships among key factors and their interrelation with social actors.	Structural analysis (MICMAC)	Expert confirmation through successive rounds
Phase 4: Analysis and discussion of results	Compare, contrast, and discuss the results obtained in previous studies with those obtained in the research.	Comparative documentary review and open interviews.	Methodological review cues

In the initial phase of the research, dimensions and factors characterizing the child emotional containment system in Peru were enumerated. A documentary review was conducted using databases such as Scopus, Scielo, and Web of Science, as well as digital repositories from the Ministries of Education in Latin American countries. The identified factors were classified into four dimensions: governmental policies, institutional proposals, family environment, and personal-social context. This was validated by three experts in Peruvian education, considering a regional perspective, through ongoing open interviews, where the mentioned factors were corroborated, and additional factors were added emergently.

In the second phase, a call was made to six additional experts in the field of emotional containment with knowledge of the Peruvian and regional context, from both the public and private sectors. Table 2 presents the general profiles of the aforementioned experts. For confidentiality reasons, their names are not disclosed.

Table 2. Profile of the experts convened for the second phase

Code	General Profile
E1	Clinical Psychologist from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP) and specialist in Child and Adolescent Development, Learning and Socioemotional Education, Well-being, Parenthood, Parenting, and Positive Discipline. She has over 20 years of experience as a teacher, trainer,

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**Code General Profile**

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consultant, and lecturer in the field of education for various national and international institutions, such as the Ministry of Education of Peru, the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of Mexico, the Dutch Bernard van Leer Foundation, the World Bank, UNICEF, among others.

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**E2** Coach, Educator, and Master in Development, with extensive experience in leadership and management of social and educational projects at the national and international levels. She has served as Basic Services Manager, Senior Education Advisor, and Education Leader for Latin America at SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation). Consultant for international organizations such as the Telefonica Foundation, and for the State, such as the Regional Directorate of Education of Metropolitan Lima (DRLEM). She is a researcher with a vast publication of modules and articles on childhood and youth issues, evaluator and supervisor of social and educational projects and programs.

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**E3** Educator and executive director with experience in academic and formative leadership of nationally recognized schools. Additionally, she has experience as a school and university teacher. She holds a master's degree in educational center management and administration of education, as well as a diploma in management and direction of educational companies.

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**E4** Psychologist, coach, and consultant with over 10 years of experience, providing a strategic and systemic vision to the development of individuals and teams from individual well-being. Master's in Education with a specialization in Higher Education Teaching and Learning Management facilitating topics related to emotional intelligence, stress and conflict management, leadership, people management, among others.

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**E5** Clinical-educational psychologist, systemic or psychoanalytic family psychotherapy with experience in various national private schools. She holds a master's degree in collaborative and dialogical practices and certification in autism detection and intervention from the neurodiversity paradigm.

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**E6** Coach, consultant, and educator expert in organizational transformation based on socio-emotional skills/tools for leadership. She holds a master's degree in Promotion of Reading and Children's Literature and is a lecturer at universities such as the University of the Pacific (UP), Peruvian University of Applied Sciences (UPC), among others.

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In the third phase, a structural analysis was conducted to determine the key factors and actors in emotional containment, through a relational matrix and with the aid of the software Matriz de Impactos Aplicados a una Multiplicación (MICMAC) (Labrín & Ruiz-Ruiz, 2022). This process involved the rating of the six experts regarding the levels of influence among the thirteen factors defined in the first phase. Consensus among the

experts was achieved after three successive rounds, enabling the evaluation of influence relationships among key factors and their interrelation with social actors.

Finally, in the fourth and last phase, the results were compared and contrasted with previous studies, leading to an analysis and reflection that allowed for discussing the characterization of the child Emotional Containment system for the Peruvian case.

### Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with the aim of contributing to knowledge in an ethical and responsible manner towards all involved parties. All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research. The collected data were handled confidentially and used exclusively for the study. Additionally, codes - instead of real names - were used to preserve the participants' privacy. Similarly, an attitude of transparency was maintained throughout the data collection, analysis, and presentation process. The results were presented accurately and without data alteration. This approach of honesty and rigor in the methodological tracks followed ensures the objectivity of the results and contributes to the integrity of the research.

### Results

Following the methodological phases outlined in the previous section, during the first phase and based on a literature review, the dimensions and factors promoting adequate emotional containment in primary schools in Peru, as well as the involved social actors, were defined. Four dimensions were identified to group the factors: governmental policies, curriculum proposal, family environment, and personal-social environment; which were validated through critical judgment by six experts. For a better understanding of the dimensions and their associated factors, Table 3 is presented below.

Table 3. System of Emotional Containment for Children in Peru

Factor	Scope
<b>Dimension: Government Policies</b>	
(F1) Policy Creation	Government policies in Peru for the promotion and development of emotional education in schools.
(F2) Implementation of Educational Policies	Ability to carry out educational policies, as well as to lead and evaluate their continuity.
(F3) Political Instability	Influence of current political instability that hinders the creation, promotion,

and continuation of normative foundations for emotional containment.

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**Dimension: Curricular proposal**

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<b>(F4)</b> Institutional curriculum	Integration of emotional education into institutions in a cross-cutting and coherent manner with the national curriculum proposed by the MINEDU to provide quality education and develop well-rounded citizens.
<b>(F5)</b> Pedagogical teaching strategies	Appropriate use of pedagogical strategies to foster the development of emotional containment in children within educational institutions.
<b>(F6)</b> Teacher participation and training in EE (Emotional Education)	Performance of teachers in their educational and leadership roles related to emotional education in schools.
<b>(F7)</b> Integration of EE into academic content	Relevant use of pedagogical strategies to foster the development of emotional containment in children within educational institutions.

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**Dimension: Family environment**

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<b>(F8)</b> Parenting styles	Choice of parenting style aimed at providing emotional containment for achieving well-being.
<b>(F9)</b> Parental roles	The presence of emotionally stable parents to provide emotional containment for their children.
<b>(F10)</b> Dialogue and coexistence	Assertive and democratic communication as a tool to foster dialogue between parents and children.

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**Dimension: Social Environment**

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<b>(F11)</b> Forms of interaction	Aspects of the forms of relationship among students that promote emotional containment.
<b>(F12)</b> Sense of belonging	It is associated with the bond between the student and the educational institution, allowing them to identify with the school's values and objectives.
<b>(F13)</b> Bonding spaces	Relevant use of spaces in schools to establish interpersonal relationships that foster appropriate emotional containment.

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Subsequently, based on open interviews with the experts convened in a second phase, the relationship of social actors participating in the studied system was defined. Using a relational matrix, experts rated the degree of influence of one actor over another, following the same principles of structural analysis as mentioned in the

methodology. Based on the defined values, the actors were classified according to their degree of power. The relationship among them, along with their hierarchical order, is presented in the following Table 4.

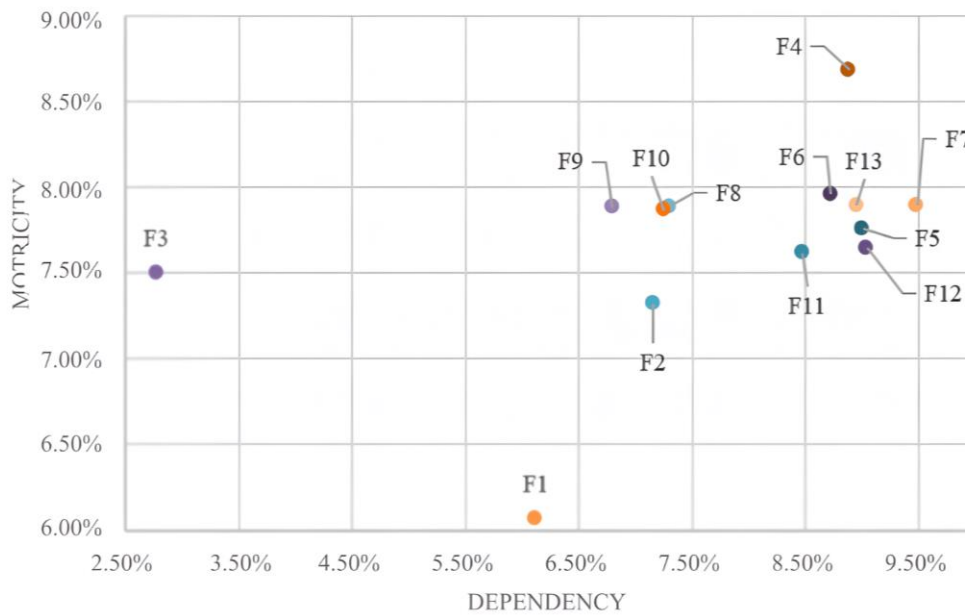
Table 4. Hierarchy Level of Social Actors in the Characterization of Emotional Containment in Primary Schools.

Hierarchy	Social Actor	Description
<b>Very High Power</b>	(A1) <i>Ministerio de Educación</i> (MINEDU) (Ministry of Education)	Governing body of national educational policies, which exercises its leadership through intergovernmental coordination with local and regional governments, in order to ensure quality education as a conducive factor for the country's development.
	(A2) <i>Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social</i> (MIDIS) (Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion)	System responsible for social development, poverty alleviation, promotion of inclusion and social equity, as well as the protection of individuals in populations at risk and abandonment.
<b>High Power</b>	(A3) United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef)	International organization whose purpose is to promote the fulfillment of the rights of children and adolescents worldwide, especially the most disadvantaged. Additionally, it contributes to improving health, nutrition, education, and protection against all forms of violence.
	(A4) School Directors	Individuals responsible for managing and sustaining administrative and pedagogical structures within the educational institution, as well as internal processes that enable the development of institution members.
<b>Medium Power</b>	(A5) Teachers	Individuals who are professionally dedicated to teaching, accompanying students in the processes of generating internal, cognitive, and socio-emotional structures to maximize their competencies and talents and play an active role in society.
<b>Low Power</b>	(A6) Parents	Individuals responsible for ensuring the protection of the rights and duties of children, instilling values, love, and support to achieve their development in a secure environment.

In the third phase of the study, a structural analysis was conducted to assess the key factors of the system. The



MICMAC software was used to process the data obtained from the group of experts and determine the relationships between the factors. Influence between the factors was rated on a scale from zero (0) to four (4), where zero (0) indicates no influence and four (4) indicates very high influence. The software generated a Cartesian plane showing the location of the factors in terms of dependence and driving power. This plane considers both direct and indirect impacts, as presented in Figure 2 below.



F1: Policy creation	F7: Incorporation of EE in academic content
F2: Implementation of educational policies	F8: Parenting styles
F3: Political instability	F9: Parental roles
F4: Institutional curriculum	F10: Dialogue and coexistence
F5: Pedagogical teaching strategies	F11: Forms of interaction
F6: Teacher participation and training in EE	F12: Sense of belonging
	F13: Bonding spaces

Figure 2. Projection of factors on the Cartesian plane (indirect impacts)

According to Godet and Durance (2007), findings of this nature depict an unstable system with an interconnection among the studied factors. Any change in one of them may impact the entire system. To address emotional containment in primary schools in Peru, it is vital to understand its dynamics and relationships. According to the critical judgment of experts, the most important factors are institutional curriculum (F4) and the integration of EE into academic content (F7), due to their high degree of motricity and dependency. Similarly situated are teacher participation and training in EE (F6), school bonding spaces (F13), teaching pedagogical strategies (F5), and student sense of belonging (F12). Factors such as forms of interaction (F11), parenting styles (F8), parental roles (F9), and parental dialogue and coexistence (F10) are highlighted to a lesser extent. On the other hand, policy creation factors (F1) exhibit low motricity and medium dependency, while

political instability (F3) shows high motricity and low dependency. The presented plane and the hierarchy of social actors are essential for the analysis and discussion of the interrelationships in the system of emotional containment in primary schools.

## Discussion

Any effort aimed at fostering relevant EE for children in primary schools must address the key factors described above in a systemic manner, considering their varying degrees of motricity and dependency. As observed in Figure 2, the vast majority of factors are absolutely important and pivotal; however, the most relevant ones are those located in the upper right quadrant: F4 and F7; namely, institutional curriculum and the integration of EE into academic content, respectively.

The motricity and dependency of the first factor are related to the assessment of curriculum objectives in each institution following the pandemic experience (OECD, 2020), which should prioritize the health and well-being of students and educational staff, providing emotional support as needed. While the National Curriculum for Basic Education (NCBE) includes socio-affective tutoring, the allocated hours are minimal for relevant EE (0 hours for preschool and 2 hours for primary and secondary levels per week). In this regard, De Romaña (2021) emphasizes the importance for school leaders to understand the educational reality and gaps in EE to promote better development from their curriculum foundations.

The second factor that exhibits high dependency and motricity is the incorporation of Emotional Education into academic content (F7), aligning with Bisquerra's proposition (2011), who asserts that EE should not be confined to a weekly session but should permeate across all subjects to promote emotional management in daily life. This will develop emotional competencies that impact student development (Fernández, 2019; Saenz & Delfino, 2022).

In light of this, the Ministry of Education, responsible for ensuring equitable access to quality education for all citizens, can integrate emotional education as an integral component within the standards and learning objectives outlined in the national curriculum. By establishing clear and specific criteria, it will provide a framework for curricular planning and the implementation of EE-related educational programs. In this regard, by officially recognizing it as an essential dimension of students' integral development, EE gains greater visibility in national policies. This ensures quality in EE implementation in institutions, as defining minimum learning standards guarantees that all students have access to quality emotional education.

Additionally, the Ministry can articulate specific strategies for the effective integration of emotional education into institutional curricula. These strategies may encompass guidance on relevant topics to address, pedagogical approaches to adopt, and available teaching resources. Their formulation is envisioned as a valuable resource for the entire educational community, providing a coherent framework that would facilitate the promotion of

students' holistic well-being. However, it is essential to consider the prevailing cultural, social, and economic diversity in society, as it requires a flexible approach to respond to the needs of each educational community and promote greater community participation.

On the other hand, four factors with high motricity are identified, albeit of lesser magnitude compared to the two previously mentioned factors. The first of these is teacher participation and training in EE (F6), in which, as outlined by Pacheco-Salazar (2017), teachers with knowledge and interest in EE promote collaborative work, assertive relationships, and good classroom coexistence. Additionally, authors such as Basurto and Farías (2022) highlight the relationship between EE, educational quality, and performance. It is necessary to have a solid education in EE that allows teachers to understand the different emotional needs of students based on their age, socioeconomic, cultural, and personal context, and to adapt their interventions appropriately. Likewise, it is necessary to possess emotional regulation skills so that teachers can manage their own emotions in the classroom assertively and guide their students with emotionally intelligent behavior. On the other hand, for greater participation, it is essential to provide teachers with access to resources and institutional support for the implementation of programs and activities related to EE, as well as for collaboration with school psychologists to systematically address the emotional needs of students.

Regarding students' bond spaces at school (F13) and their sense of belonging (F12), various studies have demonstrated that school bonds provide containment and refuge for students, fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening their security and confidence to face adversity (Hurtubia et al., 2021; Chagnollaud, 2013). Consequently, in relation to pedagogical teaching strategies (F5), the significant influence and dependency become evident, as teachers recognize the need to adapt teaching practices and approaches to address students' emotional needs post-confinement (Basurto & Farías, 2022). It is necessary to consider these factors systematically to promote emotional containment.

Finally, another factor that needs to be highlighted, due to its higher motricity and low dependency for the studied system, is the political instability of the country (F3). According to Echaiz (2019), educational policies are often influenced by political interests, hindering the resolution of the country's problems. Political instability in countries like Peru prevents the realization of educational proposals and affects the quality of services (Oliart, 2011). This instability impacts the lack of progress in pending curricular educational areas, such as Emotional Education.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence found allowed characterizing the key factors that comprise the system of emotional containment in primary schools, which are distributed across governmental policies, school curriculum, family environment, and personal-social context. It was crucial to understand that the actions taken by the involved actors (Ministry of Education, school administrators, teachers, and parents) have a notable influence on the management and

handling of the educational system, thus requiring an approach to the promotion of emotional containment from a systematic perspective.

The research emphasizes focusing on the factors located in the quadrant corresponding to the area of highest motricity and dependency on the graph: the institutional curriculum and the integration of EE into academic content. This leads to reflection on the need to create safe spaces in the classroom to develop the personal dimension and address not only cognitive processes but also to promote social, emotional, and behavioral skills in school practice. This integration prevents it from becoming an isolated and recurring EE program and is convenient following the mandatory confinement of a few years ago, which had a direct effect on students in all their dimensions.

In line with the foregoing, school leaders and educators play a significant role in promoting emotional well-being within the school environment. In this regard, their actions should be geared towards strengthening emotional competencies with the aim of fostering the holistic development of students in contemporary times. Such promotion can be achieved through the implementation of systematic and structured educational strategies, such as the conception and execution of projects and activities designed specifically to facilitate the acquisition and understanding of these competencies. Additionally, it is essential to consider everyday practices, even when they are not directly related to the educational sphere, given their impact on the cultivation of emotional skills. For example, attention should be paid to the nature of interactions between students and teaching staff, as well as to the channels and modalities of communication used in the school context.

Similarly, disseminating the importance and integration of these competencies within the framework of the Institutional Educational Project (IEP) will demonstrate a significant impact on the quality of life, both for students and the educational community as a whole. On the other hand, parents also play a crucial role in this regard. Although collaboration between the family and the school may be limited, it is imperative to strengthen these collaborative relationships in order to expand understanding of the role of parents in the emotional support of their children.

Finally, this characterization of childhood emotional containment in primary schools provides foundational information to develop a strategic plan that prepares schools to address Emotional Education (EE) in childhood. While there is a lack of updated literature on the specific demands of primary school children, it is relevant to gather information on students in the region and their emotional development in a post-pandemic context. Identifying these key factors allows schools to guide themselves to address the needs of new generations and ensure environments conducive to emotional containment, starting from the earliest ages of schooling.

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## EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices Towards Delivering Corrective Feedback on Young Learners' Writing Performance

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**Abstract:** Corrective feedback (CF) is regarded as a controversial topic, especially in writing skill. Some researchers have found it to be both meaningless and harmful, while others have researched the effects of different types of CF and found it to be good for language development in several ways. This made me interested in conducting a study focusing on what perceptions and practices teachers have concerning CF. This study attempted to explore the perceptions and practices of teachers' corrective feedback on EFL young learners' written performance. The method used was descriptive, and the data were obtained through questionnaire administered to 35 EFL teachers at a foreign language in Cantho city, and interview submitted to 5 teachers who were chosen randomly from interviewees. Beside that, there were 5 teachers selected to observe in real class to find out the relationship between their perception and practices. The general results indicated that teachers' perceptions and practices of corrective feedback were positive although the level of perceptions and practices were not high. Moreover, the surveyed teachers agreed that corrective feedback can bring some benefits to improve learners 'writing.

**Keywords:** Corrective feedback, EFL Teachers' perceptions and practices, Young learners, Writing performance

**Citation:** Ly, V.T. & Trinh, L.N.T. (2024). EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices Towards Delivering Corrective Feedback On Young Learners' Writing Performance. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science*, (pp. 1178-1226) Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

#### Rationale

In this chapter, the rationale undergoing the current study is presented. Accordingly, the research aims and significance of the study will be also pointed out. The chapter ends with the description of the organization of the thesis.

In recent times, the popularity of the English language has been steadily rising. The number of individuals pursuing English studies increases annually. Due to the global prominence of English, several countries have incorporated English language training into their educational curriculum. Several countries initiate language education at the primary level, with kids starting to study the language at increasingly younger ages (Jenkins, 2009). Due to these factors, the practice of instructing English to young students is more prevalent. Out of the four fundamental skills in English, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is undeniable that writing is one of the most challenging talents for students to acquire (Vig Iuditm-Zsuzsi, 2017). Writing assignments can be particularly exhausting and anxiety-inducing for individuals in this age range, as they may not have developed strong writing skills in any language yet. Additionally, receiving appropriate feedback is crucial for their learning process. In addition, Ferris (1999) authored a paper affirming that providing corrective feedback could indeed be advantageous for second language (L2) authors. Throughout our English instruction, we have observed many educators providing a range of feedback to students. Some educators provide oral feedback, some offer written feedback, and some employ a combination of both modalities. However, there are some professors who solely assign grades to their pupils without providing any form of feedback. This finding piqued our curiosity regarding the underlying ideas and timing behind the comments they provide. Given the current dispute regarding the use of corrective feedback (CF) in the second language (L2) writing classroom, we are particularly interested in examining whether teachers offer this type of feedback to young learners as part of their formative assessment.

Undoubtedly, providing corrective feedback for the writing performance of young learners in the Vietnamese setting poses significant challenges due to various factors.

One primary factor is that writing poses a significant challenge for young learners to acquire proficiency in. Furthermore, the function of writing in English is predominantly confined to educational institutions in Vietnam. Students are typically required to occasionally compose guided and/or restricted paragraphs. In my opinion, it is imperative to provide students with additional avenues to actively engage in English language practice and foster communicative skills both within and beyond the confines of the language classroom. Therefore, establishing an environment, such as the Pen-pal projects, where students may effectively utilize the language, they acquire in the classroom poses a difficult task for an English instructor.

In addition, as stated by Lightbown & Spada (2006), writing assignments can be highly fatiguing and anxiety-inducing for this particular age group, as they have not yet developed strong writing skills in any language. Moreover, if feedback is provided in an inappropriate manner, it can demotivate children to such an extent that they lose all enthusiasm. The age of learners is a crucial determinant in the process of providing corrective feedback. During this stage, children are undergoing conceptual development, transitioning from concrete to abstract thinking (Clark, 1990, p. 6-8). Hence, educators must carefully choose and implement appropriate forms of corrective feedback for their intended students.

Numerous studies have been undertaken to examine the impact of employing corrective feedback in the writing of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. However, research on this topic in Vietnam is still scarce. This study tries to fill the existing gap. The study investigates the beliefs and behaviors of EFL teachers on the provision of corrective feedback to young learners' writing.

#### *Aims of the research*

The study aims to investigate what EFL teachers think about corrective feedback and how they deliver it to young learners in writing skills. The study aims at: (1) investigating teachers' perceptions of using corrective feedback; and (2) figuring out how teachers deliver corrective feedback.

#### *Significance of the study*

Through the result of the study, it is hoped that EFL teachers will get some positive benefits for their teaching. Firstly, the findings of this research can help EFL teachers raise their awareness of giving feedback to their target learners such as young learners. Also, it is believed that the results of the research could enhance EFL teachers' recognition about the importance of corrective feedback in writing skill. Finally, this research might be helpful to the EFL teachers who are teaching young learners in EFL classrooms.

#### *Organization of the study*

In this study, the report of the study is organized into five chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature review, (3) Methodology, (4) Results, and (5) Discussions and Conclusions.

For Chapter 1, the research problems and background of the study, research aims and the significance of the study are presented.

In Chapter 2, relevant literature is reviewed to address the theoretical and empirical background of the current study. Accordingly, the findings from previous related studies are also presented and discussed. This review is aimed to give the readers the opportunities to understand more about teachers' thinking and awareness as well as their action towards to feedback when they are giving to their young learners in writing.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology of the study. The chapter starts with research questions and research hypotheses. Next, research design and participants are described in detail. The chapter continues with the description of the materials and research instruments. Last, the procedures of data collection and data analysis of the study are also discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. The chapter reveals the results of data analysis on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices towards giving corrective feedback to young learners.

Chapter 5 concludes the reports of the study. The chapter starts with the summary of the results of the study. Then the researcher draws out the conclusion of the study. Next, pedagogical implications are suggested. The chapter ends by presenting the limitations of study and some suggestions for further research.

## Literature Review

This chapter examines the theoretical and empirical literature on the application of corrective feedback in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for young learners' writing. The process commences with establishing the precise definitions of the pivotal phrases that are pertinent to the investigation. The chapter also presents the categorization of the many forms of corrective feedback. Next, the chapter examines the existing body of literature that focuses on teachers' perspectives and methods about the significance of employing corrective feedback to improve learning outcomes and enhance writing proficiency. The chapter finishes by providing an overview of the current state of teaching and learning writing in primary school within the Vietnamese setting. It also includes a review of past research that is relevant to the present study.

### Definition of key terms

#### *Writing performance*

Writing poses a formidable obstacle for many learners of foreign or second languages. Language is a crucial element in both schooling and daily life, particularly for individuals who struggle to communicate their emotions verbally. These individuals rely on words and letters to convey their feelings, ideas, and thoughts. Chomsky (1965) distinguishes the terms competence (as knowledge of language) and performance (as actual use in specific situations). In fact, competence refers to knowledge of grammar and other aspects of language whereas performance mentions actual use (Canale & Swain, 1980). From the theory of the terms, writing competence is understood as knowledge of content, knowledge of organization, knowledge of language and grammar. Thus, writing performance is the ability to perform writing competence in written texts.

The types of writing that are concerned in this study are sentence and paragraph writing because the target participants are EFL young learners, not adults.

A paragraph is a cohesive section of an essay that conveys a well-developed concept. A paragraph is composed of multiple sentences that serve to elucidate and clarify the notion for the reader. The first paragraph presents the context of the subject matter and acquaints the reader with the central concept of an essay. The concluding paragraph provides a concise summary of the entire article.

Bringing the sense of reality of classroom can be challenging and the purpose of writing tasks is to practice and display (Jessica, 2005). Therefore, classroom writing performance would tend to have students practice and display knowledge of content, knowledge of organization, knowledge of language and grammar on written texts.

In the present paper, writing is considered as one of the major language skills performed by the young language learners with the instruction of their teacher.

### *Perceptions*

According to James Rowland Angell's definition (1906, p.122-140), perception can be described as "the awareness of specific physical objects that are currently being sensed." Perception, in reality, encompasses more than what this definition initially suggests. This is because we are constantly conscious of additional sensory activities beyond the ones we typically associate with perception. These activities primarily involve the internal processes of our own body and exist in the background of our consciousness. Psychologists view perception as an abstraction, similar to feeling.

Perception, as described by Sainn and Ugwuegbu (1980), refers to the process by which humans derive significant information from physical stimuli. "It is the manner in which we perceive and understand our sensations," as stated on page 90. Sainn et al emphasize three crucial aspects regarding perception. Perception is influenced not only by the stimulus but also by an individual's experience, intention, and social needs. Furthermore, the perceiver is not merely a passive and apathetic observer while seeing something. Instead, they actively engage in the process by selectively gathering information and constructing hypotheses to accurately determine the true nature of the situation.

Furthermore, perception is a cognitive process that enables an individual to construct a mental representation of their surroundings, facilitating the ability to foresee future events and respond to them effectively. Hence, the sensory receptors of an individual provide only a restricted amount of data and cannot be comprehended without further information obtained from past experiences and memory. After the physical sensations are accurately processed, they will transform into the perceptions of an individual. It is widely debated that instructors' behaviors in the classroom are influenced by their perceptions.

In her paper on student perceptions and language acquisition, Horwitz (1989) emphasized the significance of teachers being mindful of how their students perceive them in the classroom. This is crucial since students' impressions may clash with teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes towards teaching. She emphasizes that teachers often perceive their classrooms as being centered around communication or focused on grammar, with a dominant presence of teacher speak. However, students are more likely to categorize their courses as either difficult or easy, and their professors as either rigorous or lenient (p. 61). The perspectives of teachers and pupils might often be completely opposite. Teachers tend to prioritize the transmission of essential learning abilities, whereas students are often more concerned with their teachers' grading methods, assignment deadlines, and workload.

In the current study, perception refers to teachers' belief and understanding about something, more specifically, their belief about the role of using corrective feedback in enhancing EFL young learners' writing performance.

### *Practice*

In common sense, practice is often used to refer to what people actually do on daily basis to serve a specific purpose. Practice is often associated with either occupational doings or personal domains. In teaching process, teachers' belief is important influences on the way which teachers practice their teaching in the classroom, and even leads to the methods they applied to teach their students. Practice means teachers' action or performance through their belief and understanding in the classroom. Belief and practice has a mutual relationship in learning/ teaching process. Many studies have described aspects of teaching practice which are related to effective classroom learning and student outcomes (Brophy and Good, 1986; Wang, Haertel and Walberg, 1993). In the classroom, teachers' practice could be positive feedback and comments, and even it could encourage the students take risks or make errors in learning process. Practice is known as key aspects of "direct or indirect instruction"– have generally been shown to have a positive impact on student achievement. That means the teacher provides learning opportunities, these must be recognized and utilized by the student to be effective.

In the present research, practice refers to what teachers do consistently and repeatedly in their teaching performance on a daily basis.

### *Young language learners (YLLs)*

Young language learners (YLLs) encompass students ranging from five years old to approximately 12/13 years old, which aligns with the typical age range for primary school instruction, particularly in Europe. The uniqueness of YLLs mostly stems from their status as children. Hasselgreen (2000, pp. 262-3) enumerates several characteristics that distinguish YLLs and place them in a unique position. These characteristics encompass their fervor and receptiveness towards acquiring new languages, while simultaneously necessitating tailored instructional approaches in the classroom. The learners constitute a distinct population, and their teachers frequently lack expertise in language or language acquisition. Additionally, the language created by young language learners (YLLs) in their second language (L2) is distinct from that of adults, similar to how their first languages (L1s) differ. At a young age, children initially start categorizing words related to tangible items. When incorporated into the L2 classroom, learners require highly specific terminology that is directly related to tangible objects they can physically interact with or see (Cameron 2001, p. 81). On the other hand, adult learners possess the ability to handle abstract concepts (ibid). YELLs lack the ability to understand intellectual concepts, such as language. Bourke (2006, p. 280) observes that young learners lack an understanding of concepts such as components of speech, discourse, and phonology. Attempting to elucidate these abstract concepts to young individuals is likely to result in their confusion. To circumvent the need to engage with conceptual notions, Cameron (2001, p. 53) suggests addressing subjects that youngsters are acquainted with, such as familial and social relationships or educational experiences. Within the context of this document, the term "young language learners" specifically denotes Vietnamese kids between the ages of 6 and 12. They are acquiring English as a second language at language facilities in Can Tho city.



### *Error*

Multiple definitions of the term "error" exist. Lennon (1991) defines an error as a linguistic form or combination of forms that would not likely be created by native speakers in the same context and under identical production conditions as their counterparts (p.182). The errors made by learners are highly significant as they offer valuable insight into the extent of a learner's language acquisition progress and indicate the amount of further learning required by the learner (Ringbom, 1987, p.69).

Throughout the course of human history, mistakes made by learners have typically been viewed as a detrimental consequence, often leading to punishment throughout the learning process. The positive aspects of errors are mostly unexplored. Nevertheless, an increasing number of recent studies indicate that the error has advantageous benefits. Jabeen (2015) demonstrated that errors are not inherently negative, but rather they play a vital role as integral components in the language acquisition process. These findings may shed light on the intricate mechanisms of language development, while also offering a methodical approach to recognizing, describing, and explaining pupils' errors. Errors can also contribute to a deeper comprehension of the second and foreign language acquisition process.

In the realm of English language learning and instruction, errors and mistakes are frequently employed phrases to describe the incorrect performances of students in the language. It is crucial to differentiate between errors and mistakes. An error is perceived as a consequence of the learner's inadequate understanding of grammar, and the mistake is attributed to the failure to correctly utilize a familiar system.

In his 1997 work, Ellis proposed two methods for differentiating between an error and a mistake. One purpose is to assess the coherence of the learner's performance. If a student inconsistently employs the accurate structure and occasionally employs an incorrect structure, then it constitutes an error. However, if he or she consistently uses it wrongly, it becomes a mistake. The second approach involves prompting the student to attempt to rectify their own wrong form. If they are unable to do so, it is classified as an error. Conversely, if they are successful in correcting it, it is considered a mistake.

### *Corrective feedback*

The concept of corrective feedback (CF) has consistently been defined in a comparable manner across various periods of time. Chaudron (1977) provides an initial definition of corrective feedback as "any response from the teacher that visibly changes, disapprovingly refers to, or requires improvement of the learner's utterance" (p. 31). Similarly, Ellis (2008, p.958) also defines that corrective feedback is information which learners are given in order to acquire their interlanguage. Therefore, CF can be explicit or implicit. In addition, according to Lightbown and Spada (1999, p.172), corrective feedback is as "an indication to the learners that his or her use of the target language is incorrect". Through corrective feedback, teachers can assist their learners to realize their errors and mistakes in various ways, maybe directly or indirectly.

In their respective studies, Loewe (2012) and Sheen (2007) provide a definition of corrective feedback as the provision of information to the learner regarding a linguistic error. Nevertheless, it is crucial for teachers to consider corrective feedback as an essential aspect of their teaching practice. They must carefully determine when, how, and if they should correct their students' errors, as these decisions are influenced by their broader teaching and learning theories.

From those definitions provide evidence that CF is effective in an EFL context and encourages teachers to reflect and give feedback to bring beneficial effects on learners' production. In this study, CF is defined as teacher's explicit response and comments on students' writing.

### *Young language learners*

#### *Characteristics of young language learners*

In order to be an effective English teacher for young learners, it is imperative for the teacher to have a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive, linguistic, and emotional aspects of the students. This understanding will greatly influence the teacher's lesson planning, ensuring that the students are fully engaged in the learning process and that the objectives of the lesson are successfully achieved. Additionally, the teacher's ability to respond to the students will be greatly enhanced. Clark (1990: 6-8) outlines five distinctive attributes of young learners:

- Children undergo conceptual development, transitioning from concrete to abstract thinking.
- Children lack developed linguistic abilities, unlike adult learners who possess specific goals for language acquisition, such as improving employment prospects. In contrast, children seldom have such motivations when learning a foreign language. They acquire knowledge in the subjects that the school offers.
- Children are in the process of maturing, acquiring fundamental abilities such as turn-taking and the use of nonverbal communication.
- Young children exhibit a high degree of egocentrism, since they primarily focus on themselves.
- Children have a tendency to become easily bored. Children are compelled to attend school without any option. The absence of choice necessitates that class activities be as enjoyable, captivating, and stimulating as possible through the implementation of engaging tasks.

According to Halliwell (1992: 3-5), children possess the ability to interpret meaning even without fully comprehending each individual word. They demonstrate impressive proficiency in utilizing language creatively within the constraints of their limited vocabulary. Children often acquire knowledge indirectly rather than through direct instruction. They derive enjoyment from discovering and inventing amusement in their activities, and they possess a readily accessible imagination.

Ultimately, teachers must familiarize themselves with the attributes of the young learners they instruct, since this will directly impact the efficacy of language acquisition. By taking into account the aforementioned features, it is expected that the instructor will be able to select the most effective teaching tactics to ensure that young learners comprehend the topic thoroughly.

### *Young writing learners*

Teachers have encountered significant difficulties in the classroom specifically related to writing. Typically, pupils, particularly young learners, exhibit a lack of interest in writing due to a lack of encouragement or enjoyment in the activity. Roseli Serra, the recipient of the Teaching English monthly blog award, discusses strategies for fostering a passion for writing in English among children learning the language. As mentioned, the focus on writing among young learners in many schools is extremely minimal. Typically, pupils frequently convey their ennui when teachers assign them writing projects.

Proficient young students exhibit a strong inclination to engage in the activity of tracing letters and words, displaying a keen desire to acquire the skill of writing their own names, as well as the names of their siblings, pets, toys, and classroom items. We aim to sustain our pupils' enthusiasm for writing while they further enhance their English writing abilities. However, acquiring the talent of writing can be a significant challenge for children. Writing is typically an individual endeavor that is carried out in silence, requiring considerable exertion and consuming a significant amount of time. Mastering the art of writing can be challenging, even for exceptionally young learners. Nevertheless, engaging in written communication in any language can be highly enjoyable.

Teaching writing is the hardest talent among all four skills. Specifically, teaching writing to young learners poses a serious challenge for teachers. Developing language skills from an early age is crucial. Young learners lack motivation to engage in writing activities and instead prefer to focus on oral communication in an ESL classroom. Within our educational system, pupils are not afforded sufficient opportunities to exercise their autonomy in writing. Certain educational institutions provide creative writing courses that provide students with the opportunity to engage in unrestricted writing. At the elementary level, teachers have a crucial role in cultivating writing proficiency.

### *Errors in writing*

#### *Error types in writing*

Within the literature on second language learning, various categories of errors have been discovered. There are two distinct categories that arise from analyzing learners' oral and written performance. The term used to describe this type of error is intralingual/developmental error. Richards (1974) states that these errors are made by learners and do not represent the structure of their native language. Instead, they are overgeneralizations based on little experience to the target language. Overgeneralization often includes the production of one deviant structure in place of two standard structures, for example, "He can sing", "We are hope", "it is occurring". Furthermore, interlingual/transfer errors pertain to the detrimental influence of the learner's first language habits (Selinkker, 1974). For instance, numerous English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners tend to rely on their native language and employ literal translation when expressing themselves orally or in writing in their second language (L2) and so make errors.

The types of error learners usually have made including grammatical errors, lexical errors, semantic errors and mechanics errors. Grammatical errors are errors related to Verb tense, Sentence structure, Coordination, Relative clause, Singular/plural, Verb omission, Subject omission, S-V agreement, Fragment. Lexical errors are often associated with Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Article, Preposition, Word form, Interjections. Semantic errors are more about Word choice (Meaning) while mechanics errors often involve Punctuation, Capitalization, and Spelling.

#### *Common errors in sentence and paragraph writing*

In a further study conducted by Hengwichitkul (2006), mistakes were examined at the level of complete sentences. The faults were categorized as subject-verb agreement, tenses, parts of speech, participial phrases, relative clauses, passive voice, parallel structure, punctuation, run-ons, and fragments. In a similar manner, Runkati (2013) classified the errors identified in her research into two primary categories. The first category addressed problems at the level of individual sentences, including fragments, run-ons, subject-verb agreement, word order, tenses, capitalization, and punctuation. The last one consisted of errors at the lexical level, including articles, prepositions, word selection, nouns, and numbers.

In a study conducted by researchers from a Thai university and released in February 2017, the focus was on faults in English sentences. The study found that Thai EFL students commonly made errors in fragments, subject-verb agreement, word order, tenses, capitalization, and punctuation. The other worrisome problems at the lexical level were articles, prepositions, lexical choices, nouns, pronouns, and verbs. Additional forms of analysis, such as addition and omission, were also classified as subcategories of errors occurring at the sentence level and word level. The primary sources of the errors were identified as interlingual interference, intralingual interference, insufficient grasp of English grammar and vocabulary, and student carelessness.

#### *Corrective feedback in teaching writing*

##### *Theoretical perspectives of corrective feedback*

##### *Early Perspectives on Error and CF in SLA.*

Since the mid-20th century, a key focus of SLA research has been the examination of learner errors and how they are addressed, a topic greatly impacted by linguistic viewpoints. This section examines common methodologies, such as Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis, and Krashen's (1985) Monitor Model, which address the importance of errors and corrective feedback in second language (L2) learning and acquisition.

According to Krashen's (1985) Monitor Model, Written Corrective Feedback is deemed useless due to the distinction between learning and acquisition. Learning is a conscious process that involves teaching, while acquisition is a subconscious process that occurs naturally. As a result, corrective feedback, which is a conscious process, does not contribute to the growth of learning.

*Recent Perspectives on Error and CF in SLA.*

In the past twenty years, research has emphasized the importance of CF in language learning, highlighting its cognitive and societal benefits. These two lines of research utilize a diverse range of arguments that have a significant impact due to their explicit and implicit incorporation of the role of cognitive function in the process of second language acquisition (SLA). Prior to delving into the empirical research, it is imperative for us to thoroughly examine these viewpoints, specifically Processability Theory, Skill-based Theory, Interaction Theory, and Sociocultural Theory.

Processability Theory, formulated by Pienemann (1998) and his associates (Pienemann & Johnston, 1987; Pienemann, Di Biase, & Kawaguchi, 2005), posits that the cognitive capacity of L2 learners to comprehend and generate language is limited by a language processor. It suggests that these constraints, organized in a hierarchical manner, give rise to discernible stages of advancement in L2 acquisition.

The work of Anderson (1983, 1985), McLaughlin (1987, 1990), and DeKeyser (2003, 2007a) provides the most comprehensive representation of Skill-based Theory. The theory is primarily applicable to the acquisition of sophisticated cognitive skills, such as mathematics, and has also been expanded to encompass language learning, as stated by the theory. Simply said, Skill-based Theory views CF as a catalyst in the process of converting information.

The interaction approach encompasses language acquisition through the processes of input, output, and feedback, all of which take place during interaction (Gass & Mackey, 2006; Long, 1996). Among various ways that examine the role of CF, whether directly or indirectly, the interaction approach is widely regarded as the one that extensively investigates CF.

Sociocultural Theory, primarily grounded in the research of Vygotsky (1978, 1981), examines cognitive functioning from a distinct perspective. This perspective acknowledges that cognitive processes, such as language acquisition, are facilitated by the social interactions between learners and individuals who possess more knowledge and skills.

*The significance of corrective feedback*

Hopefully, recent studies and findings have made a contribution to increase teachers' awareness of corrective feedback to EFL young learners' writing.

The corrective feedback has a lot of advantages. Using an appropriate feedback correction can potentially boost pupils' motivation. It motivates the student to persist in their learning, particularly when they are aware that their output yields accurate results. Furthermore, if the learner discovers that their output is inaccurate, they should acknowledge their own accountability for their performance and strive to improve in subsequent attempts. An

additional advantage is that proficient utilization of correction feedback by professors can enhance students' proficiency and enhance their writing aptitude. It provides the learner with information about their learning trajectory and the level of progress they have made in their written performance. The learner will receive a comprehensive assessment on their primary deficiencies and will have the opportunity to seek potential solutions to improve their performance.

#### *Types of corrective feedback in writing classes*

Various forms of feedback can be given to students to identify and rectify faults in their writing. These recommendations have been extensively examined in numerous researches, which have offered evidence indicating the types of feedback that can enhance language acquisition. Hence, written corrective criticism can be classified into two primary categories: direct and indirect (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

Direct corrective feedback encompasses several forms, including: a) cross-outs, where the teacher eliminates any incorrect additions from the students' original texts, b) rewrites, where the teacher provides the correct spelling, structure, or form by rewriting a word, phrase, or sentence on the students' original texts, and c) additions, where the teacher includes any missing elements on the students' original texts, such as prefixes, suffixes, articles, prepositions, or words.

Indirect corrective feedback refers to the practice of the teacher identifying flaws in students' original texts by underlining, circling, or highlighting them, without actually correcting them. Students are required to analyze their mistakes and rectify them (Ferris, 2002). Indirect corrective feedback prioritizes the involvement of students in comprehending and rectifying their faults, rather than simply receiving the corrections. Indirect feedback is implemented by highlighting the flaws in pupils' writing, so conveying to them the presence of an issue that requires rectification. Teachers can employ various methods such as lines, circles, or highlighting to denote the precise position of errors. In addition, they must determine the level of explicitness of indirect feedback, taking into consideration the objectives they aim to accomplish through the provision of feedback.

In addition, when students are tasked with writing, they typically prioritize the content over the form. They then align their interests with the organization, presentation, and ultimately the purpose of language forms (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation). Most teachers primarily provide comments on language forms, which may lead children to believe that grammar is the sole aspect to consider in writing. Nevertheless, numerous educators concur that equal attention should be devoted to both form and content, as the acquisition of writing proficiency necessitates the cultivation of both aspects. Raimes (1983; cited in Khalil, 2008) proposes that the teacher's primary emphasis should be on the substance of the writing during the initial phases of drafting, and thereafter on the structure and organization. Furthermore, when students are making numerous errors, teachers' focus is directed towards rectifying these mistakes, which are both time-consuming and labor-intensive. According to Gulcat and Ozagac (2004), it is suggested that one should prioritize fluency in students before emphasizing correctness (p.26).

### *The situation of early English education in Vietnam*

The education system in Vietnam is structured into three stages, spanning 12 grades. The primary level caters to children aged 6 to 10, covering grades 1 to 5. The secondary level is designed for children aged 11 to 15, including grades 6 to 9. Lastly, the high school level is intended for students aged 15 to 18, covering classes 10 to 12.

From 1982 to 2002, English was mandatory at high school and optional at secondary school in Vietnam, where it was taught as a foreign language. The English textbooks primarily focus on grammar, while also incorporating reading comprehension and spoken proficiency. Furthermore, teachers primarily dedicate their time to instructing grammar and its rules, aiming to assist pupils in acquiring and mastering the English language for effective communication.

Since the early 1990s, the teaching of English in Vietnam has undergone considerable changes as a result of the influence of English as a global language. In early 2002, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) initiated the development of a new curriculum and the creation of new textbooks for all academic areas. In contrast to the time span from 1982 to 2002, the current general curriculum mandates the inclusion of English as a mandatory subject in both secondary and high school, while at the elementary level it is offered as an optional subject. Nguyen (2007) states that English is presently acknowledged as the preeminent and crucial foreign language incorporated at all educational levels in Vietnam. The importance and prevalence of English education have significantly increased, and currently, English Language Teaching in Vietnam is receiving elevated recognition. According to recent survey data, 99.1% of junior secondary schools teach English, whereas just 0.6% teach French, 0.2% teach Russian, and 0.1% teach Chinese (Loc, 2005).

### *The curriculum*

The curriculum guidelines, which are also mandated by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, offer explicit instructions for the specific duration that teachers and students should allocate to each segment of a 40-minute class. Teachers are urged to enhance these lesson plans, but they must obtain authorization through a teacher assessment program in order to modify or substitute them. English was implemented as an optional course beginning in the second semester of Grade 3, with two 40-minute sessions per week. Starting in 2006, English will be mandatory, with four 40-minute sessions per week. MOET implemented an English curriculum for primary schools in the academic year 2003-2004. The program places a strong emphasis on the initial development of speaking and listening abilities, among four other skills.

### *The role of writing in the primary curriculum*

Despite its crucial role in developing the four fundamental language abilities, writing has been consistently overlooked in Vietnamese elementary schools. As per the national test pattern, reading ability continues to be



considered the foremost competence. Formative and summative assessments do not incorporate writing, which poses a challenge in motivating students to engage in writing activities throughout class. Writing is regarded as more intricate to instruct in comparison to the other three skills. Certain educators lack self-assurance in their English proficiency and avoid creating writing assignments or encouraging students to engage in writing beyond just grammar exercises. Occasionally, educators may lack a sufficient number of ideas to assist students.

Typically, the majority of teachers adhere strictly to the requirements outlined in the textbook duties and do not go beyond them. They may even permit pupils to replicate the models from the aforementioned "How to" book. It is apparent that teaching writing is not considered a priority in Vietnamese upper-secondary English schools, as it is given a lower level of importance. Unsurprisingly, the emphasis on reading and the focus on exam performance have detrimental impacts on upper-secondary graduates, who often get numerous complaints about their inadequate listening, speaking, and writing abilities.

In the setting of Vietnamese primary schools, there has been a longstanding custom for instructors to assume the responsibility of revising their students' written work. Consequently, students primarily write with the intention of impressing their teachers rather than expressing themselves, leading to teachers being the sole recipients of the writing experience gained by students. Consequently, writing instructors frequently face the burden of providing comments and rectifying students' written work. Consequently, teacher-controlled feedback continues to prevail in Vietnamese English writing schools.

#### *Review of previous research on the relationship between corrective feedback and writing performance.*

Within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research and theory, there has been ongoing debate on the impact of corrective feedback on language acquisition. Some proponents argue that corrective feedback is useful in enhancing learners' writing correctness, while others contend that it is ineffective or even detrimental. The following discussion will go into these contrasting viewpoints.

Extensive study has been carried out in Western settings to elucidate the efficacy of corrective feedback on writing. Krashen's (1985) Monitor Model suggests that WCF is not effective because to the distinction between learning and acquisition, with the latter being an unconscious process. Furthermore, learners systematically acquire the linguistic characteristics of the second language in a predetermined sequence that remains unaffected by the order in which it is taught. Hence, the deliberate act of providing incorrect feedback does not contribute to the development of pupils' acquired knowledge. Nevertheless, the interaction theories proposed by Long (1996) and Swain (1985, 1995) provide evidence in favor of the beneficial impact of written corrective feedback (WCF).

In 1996, Truscott published a critical essay contending that providing corrective feedback on writing by L2 students was not only ineffective but also potentially detrimental. He contended that error correction was irrelevant in writing classes, as evidenced by his study and the insights from second language acquisition (SLA)

research. Nevertheless, Ferris (1999) discovered that the empirical data provided in Truscott's study was restricted, and the methodology employed in previous investigations were flawed. According to Ferris (2002), indirect feedback is often more suitable and efficient than direct input. The potential peril of providing immediate feedback is that educators may misconstrue the intended message of students and inadvertently impose their own words upon them. According to Ferris (2002), direct feedback is suitable in the following situations: (1) when dealing with beginner students, (2) when errors cannot be easily corrected by the students themselves, such as errors related to sentence structure and word choice, and (3) when teachers want to highlight other error patterns that require correction by the students.

According to Chandler (2003), indirect corrective feedback is not helpful because it does not offer learners with enough information to fix complicated errors, such as grammatical faults. In addition, Chandler (2003) contended that whereas learners who receive direct corrective feedback are able to immediately internalize the proper form offered by their teacher, learners who receive indirect corrective feedback are uncertain about the accuracy of their own hypothesized corrections. In addition, Bitchener and Knoch (2010b) proposed that only direct corrective feedback provides learners with the explicit information necessary for evaluating hypotheses about the target language.

Lee (2011, 2013) conducted a study to examine how corrective feedback can enhance the accuracy of students' writing. The study explored the individual reactions to both focused feedback and peer feedback, as well as the individual elements that influence these reactions. The study's findings indicate a decrease in the number of mistakes committed by students, along with an increase in the number of errors corrected. Additionally, proficient pupils were capable of evaluating their classmates' written work. The study revealed that linguistic proficiency could potentially influence students' adoption of WCF.

### *Summary*

This chapter has reviewed theoretical perspectives for conducting the current study. It covers key terms, previous studies about corrective feedback. Throughout reviewing the related studies on the effects of corrective feedback on students' writing the researchers (Krashen, 1985; Truscott, 1996) show that corrective feedback is both useless and ineffective to learners' acquisition and writing performance. While, there were many studies supported the role of corrective feedback to learners' improvement such as the researchers (Long, 1996; Swain, 1995; Ferris, 2002; Chandler, 2003; Lee, 2011 & 2013).

Our review has shown that the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers towards delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing. First, this study would like to investigate how EFL teachers understand and aware of using corrective feedback in their classes; and the second is figuring out how teachers deliver corrective feedback.

This shows the need to investigate the gap in previous studies in terms of participants and research contextual

background. In most of previous studies, target participants were adult students with intermediate or high level at high schools and universities. Few studies on delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing have been conducted with low English proficiency students. Beside that, almost all of these studies are conducted in countries with great differences of cultural and linguistic background as well as assessment trend in comparison with those in Vietnam in general and in Cantho city in particular. Hence, the current study was worth conducting on young learners who are learning English as a foreign language to enrich empirical findings as well as explores the perceptions of EFL teachers who are teaching at foreign languages in Cantho city toward delivering corrective feedback.

## **Methodology**

This chapter presents an overview of research methodology of the study. The chapter starts by introducing research questions. Next, research design and participants are described in detail. The chapter continues with the description of the materials and research instruments. Last, the procedures of data collection and data analysis of the study are also presented.

### **Research questions**

This study seeks to investigate the perspectives and methodologies employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in providing corrective feedback on the writing of young learners in Can Tho City. The study was specifically designed to ascertain the answers to two specific questions:

- (1) What are EFL teachers' perceptions of delivering corrective feedback on young learners' writing?
- (2) How do they deliver corrective feedback on young learners' writing?

### *Research approach*

The present study is structured as a descriptive study that employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The study employed a blend of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather and analyze data, as well as address the two research inquiries. The quantitative approach enables the acquisition of numerical data analysis by means of collecting surveys. Data is typically presented in numerical and statistical formats, sometimes organized in tables, charts, figures, or other visual representations that facilitate clear comprehension of the outcomes of your investigation.

Furthermore, the researcher might utilize this strategy to obtain a substantial sample size. The utilization of qualitative methodology, involving interviews and observations, yields substantial, intricate, and reliable facts that significantly enhance the comprehensive comprehension of an authentic setting. Furthermore, this approach examines certain variables in order to obtain more dependable data.

*Research methods*

The quantitative method consisting of a questionnaire aims to explore the EFL teachers' perceptions of using corrective feedback for young learners in performance. Furthermore, it helps to identify the types of corrective feedback which teachers find the most useful for them to provide their learners. The qualitative method includes interviews in order to find out strategies that teachers deliver corrective feedback to their young learners' writing.

The interview is a qualitative method by its nature, frequently employed to collect profound information from the interviewee rather than superficial details. According to Kvale (2009), a qualitative research interview aims to address both factual information and the deeper meaning behind it (p. 30). The interviewer possesses the ability to actively listen to the interviewee's descriptions and analyze their statements to derive both explicit and implicit messages (Kvale, 2009, p. 30).

Table 2.1. Descriptions of the research design

Research questions	Methodology	Instruments
1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of delivering corrective feedback on young learners' writing?	Descriptive study with qualitative and quantitative approaches	Questionnaire
2. How do they deliver corrective feedback on young learners' writing?		Interview & Observation

*Participants*

*Questionnaire respondents*

For the purpose of the present study, the participants in the research included 35 EFL teachers at English language centers are delivered questionnaire form.

The teachers are teaching in English centers in Can Tho City. They included 35 (5 males and 30 females) teachers aged from 25-35 years old. Their major is English Education and most of them graduated from Cantho University. The teachers who are working at private English centers are offered more benefits than others teaching at public English centers. Firstly, the number of students is limited around 20 for each class in private centers, while there are about or over 30 learners per class in public centers.

These teachers have been teaching more than two years to young learners aged from 6-12 years old. Moreover, they had got level from B2 to C1 of Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP).

### *Interviewees*

In this study, two focused group interviews were conducted with 6 participants who majored in English Education in order to collect further information about their attitudes and preferences on the types of corrective feedback and how they deliver corrective feedback to specific ages of young learners. These interviewees also participated in answering the questionnaire. In interview group 1, participants teach their learners at the ages from 6-8 years old, while in the second group their target learners are students from 9-12 years old.

In this research, the interview was designed and focused on 1) the definitions of error correction 2) types of corrective feedback 3) strategies of using corrective feedback 4) practices of delivering corrective feedback. The interview was designed in English and prompts were also prepared to elicit the responses in case the participants could not provide the appropriate answers.

### *Observed participants*

Five EFL teachers who are teaching young learners were observed and they were chosen purposely from responding the questionnaire. After that, they will be divided into two observe groups based on their textbooks and students' level.

In group 1, there are two female teachers who are teaching two different classes but the same textbook "Smart Start 3". The first teacher has 4 years in teaching young learners and she got level B2 of VSTEP. Her class size is 10 students with ages from 8-11 years old. While the second teacher has also 4 teaching experience years but she got C1 level of VSTEP. There are 12 students ages from 7-12 years old in her class.

In group 2, there are three female teachers who are teaching the same text book "Smart Start 5" but in different classes. Their teaching experiences to young learners are from 3-5 years and their levels are B2 and C1 of VSTEP. Their number of students in each class range from 10 to 15 students. The students' ages are from 9-12 years old.

### Data collection instruments

#### *Designing the questionnaire*

The questionnaire is a main tool to collect data. It consists of three main parts. The first part was to find out the information related to EFL teachers who are teaching young learners including their gender, teaching duration, teaching experiences and teaching qualification.

The second part was to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of delivering corrective in young learners' writing in terms of teachers' understandings of basic concepts of errors and corrective feedback, strategies on delivering corrective feedback.

The last part was to explore EFL teachers' practices of delivering corrective in young learners' writing to find out frequency of using corrective feedback and types of corrective feedback that teachers usually applied in their classes.

The questionnaire consists of 39 questions including 25 questions for teachers' perceptions of errors and corrective feedback, 14 questions for teachers' practices of corrective feedback (Appendix 1).

A five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree was employed within teachers' perceptions. The participants had to decide whether they strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. Toward teachers' practices of corrective feedback, the Likert frequency scale ranging from Never to Always was applied. In these sections, the participants had to decide whether they practice corrective feedback Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often or Always. In addition, because all the participants were Vietnamese teachers teaching English language, the questionnaire was presented in English. The items were arranged according to constructs to facilitate the participants' understanding.

#### *Piloting the questionnaire*

The questionnaire was designed and given to the researcher's colleagues for comments. The researcher chose the teachers who had experience in conducting research in order to assure its original validity and ease of use to the participants. Some adjustments or corrections were implemented in order to be more understandable for participants. Then, the questionnaire was piloted with 20 EFL teachers who are teaching young learners. A reliability test was run with the Cronbach alpha of .933. This result reveals that the questionnaire is reliable enough to collect official data for the study.

#### *Administering the questionnaire*

The questionnaire was delivered to the participants who are teaching young English learners in EFL classes where teachers used corrective feedback in their students' writing. Next, the researcher summarized the purpose of the questionnaire and explained the measure to respond to the questionnaire in order to make sure that the participants understand how to put a check on the questionnaire. This step helped the researcher collect the data more correctly. Each questionnaire was completed within approximately 15-20 minutes.

#### *Interview*

##### *Designing the interview*

With the aims of finding more information to support the findings of the questionnaire and the whole research, to get more in-depth of what teachers apply corrective feedback in practical contexts as well as viewing the possible differences in teachers' perceptions and practices, a semi-structured interview was employed. The interview used in this study as a secondary data collection tool was composed of eight main questions

(Appendix2). The interview was given to the researcher's colleagues for comments and feedback to make sure it was easy for interviewees to understand and answer.

#### *Collecting data from the interview*

The interviews were carried out during two weeks after contacting the participants via facebook or phone call. All interviews took place at language centers in Cantho city after teaching time. There are six EFL teachers who participated in responding questionnaire were chosen to answer the interview.

Four interviews were performed in tranquil and unoccupied classrooms, while the remaining two had to be completed remotely by phone call due to the researcher's inability to personally interview these professors. Each interview had a duration of 25-40 minutes and was conducted exclusively in Vietnamese. This decision was made in an effort to foster a more casual and uninhibited atmosphere among the participants. Based on our expertise, conversing in a language different from one's customary can result in certain ideas or thoughts being left unexpressed. This may occur due to a sense of discomfort or a lack of proficiency in effectively conveying one's true emotions. Due to the interviews being conducted in Vietnamese, it was necessary to translate the transcribed portions into English prior to using them in this essay. The researchers conducted the translations. The interviews were conducted as in-person dialogues following the administration of the questionnaire. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and subsequently translated into English.

#### *Observation*

##### *Designing the observation*

The study analyzed the interaction in the classroom between the teacher and students, specifically looking at the feedback provided to affirm accurate answers and rectify bad ones. Feedback data were obtained through class observation to ascertain the types and frequency of feedback provided by teachers.

The researcher sought consent from many EFL teachers to participate in classroom observations. Five 45-minute lessons taught by five English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers were watched for a duration of four weeks. The decision to employ observation as a qualitative method for gathering data was motivated by the necessity to ascertain the specific feedback tactics employed by teachers in their actual classroom settings.

##### *Collecting data from the observation*

The data were subsequently subjected to qualitative analysis to comprehend the various forms of feedback employed in the classroom. Additionally, quantitative analysis was conducted to quantify the data according to a certain scheme. Prior to the observation, a predetermined observation protocol was established to assist the researcher in maintaining attention on specific characteristics that required investigation. The methodology encompassed many forms of feedback anticipated to transpire in the classroom, including teacher feedback, peer



feedback, direct feedback, indirect feedback, and any additional input not explicitly listed. Each feedback type was marked with a tick to quantify the frequency and type of feedback used by each teacher. This was performed subsequent to the collection of the data.

#### *Data analysis methods*

To go in line with the data analysis, quantitative and qualitative analysis were combined together. The questionnaire's quantitative data was inputted into a computer and evaluated using the computer software Statistics Package for the Social Science (SPSS 22 for Windows). A Descriptive Statistic test was used to analyze the attitudes of EFL students regarding teachers' utilization of authentic material for training in medical English terminology. To obtain qualitative data, the interview was examined utilizing interview methods.

## **Findings and Discussion**

This chapter presents the results of the study. It describes and whenever relevant interprets the results of data analysis on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of delivering corrective feedback on young learners' writing. Data analyzed include questionnaire, interview and observation. The final part of this chapter discusses the major findings emerging from the study.

### **Data of teachers' perceptions and practices of delivering corrective feedback to young English learners.**

Prior to evaluating the questionnaire data, the reliability of the data acquired from 39 questionnaire items with 35 participants was assessed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to be .898 ( $\alpha=.898$ ), indicating a high level of reliability for the questionnaire. This allows for the use of a Descriptive Statistic Test in SPSS to collect the average mean score of 35 instructors' views and practices on corrective feedback. The test outcome is displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 General teachers' perceptions and practices of delivering corrective feedback to young English learners at a language center in Cantho city.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
General	35	2.69	4.13	3.3927	.33822
Valid N (listwise)	35				

The average score of the questionnaire is displayed in Table 4.1, with a mean value of 3.3927. A one-sample T-test was conducted to compare the average score of instructors' views and practices of corrective feedback with the specified values of 3.0 (representing neutrality) and 4.0 (representing agreement). The findings indicate that

the average score of instructors' perceptions and practices of corrective feedback significantly deviates from both 3.0 ( $t=6.869$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and 4.0 ( $t=-10.623$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

A one-sample T-test was conducted with a test value of 3.5. The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant disparity between the average score of general instructors' perceptions and practices of corrective feedback ( $M=3.3927$ ) and the test value of 3.5 ( $t=.729$ ,  $p=.069$ ). The study revealed that EFL teachers often demonstrated above-average perceptions and practices when it came to providing corrective comments on the writing of young English learners.

*Teachers' perceptions of corrective feedback in young learners' writing*

*Teachers' perceptions of the role of young learners' errors in writing*

To collect data about the perceptions of EFL teachers of the role of young learners' errors in their writing performance, a well-designed questionnaire was employed. After the procedure of data collection through questionnaire, the data were analyzed and the general result is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Teachers' perception of the role of young learners' errors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Error	35	1.75	4.38	3.1893	.56667
Valid N (listwise)	35				

A one-sample T-test was conducted on the average score of EFL teachers' views of errors made by young learners, with a test value of 3.5. The analysis indicates a disparity between the average rating of teachers' observations on errors made by young learners ( $M=3.1893$ ) and the benchmark value of 3.5 ( $t=3.244$ ;  $p=.003$ ). EFL teachers' judgments of young learners' blunders can be deemed as mediocre. The teachers under investigation possess unfavorable beliefs on the significance of faults made by their students in writing. Nevertheless, the comprehensive examination of the data provides other insights.

Aiming at comparing the level of each perception listed in the questionnaire, the Frequency Test was run. The results are illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Teachers' perception of young learners' errors

No.	Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	No idea (%)
1	Learners' errors are necessary in language learning progress.	86.8	2.6	2.6
2	Learners' errors can help teachers know how much more the learner needs to learn.	86.9	0.0	5.3

3	Errors are both useless and harmful for learners.	5.3	68.4	18.4
4	Errors have no role in writing skill.	0.0	86.9	5.3
5	Errors may also help to better understand the process of second and foreign language acquisition.	71.1	10.5	10.5
6	Learners' errors have been generally considered as a negative effect or result, even to be punished in learning process.	0.0	86.9	5.3
7	Young learners can realize their errors and correct those errors by themselves.	28.9	47.4	15.8
8	Young learners can realize their errors pointed out by their teachers more easily.	85.2	0.0	10.5

For the perceptions of EFL teachers of the role young learners' errors play in learning progress, most of the teachers investigated agree that errors play an important role and essential part in language acquisition. It can be seen clearly in their response to item 1 and 2. Nearly 87% (33 participants in total 35) believe that errors are to be corrected by teachers as an effective way which helps to recognize what the learners have already mastered or what issues or structures still remain problematic for them. Moreover, also nearly 87% of the participants disagreed that errors do not have any role in writing skill, the investigated teachers have positive attitudes towards the fact that errors are useful in giving teachers the chance to help learners improve young learners' writing. In comparison between item 7 and 8, the majority of EFL teachers (nearly 85%) thought that it is more effective when teachers point out errors for the young language learners. Only 29% of the investigated teachers believe that young learners can recognize their errors by themselves.

#### *Teachers' perception of delivering corrective feedback on young learners' writing*

The second cluster of the questionnaire includes a set of questions aimed at gathering more evidence regarding EFL teachers' perspectives of providing corrective feedback to young learners' writing. The overall outcome of teachers' perceptions on the provision of corrective feedback for young learners' writing is presented in Table 4.4, following the process of data collection and analysis.

Table 4.4 Teachers' perception of delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CF	35	2.50	4.75	3.7321	.57534
Valid N (listwise)	35				

One sample t-test on the second cluster was run in order to analyze the data. With the Mean score  $M=3.7$  ( $p=.00$ ) when it was compared with the test value (4.0), the result shows that there is a difference between the mean score of EFL teachers' beliefs about corrective feedback ( $M=3.7$ ) and the test value 4.0 ( $t=-5.445$ ,  $p=.000$ ). It can be concluded that EFL teachers' perceptions about delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing is just above average. However, it can be confirmed that the investigated teachers recognize the role of delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing and what types of corrective feedback delivered to their learners.

To gain insights into the perception of EFL teachers of giving error correction and feedback in writing skill, the test of frequency was run.

In this part, based on the response of the participants, their beliefs of the mutual relationship between corrective feedback and writing improvement is found. All of the investigated teachers (100%) believed that providing corrective feedback can help improve students' writing accuracy (in item 11). The implication of this result is that the participants absolutely believe in the advantage of making corrective feedback available to young learners, that is it could help enhance learners' writing performance.

Moreover, no participants denied the role of corrective feedback in promoting English learning. Although delivering corrective feedback is believed to help improve young learners' writing skill, the response of nearly 50% of the participants has shown that to them writing is not a major skill to young EFL learners. What could be inferred from this result is that these teachers would not focus too much on writing skill as well as learners' writing performance in their classes, which is actually a good decision because the theory of child language acquisition emphasizes that children should be developed in terms of oral skills moving from listening then to speaking first; reading and writing should come much later in the process.

Concerning the types of corrective feedback between direct and indirect feedback, the questionnaire data have indicated the investigated teachers had a tendency to apply direct feedback as a result of their consideration the young age of their learners and their low level of proficiency.

Up to 72% of teachers showed they prefer chose direct feedback to because their students are young learners, so their levels are low. Over a half of the number of the participants agreed that direct feedback would be applied in class effectively.

It is obvious that most of the surveyed teachers shared nearly similar views of the role of errors and of providing corrective feedback. The majority of the teachers believed that corrective feedback is useful in keeping a record of their young students' learning progress. In addition, learners' errors can help students know their own strengths and weaknesses in learning writing.

The teachers in the interview data also believe that they can adapt their teaching, modify the lesson to help students write better. Although the motivation was rarely mentioned in the interviews by teachers, some teachers do believe that corrective feedback can be used to motivate students' learning.

*Teachers' strategies on delivering corrective feedback to young learners.*

In order to deliver corrective feedback successfully and efficiently, there are various of strategies that teachers should follow when they apply for their students. The data of exploring the teachers' beliefs of ways on giving correct feedback were collected through questionnaire. After the procedure of data collection and data analysis, the general result of teachers' perceptions of strategies of corrective feedback is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Teachers' strategies on delivering corrective feedback

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Strategies	35	3.7238	.28820	.04871

A one-sample T-test was conducted to evaluate the average score of EFL teachers' beliefs regarding corrective feedback procedures (M=3.72) against a test value of 4.0. The outcome revealed a significant disparity between the average score and the test value ( $t=-5.670$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Based on the data analysis, it is evident that teachers' perception varied in relation to the tactics they employed for providing corrective feedback.

The Descriptive Statistic Test was conducted to provide further understanding of the variations in instructors' attitudes regarding specific tactics for providing corrective feedback. Table 4.6 displays the results.

Table 4.6 Teachers' beliefs in strategies of giving corrective feedback

No.	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	17. The teacher should mark only MAJOR errors because it's too time consuming to mark all errors.	35	2.0	4.0	3.200	.8677
	18. The teacher should mark all errors at first,	35	2.0	5.0	3.771	.8432

	then focus on repeated ones.					
	19. First the teacher should respond to content and organization, then on final draft mark errors.	35	2.0	5.0	3.600	.7746
	20. The teacher should only mark some errors, and make general comments at the end.	35	2.0	5.0	3.200	.9010
	21. Teachers should give positive feedback and comments to young learners	35	2.0	5.0	3.914	.9813
	22. Teachers could encourage the students take risks or make errors in learning process.	35	4.0	5.0	4.086	.2840
	23. Teachers should give the complete explanation of the error and the proper rule or pattern	35	2.0	5.0	3.857	.6482
	24. Grammatical errors were also frequently corrected in Writing tasks.	35	2.0	5.0	3.943	.5392
	25. Spelling errors were also frequently corrected in Writing tasks.	35	3.0	5.0	3.943	.4161
Total		35				

The results indicated that teachers' beliefs toward specific types of corrective feedback were rather high. The types of errors such as grammatical and spelling errors (M=3.943) were the most common errors that teachers corrected in Writing tasks.

*Teachers' practices of delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing*

*Teachers' frequency on delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing*

The second research question is aimed at investigating EFL teachers' practices of delivering corrective feedback on young language learners' writing. The research question has two focuses. Firstly, it explores which errors that teachers mainly focused on correcting. Secondly, it focuses on the ways that the teachers applied when delivering corrective feedback in their teaching context. Two research instruments were used to collect data for answering the question. These include questionnaire at first and interview later in the process. In the questionnaire, the participants were required to respond never, rarely, sometimes, very often, always to the items developed. After the collection and analysis of the questionnaire data, the result is shown in Table 4.7. It is important to remember that these data show the reflections of the teachers' practices rather than provide empirical evidences of their actual practice through observation or recording. As such these data are reflective in nature.

Table 4.7 Teachers' reflection of the frequency of their delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequency	35	2.75	5.00	3.9000	.52580
Valid N (listwise)	35				

The one sample T-test was run to compare mean score of teacher's reflected practices of the types of errors they often give and the test value 4.0. The result has shown that there is no difference between the mean score and the test value ( $t=-1.125$ ,  $p=.268$ ). It can be concluded that the surveyed EFL teachers' practices of error types are fairly above average.

*Teachers' practices on delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing*

This part is aimed at investigating ways of giving corrective feedback that EFL teachers claim they use in their teaching context. The data received through the questionnaire are complimentary by the interview data. After the questionnaire data collection and data analysis, the result is shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Teachers' reflective practices of delivering corrective feedback to young learners' writing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Practices	35	1.80	4.30	2.7829	.64008
Valid N (listwise)	35				

The average score of instructors' overall reflective practices of corrective feedback was compared to the test value of 3.0 using a one-sample T-test. The analysis indicates that there is no statistically significant disparity



between the test value and the average score of instructors' overall reflective practices for corrective feedback ( $t=-2.007$ ,  $p=.053$ ). The teachers' overall practices of corrective feedback can be deemed as mediocre.

Aiming at getting more detailed information about how participants responded to every item in the questionnaire, the test of Frequencies was run.

One corrective feedback which is claimed by the participants is typically used to improve young learners' writing is direct feedback. There are 31 teachers (nearly 90%) who said they often or always use this type of corrective feedback to assess their young students' writing. Other 4 participants (nearly 11%) admitted they rarely applied this type of feedback in their feedback to young learners' writing. It can be concluded that the frequency of use of direct corrective feedback as reflected by the teachers is fairly high.

The next type of corrective feedback used to assess students' writing performance is indirect feedback. Concerning indirect corrective feedback, 12 participants (nearly 34%) claimed they sometimes employ this strategy. Other 3 participants (nearly 14%) said they very often use reading aloud task. The number of participants who rarely or never applied indirect corrective feedback through underlining or circling the errors without any comments, however, is rather large. There are 14 participants (nearly 40%) who rarely or never applied this type of corrective feedback in their teaching context.

Comparing the frequency of using teacher feedback to peer feedback in writing classes, 27 teachers (nearly 77%) claimed they very often had this type of corrective feedback applied in their classroom. Eight participants (nearly 22%) said they sometimes use it.

Regarding using peer feedback, there are 17 participants (nearly 50%) saying they sometimes implement peer feedback in writing assessment, while one participant (nearly 3%) never applied this type in writing correction. The data from the questionnaire about teachers' practices of delivering corrective feedback were also supported by teachers' answers in the in-depth interview.

Firstly, the interviewed teachers said that there were 4 main kinds of corrective feedback that they applied in their teaching context. These include direct and indirect feedback, teacher and peer feedback.

The data have indicated that most of the investigated teachers in the interview used various kinds of corrective feedback to response to their young learners' writing. This conclusion is in line with the data obtain by means of the questionnaire. It can be seen that direct and indirect feedback were mentioned by most interviewed, teacher 1, teacher 3 and teacher 4, which means these types are commonly used. The least mentioned is peer feedback. Secondly, in order to examine whether the teachers usually use direct or indirect feedback in their classrooms, there are two different ideas. The first group said that they preferred indirect feedback to direct feedback because the former help learners recognize their errors by themselves and they can remember for long time. However, if students are young learners and low levels, teachers should use direct feedback because it should be

more useful and effective. The other group suggested that the decision of giving direct or indirect feedback should depend on each situation and learners' proficiency as shown in the following explanation:

"I think that it depends on each case so that the teacher can decide to give the students indirect or direct feedback. For example, if the sentences are easy to understand or simple, the teacher can deliver them indirect feedback. Also, the students' level can affect the type of corrective feedback. For weak students, we should give them direct feedback and vice versa" (Teacher 1).

#### *Teachers' practice of delivering corrective feedback from empirical evidence*

As said above, while the questionnaire and interview data can provide some relevant information about teachers' practices, they are reflective by nature and may not provide a comprehensive picture of what teachers really do in practice. In order to find out more empirical evidences for EFL teachers' practices of using corrective feedback to young learners' writing, some observations were carried out. After the procedure of observation collection, there are some major findings established.

Firstly, the observed EFL teachers always correct their students' errors both in sentences or paragraphs. They mainly focused on correcting grammatical and lexical errors like tenses, structures, spellings and so on because their target learners are young learners. Secondly, most of observed teachers used teacher feedback more than peer feedback because as they said in the interview that it could help them to save time and it is easy for their young students to realize the errors. Moreover, there was one teacher who was captured to apply different types of corrective feedback. She combined both group and individual correction, teacher and peer feedback, direct and indirect feedback. She took advantage of peer feedback effectively through asking her students to write their own writing based on her writing model and then she stuck their writing on the blackboard. After that, the students went around the classroom to read and vote the best writing through their stickers. The students also could correct some basic errors on their classmates' writings. This activity not only created an interesting atmosphere but also became a useful way to provide corrective feedback.

#### *Discussion of the research results*

##### *EFL teachers' perceptions*

The numerical data obtained from the questionnaire are utilized to address the initial study inquiry. The examination of the questionnaire data indicates that the participants hold predominantly positive attitudes regarding the role of corrective feedback in young learners' writing. The majority of experts concur that learners' faults are vital in the process of learning and teaching, particularly in the context of teaching and learning writing skills. This assertion is strongly corroborated by the works of Ringbom (1987) and Jabeen (2015). These studies have demonstrated that errors need not necessarily be seen negatively, but rather as integral and essential components of the language acquisition process. Errors can also help teachers' comprehension of the second and foreign language acquisition process. Nevertheless, the participants' level of mistake awareness is low.

Along with the positive perception of learners' errors, the participants also appreciated the effects of corrective feedback on writing performance.

Consensus was reached among all participants that the provision of corrective feedback has the potential to enhance the accuracy of students' writing. The participants' questionnaire replies indicated that the adoption of corrective feedback helped their learners to recognize their flaws and blunders in different ways, either directly or indirectly. The study has revealed that the teachers who were examined believe that both direct and indirect feedback can enhance language acquisition, particularly in the context of writing skills.

#### *EFL teachers' practices*

The practices of delivering corrective feedback on writing performance in terms of specific features including strategies and practices.

The results from the study have indicated that in the teachers' opinions, error correction is not always time-consuming. It depends on the techniques which teachers apply in their classes, for example, highlighting some major errors to give their students feedback in front of the class. Beside that, the type of error is an influential factor for the strategy or technique used. Therefore, teachers should be flexible in selecting the errors and choosing correction method suitably. Additionally, in order to deliver feedback effectively, the teachers should give positive feedback and comments to young learners to enhance their motivation in learning writing. Teachers also encouraged student to make errors in learning process because they could learn many things from these errors.

The study has shown that the participants did pay more attention to these specific errors such as when giving correction. They focus more on grammatical and semantic errors than taking care of semantic and mechanic errors. During the observation time, learners did some semantic and mechanic errors but teachers did not realize or chose to ignore these errors, which might affect the way the students wrote. In general, there was a notable alignment between teachers' perception and their actual practices for direct and indirect feedback. This suggests that the instructors' actions in the error correction task were consistent with what they had previously said in the teacher questionnaire and interview.

## **Conclusion And Implications**

This chapter summarizes major findings of the study. It also discusses pedagogical implications and identifies limitations of the study. From these issues, some suggestions for further research are presented.

### **Major findings**

The study sought to examine the perspectives and methodologies employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers when providing corrective feedback on the writing abilities of young learners at a language center in Cantho city. The investigation focused on two primary areas: the teachers' conceptions of corrective feedback and their actual implementation of corrective feedback strategies. The overall findings demonstrated that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors have a favorable understanding of the significance of errors and corrective feedback in relation to learners' writing skills and language learning as a whole. In addition, the majority of teachers concur that providing corrective comments can be beneficial in enhancing students' writing accuracy and improving their writing performance. Nevertheless, the degree of perceptions and practices was rather low. Teachers possessed knowledge on corrective feedback in relation to errors made by young learners, various forms of corrective feedback, techniques for delivering corrective feedback, and the implementation of corrective feedback in their teaching setting. Concerning the connection between perceptions and practices, there was a significant link observed between teachers' perceptions and their implementation of corrective feedback.

#### *Pedagogical implications*

##### *Implications for administrators*

The findings from the research revealed that EFL teachers held positive beliefs of corrective feedback. Moreover, their perceptions were translated into their practices. There was a positive correlation between teachers' beliefs and practices.

Positive beliefs are fundamental to the practices. In the current study, although teachers' beliefs of corrective feedback were positive in general, the level of beliefs was not really high. In addition, teachers were doubtful of many beliefs, which may affect their teaching experiences in general and corrective feedback in specific. Because of these problems, administrators should hold training programs, seminars, workshops to provide teachers with knowledge in the field of corrective feedback. Through training programs, seminars, workshops, teachers might change or adapt their beliefs as well as get updated with changes in the field of giving correction and feedback to make better teaching and learning.

##### *Implications for EFL teachers*

Based on this research, EFL teachers can investigate the important role of corrective feedback to learners, especially young English learners. Moreover, effective correction and feedback could bring many benefits in teaching and learning, especially it could improve young learners' writing abilities. However, in order to master and deliver corrective feedback effectively, teachers could follow these suggestions.

First and foremost, educators should prioritize the utilization of many forms of feedback within their instructional setting. Due to variations in student intelligence, it is not feasible to provide the same feedback to all students. Therefore, feedback often needs to be tailored to individual students. Hence, teachers should offer

feedback that is most efficacious for the kids. Furthermore, educators should possess knowledge on the benefits of feedback and the most effective methods for its implementation and delivery to their pupils.

An important aspect is for teachers to motivate their students by encouraging them to take risks and providing positive feedback, either orally or in writing (such as praising their work as good or excellent, and acknowledging their excellent word choice). Additionally, teachers can offer rewards to those who perform exceptionally well, and provide extra marks to students who provide correct answers.

Furthermore, teachers could talk or discuss problems in error correction and feedback with colleagues, share experiences in assessing students' writing skill. These activities would make teachers' teaching better and benefit students' learning.

## **Limitations**

The current research has reached its aims. However, it has limitations due to the time constraint.

The first point is the study was conducted with a small size of participants (35 participants for questionnaire and 5 participants for interview). With more participants, the research findings could gain more reliability.

The existing research on corrective feedback in writing has not comprehensively addressed all areas, hence limiting our understanding of EFL teachers' attitudes and practices in this area. This is due to the vast scope of the topic of language assessment and corrective feedback.

## **Suggestions for further research**

As far as the researcher is aware, no studies on providing corrective feedback to young learners in the Mekong Delta have been conducted. Hence, the researcher aspires that the outcomes of this study can serve as a point of reference for future investigations conducted in the same region or comparable circumstances.

Further studies can be conducted on corrective feedback towards other English skills such as speaking, listening, and so on in order to contribute valuable source in teaching career.

Hopefully, the current study and other future research will lead to greater awareness of giving correction and feedback to make better teaching and learning.

## **Acknowledgements**

The research paper would not have been completed without the supports from many people. On this occasion, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of them.

I am deeply thankful to the colleagues who participated with pleasure to fill the questionnaires and cooperated in the interviews and observations.

I would like to send my sincere thanks to my family, especially my parents, who were always by my side and provided me with everything to gain the valuable achievement for my study.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Dear Teachers,

I am Vu Thi Ly, a lecturer of the university in Mekong Delta. I am conducting a study on the topic of how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers perceive and implement corrective feedback in order to improve the writing performance of young learners. The subsequent questionnaire holds significant significance in my investigation. There is no definitive answer. Indicate the column that corresponds to your knowledge and expertise. The responses you provide will serve as the fundamental data for my research. Your information will be securely safeguarded and utilized solely for research purposes.

#### A. Participants' information

1. Gender:  Male       Female
2. Age: .....years old.
3. Your English proficiency: (B1, B1, C1 & C2).....
4. You have taught English for .....years.
5. Your English center: .....
6. Your students' age: .....
7. Your class size: .....

#### *The questionnaire*

This questionnaire consists of 39 statements. Please read each statement and put a check (✓) to indicate your agreement on each.

N.o	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I	Teachers' perceptions toward young learners' errors					
1	Learners' errors are necessary in language learning progress.					
2	Learners' errors can help teachers know how much more the learner needs to learn.					
3	Errors are both useless and harmful for learners.					
4	Errors have no role in writing skill.					
5	Errors may also help to better understand the process of second and foreign language acquisition.					
6	Learners' errors have been generally considered as a negative effect or					

	result, even to be punished in learning process.					
7	Young learners can realize their errors and correct by themselves.					
8	Young learners can realize their errors by their teachers.					
II	Teachers' perception towards corrective feedback in young learners' writing					
9	Corrective feedback is essential in promoting L2/FL learning					
10	In your opinion, writing is the major language skill to young learners.					
11	The effect of corrective feedback can improve students' writing accuracy					
12	Teachers should correct ALL errors that learners make in class, so that they can write correctly.					
13	Teachers should correct learners' errors CLEARLY in the process of writing English.					
14	Through corrective feedback, teachers can assist their learners to realize their errors and mistakes in various ways, maybe directly or indirectly.					
15	Direct corrective feedback is more effective than indirect corrective feedback.					
16	Direct feedback is appropriate for beginner students					
III.	Teachers' strategies on delivering corrective feedback					
17	The teacher should mark only MAJOR errors because it's too time consuming to mark all errors.					

18	The teacher should mark all errors at first, then focus on repeated ones.					
19	First the teacher should respond to content and organization, then on final draft mark errors.					
20	The teacher should only mark some errors, and make general comments at the end.					
21	Teachers should give positive feedback and comments to young learners					
22	Teachers could encourage the students take risks or make errors in learning process.					
23	Teachers should give the complete explanation of the error and the proper rule or pattern.					
24	Grammatical errors were also frequently corrected in Writing tasks.					
25	Spelling errors were also frequently corrected in Writing tasks.					
N.o	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
IV	How often do you give these kinds of corrective feedback?					
26	Grammatical errors					
27	Lexical errors					
28	Semantic errors					
29	Mechanics errors					

1. Grammatical errors: Verb tense, Sentence structure, Coordination, Relative clause, Singular/plural, Verb omission, Subject omission, S-V agreement, Fragment.
2. Lexical errors: Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Article, Preposition, Word form, Interjections.
3. Semantic errors: Word choice (Meaning)
4. Mechanics errors: Punctuation, Capitalization, and Spelling.

N.o	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
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V	How often do you give your corrective feedback?					
30	By indicating only the place where the errors occurred by underling /circling.					
31	By indicating only the place where the errors occurred by underling /circling and give correct form.					
32	By making only comments without correcting errors.					
33	By correcting errors without giving comments.					
34	By letting the student evaluate each other's work in pairs or with whole place.					
35	By discussing the written errors with students.					
36	By correcting errors and writes comments for each student's writing work.					
37	By correcting repeated errors to the whole class.					
38	By correcting only MAJOR errors and ignore other errors.					
39	Teacher ignores students 'errors.					

## Appendix 2

### *Interview (English version)*

1. How long have you taught children?
2. What ages of young learners do you usually teach?

Teachers' perceptions
In your opinion, what is error correction? Is it necessary for children?
Do you think a teacher should correct ALL or SOME errors in student' writing? Why?
Do you think error correction takes a lot of time?
Do you think your students like to be corrected by their teacher or their friend? Why do you know that?
Teachers' practices
How do you correct young learners' writing in class?
What types of corrective feedback do you usually use in class?
Do you prefer direct feedback or indirect feedback? Why?
What types of errors in writing do you usually correct for young learners?

### Appendix 3

#### *Interview (Vietnamese version)*

A. Nhận thức của giáo viên về lỗi và sửa lỗi cho trẻ em
1. Theo ý kiến của bạn, sửa lỗi là gì và việc sửa lỗi này có cần thiết cho trẻ em không?
2. Bạn nghĩ là giáo viên nên sửa tất cả các lỗi hay chỉ một số lỗi trong bài viết của học sinh và tại sao? Bạn có nghĩ việc sửa lỗi thì mất thời gian không?
3. Bạn nghĩ là học sinh của bạn sẽ thích được sửa lỗi từ giáo viên hay từ bạn cùng lớp. Tại sao bạn lại nghĩ như vậy?
B. Thực hành của giáo viên về sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét
4. Bạn thường sửa lỗi bài viết của học sinh là trẻ em như thế nào?
5. Loại sửa lỗi nào mà bạn thường áp dụng trong lớp? sửa lỗi trực tiếp hoặc gián tiếp?
6. Bạn thích loại nào hơn: sửa lỗi gián tiếp hay sửa lỗi trực tiếp? Tại sao?
7. Những loại lỗi nào trong bài Viết mà bạn thường xuyên sửa lỗi cho đối tượng học sinh là trẻ em.

## Appendix 4: Interview Transcript

### *Interview 1: Giáo viên 1*

Người phỏng vấn: Chào bạn, hôm nay mình xin bạn một ít thời gian để trao đổi một số vấn đề về đề tài mình đang thực hiện. Đề tài về việc sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét trong bài viết của đối tượng là trẻ em. Bạn cho mình hỏi:

Bạn đã dạy cho đối tượng trẻ em được bao lâu rồi? Đối tượng giảng dạy chính của bạn ở độ tuổi nào vậy?

GV 1: Em đã đi dạy được 4 năm rồi chị. Em dạy nhiều cấp độ khác nhau, dạy trẻ con thì em dạy các bé từ độ tuổi 9-10 tuổi.

(Câu hỏi 1)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo ý kiến của bạn, sửa lỗi là gì và việc sửa lỗi này có cần thiết cho trẻ em không?

GV 1: Em nghĩ là sửa lỗi là giúp các bé sửa những lỗi mà chúng gặp phải trong quá trình học. E nghĩ sửa lỗi thì rất cần thiết đối với con nít đó chị để giúp các bé cải thiện các kỹ năng.

Người phỏng vấn: Vậy theo em sửa lỗi cho trẻ con thì rất quan trọng và cần thiết đúng không em?

GV 1: Dạ đúng.

Người phỏng vấn: Trong lớp em có thường xuyên sửa lỗi cho các bé không em?

GV 1: Dạ có chị.

(Câu hỏi 2)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo em, là giáo viên thì mình nên sửa hết tất cả các lỗi cho các bé hay chỉ sửa 1 vài lỗi nào đó thôi?

GV 1: Theo em nghĩ, giáo viên chỉ nên sửa 1 vài lỗi thôi chị, không nên sửa hết bởi vì chỉ cần chú trọng vào các lỗi chính quan trọng thôi và sau đó đưa ra nhận xét hoặc góp ý cho học sinh.

Người phỏng vấn: Em có thể cho biết lý do tại sao em chỉ sửa 1 số lỗi chính?

GV1: Em nghĩ nếu giáo viên sửa tất cả các lỗi sẽ làm cho học sinh cảm thấy mất động lực học tập và cảm thấy sợ hãi khi mắc lỗi. Với lại, em cũng nghĩ nếu giáo viên đưa ra những nhận xét mang tính động viên và thân thiện để khuyến khích các em trong việc học tiếng Anh.

(Câu hỏi 3)

Người phỏng vấn: Em có nghĩ là sửa lỗi rất mất thời gian?

GV1: Em nghĩ sửa lỗi không mất quá nhiều thời gian bởi vì em chỉ chú trọng sửa 1 số lỗi chính và đưa ra nhận xét chung cho cả lớp. Nó giúp giáo viên tiết kiệm được nhiều thời gian.

Người phỏng vấn: Vậy theo em, nếu chúng ta sửa tất cả các lỗi sẽ mất rất nhiều thời gian?

GV 1: Dạ đúng vậy.

(Câu hỏi 4)

Người phỏng vấn: Em nghĩ là học trò của em thích được em sửa lỗi cho hay thích được bạn bè cùng lớp sửa lỗi?

GV1: Em nghĩ là đa số đều thích được nhận sửa lỗi và nhận xét từ giáo viên hơn bởi vì các em nghĩ là Giáo viên là người có kiến thức nhiều về Tiếng thì có thể sửa lỗi cho các em tốt hơn.

Người phỏng vấn: Tại sao em biết được điều đó?

GV1: Em biết được do đọc 1 số nghiên cứu trước đây về sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét, loại sửa lỗi được học sinh thích là teacher feedback hơn là peer feedback.

Người phỏng vấn: Theo em học trò của em có thích được em sửa lỗi hơn các bạn trong lớp không?



GV1: Em nghĩ là có.

(Câu hỏi 5)

Người phỏng vấn: Chị sẽ hỏi em về 1 số cách mà em áp dụng để sửa lỗi trong lớp. Em trao đổi và chia sẻ với chị nha?

GV 1: Dạ. E sẵn sàng nói những gì em biết cho chị.

Người phỏng vấn: Trong lớp, em sửa lỗi cho phần Viết của học sinh như thế nào?

GV 1: Dạ, nó còn phụ thuộc vào từng câu, vì vậy em có nhiều cách sửa lỗi và đưa nhận xét khác nhau. Ở trong lớp, em thường dùng phương pháp lập lại để sửa lỗi cho học sinh.

Người phỏng vấn: Em có thể nói cụ thể và cho ví dụ được không em?

GV 1: Ví dụ khi học sinh nói về những sự việc đã xảy ra trong quá khứ, các em thường quên chuyển từ “go” thành “went” thì lúc đó sẽ áp dụng phương pháp lập lại.

Ví dụ học sinh nói: I go to Nha Trang last vacation. Thì em sẽ lập lại câu đó lần nữa và nhấn mạnh vào chữ go và em sẽ nói You GO to Nha Trang last vacation. Em sẽ đưa ra gợi ý để học sinh có thể tự sửa lỗi của mình trước.

Người phỏng vấn: Vậy là em sử dụng cách lập lại và nhấn mạnh lỗi để học sinh có thể tự nhận ra và tự sửa lỗi trước?

GV 1: Dạ đúng vậy.

(Câu hỏi 6)

Người phỏng vấn: Những loại corrective feedback nào mà em hay sử dụng trên lớp.

GV1: Em thường áp dụng sửa lỗi gián tiếp, trực tiếp và cho học sinh sửa lỗi cho nhau.

(Câu hỏi 7)

Người phỏng vấn: Em thích sửa lỗi trực tiếp hay gián tiếp hơn?

GV1: Em nghĩ là cũng tùy vào trường hợp, giáo viên có thể đưa ra sửa lỗi trực tiếp hay gián tiếp. Ví dụ, nếu đó là câu dễ và đơn giản, giáo viên có thể đưa ra gợi ý và sửa lỗi gián tiếp.

Người phỏng vấn: Em có nghĩ là cấp độ của học sinh cũng ảnh hưởng đến việc lựa chọn loại corrective feedback?

GV1: Em đồng ý, cấp độ của người học sẽ ảnh hưởng đến việc lựa chọn loại corrective feedback cho phù hợp.

Ví dụ, đối với học sinh yếu thì em chọn sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét trực tiếp và ngược lại.

(Câu hỏi 8)

Người phỏng vấn: Trong phần viết, thì những loại lỗi nào thì em sẽ thường xuyên sửa cho trẻ em?

GV1: Em thường sửa lỗi về ngữ pháp như các thì, cấu trúc câu hay chính tả.

Người phỏng vấn: Như vậy, việc sửa lỗi thì cần thiết cho học sinh là trẻ em và em thường xuyên sửa lỗi trong lớp. Bên cạnh đó, thì em chỉ tập trung 1 số lỗi chính và đưa ra nhận xét chung cho cả lớp vì em nghĩ điều này giúp em tiết kiệm được thời gian sửa bài. Khi đưa ra nhận xét thì giáo viên nên đưa ra những nhận xét mang tính động viên và góp ý để giúp các em tiến bộ hơn. Theo em, thì học sinh thích được sửa lỗi và nghe nhận xét từ giáo viên hơn là bạn cùng lớp vì sẽ chính xác hơn.

Đối với những phương pháp sửa lỗi trong lớp thì em áp dụng phương pháp lập lại và nhấn mạnh vào lỗi để giúp học sinh có thể tự nhận ra và sửa lỗi. Trên lớp thì em áp dụng các loại sửa lỗi như sửa lỗi gián tiếp, trực tiếp và cho các bạn cùng lớp sửa lỗi với nhau. Theo em, thì việc lựa chọn áp dụng loại sửa lỗi nào thì tùy thuộc vào

loại câu dễ hoặc khó, trình độ của người học. Trong phần Viết, thì em tập trung vào sửa lỗi ngữ pháp, cấu trúc câu, các thì và chính tả.

Cám ơn em thật nhiều về buổi phỏng vấn hôm nay!

*Interview 2: Giáo viên 2*

Người phỏng vấn: Chào bạn, hôm nay mình xin bạn một ít thời gian để trao đổi một số vấn đề về đề tài mình đang thực hiện. Đề tài về việc sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét trong bài viết của đối tượng là trẻ em. Bạn cho mình hỏi:

Bạn đã dạy cho đối tượng trẻ em được bao lâu rồi? Đối tượng giảng dạy chính của bạn ở độ tuổi nào vậy?

GV 2: Chào chị, em dạy kids từ lúc e mới ra trường, cũng được 5 năm rồi chị. Em dạy cho các bé từ 5-10 tuổi.

(Câu hỏi 1)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo ý kiến của bạn, sửa lỗi là gì và việc sửa lỗi này có cần thiết cho trẻ em không?

GV 2: Theo em, sửa lỗi là tìm ra những lỗi mà học sinh mắc phải trong quá trình học, sau đó đưa ra nhận xét vào phần bài làm của học sinh. Điều đó là hoàn toàn cần thiết cho quá trình học.

(Câu hỏi 2)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo em, là giáo viên thì mình nên sửa hết tất cả các lỗi cho các bé hay chỉ sửa 1 vài lỗi nào đó thôi?

GV 2: Theo em thì Giáo viên nên sửa tất cả các lỗi bởi vì trẻ em thì còn rất nhỏ để nhận ra lỗi. Sửa lỗi giúp cho chúng phát triển đặc biệt là cải thiện kỹ năng Viết.

(Câu hỏi 3)

Người phỏng vấn: Em có nghĩ là sửa lỗi rất mất thời gian?

GV 2: Theo em là có

(Câu hỏi 4)

Người phỏng vấn: Em nghĩ là học trò của em thích được em sửa lỗi cho hay thích được bạn bè cùng lớp sửa lỗi?

GV 2: Em thấy đa số là học trò sẽ thích Giáo viên sửa bài hơn vì các em sẽ tin tưởng vào khả năng của Giáo viên hơn là bạn bè của chúng.

Người phỏng vấn: Em có thể dẫn chứng cụ thể cho chị được không?

GV 2: Sau khi cho các bé thực hành viết 1 đoạn văn, em áp dụng peer feedback trước, có nghĩa là cho các bé sẽ sửa lỗi bài của nhau. Trong quá trình đó, em thấy các bé có vẻ không tự tin khi sửa bài cho bạn, luôn luôn nhờ Giáo viên giúp tìm lỗi sai hoặc không biết sửa như thế nào là đúng. Và sau khi đã nhận lại bài viết từ bạn, thì các bé sẽ luôn thắc mắc về những lỗi sai đó và nhờ Giáo viên kiểm tra lần nữa.

(Câu hỏi 5)

Người phỏng vấn: Chị sẽ hỏi em về 1 số cách mà em áp dụng để sửa lỗi trong lớp. Em trao đổi và chia sẻ với chị nha?

GV 2: Em thường áp dụng cách gạch dưới những lỗi sai. Nếu em thấy những lỗi đó khá dễ thì em chỉ gạch dưới và không đưa ra hình thức đúng. Và ngược lại, khi đó là những lỗi khá khó thì em sẽ vừa gạch dưới và vừa sửa lại cho đúng.

(Câu hỏi 6)

Người phỏng vấn: Những loại corrective feedback nào mà em hay sử dụng trên lớp.

GV 2: Hai loại em hay sử dụng nhiều nhất là Peer feedback & Teacher feedback

(Câu hỏi 7)

Người phỏng vấn: Em thích sửa lỗi trực tiếp hay gián tiếp hơn?

GV 2: Theo em thì em thích sửa lỗi gián tiếp bởi vì em nghĩ sửa lỗi gián tiếp sẽ giúp học sinh tự nhận ra lỗi của mình và sẽ nhớ được lâu hơn.

(Câu hỏi 8)

Người phỏng vấn: Trong phần viết, thì những loại lỗi nào thì em sẽ thường xuyên sửa cho trẻ em?

GV 2: Em thường sửa lỗi về từ loại như chủ từ, động từ, tính từ .... Vì em thấy trẻ em hay mắc những lỗi này nhiều khi viết bài.

Người phỏng vấn: Như vậy, theo bạn việc sửa lỗi là tìm ra lỗi của người học mắc phải trong quá trình học và hoàn toàn cần thiết cho đối tượng người học là trẻ em. Đặc biệt, đối với người học là trẻ em thì Giáo viên nên sửa TẤT CẢ các lỗi mà các em mắc phải bởi vì độ tuổi của các em còn nhỏ chưa tự nhận thức được lỗi của bản thân. Bạn cũng nhận thấy là việc sửa lỗi thì mất nhiều thời gian. Theo quan sát của bạn trong quá trình sửa lỗi thì học sinh của bạn thích được Giáo viên sửa lỗi hơn là được bạn cùng lớp sửa vì các em tin tưởng vào khả năng và kiến thức của Giáo viên đứng lớp. Đối với việc sửa lỗi trong bài Viết của trẻ em thì bạn áp dụng hai cách để sửa: đối với những lỗi đơn giản và dễ thì bạn chỉ gạch dưới để tạo cho người học có cơ hội tự nhận ra lỗi; tuy nhiên, nếu đó là những lỗi phức tạp thì bạn sẽ vừa gạch dưới và vừa đưa ra hình thức đúng. Hai loại corrective feedback mà bạn thường áp dụng thường xuyên trong lớp là Teacher feedback & peer feedback. Bên cạnh đó, thì bạn cũng thích sử dụng sửa lỗi gián tiếp vì bạn nghĩ rằng điều này sẽ giúp học viên nhớ sâu và lâu hơn. Trong phần sửa lỗi bài viết, những lỗi bạn hay tập trung nhiều nhất là về từ loại vì bạn nhận thấy học sinh của bạn mắc lỗi phần này là nhiều nhất.

Cám ơn bạn thật nhiều về buổi phỏng vấn hôm nay!

Interview 3: Giáo viên 3

Người phỏng vấn: Chào bạn, hôm nay mình xin bạn một ít thời gian để trao đổi một số vấn đề về đề tài mình đang thực hiện. Đề tài về việc sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét trong bài viết của đối tượng là trẻ em. Bạn cho mình hỏi:

Bạn đã dạy cho đối tượng trẻ em được bao lâu rồi? Đối tượng giảng dạy chính của bạn ở độ tuổi nào vậy?

GV 3: Chào bạn, mình ra trường năm 2009, nhưng mình chỉ mới đi dạy trẻ em khoảng 5 năm. Và đối tượng giảng dạy chính của mình là trẻ em từ 5-10 tuổi.

(Câu hỏi 1)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo ý kiến của bạn, sửa lỗi là gì và việc sửa lỗi này có cần thiết cho trẻ em không?

GV 3: Theo mình thì sửa lỗi là tìm ra những lỗi mà học sinh hay mắc phải trong quá trình học và sửa những lỗi đó sẽ giúp cho các em hiểu nhiều hơn và sử dụng một cách chính xác. Sửa lỗi thì cần thiết cho người học vì khi giáo viên sửa lỗi thì người học có thể tránh những lỗi đó cho lần sau.

(Câu hỏi 2)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo bạn, là giáo viên thì mình nên sửa hết tất cả các lỗi cho các bé hay chỉ sửa 1 vài lỗi nào đó thôi?

GV 3: Giáo viên nên sửa TẤT CẢ các lỗi trong bài viết của học sinh bởi vì kỹ năng Viết đóng vai trò quan trọng trong việc học Tiếng Anh. Học sinh có thể thể hiện ý tưởng, cách dùng từ vựng và ngữ pháp chính xác nếu Giáo viên giúp chúng sửa hết các lỗi.

(Câu hỏi 3)

Người phỏng vấn: Bạn có nghĩ là sửa lỗi rất mất thời gian?

GV 3: Theo mình, việc đó còn tùy thuộc vào loại lỗi mà học sinh mắc phải trong khóa học. Nếu chúng là những lỗi bình thường, thì chỉ cần ít thời gian để sửa thôi. Nhưng nếu đó là những lỗi phức tạp như Ngữ pháp, thì sẽ mất nhiều thời gian để sửa.

(Câu hỏi 4)

Người phỏng vấn: Bạn nghĩ là học trò của bạn thích được bạn sửa lỗi cho hay thích được bạn bè cùng lớp sửa lỗi?

GV 3: Mình nghĩ, học trò của mình thích được mình sửa lỗi hơn bởi vì các em nghĩ Giáo viên có nhiều kiến thức và tin tưởng và những gì Giáo viên dạy. Còn về bạn bè, các em có thể học hỏi nhiều từ bạn bè của mình nhưng kiến thức của các bạn cùng lớp cũng chỉ có giới hạn thôi và chỉ có thể sửa những lỗi nhỏ.

(Câu hỏi 5)

Người phỏng vấn: Bạn cho mình hỏi về 1 số cách mà bạn hay áp dụng để sửa lỗi trong lớp. Bạn vui lòng trao đổi và chia sẻ với mình nha?

GV 3: Trong lớp, mình thường dùng viết chì để sửa lỗi bài viết của học sinh. Nếu học sinh mắc lỗi, mình thường gạch dưới lỗi đó và sửa lại ở bên trên. Nếu trong một câu mà có nhiều lỗi sai, mình sẽ ghi chú lại và viết lại câu đúng hoàn chỉnh ở bên dưới.

(Câu hỏi 6)

Người phỏng vấn: Những loại corrective feedback nào mà bạn hay sử dụng trên lớp?

GV 3: Mình thường áp dụng Teacher feedback, đa số trong lớp thì mình đều áp dụng cách này vì mình nghĩ nó hiệu quả với học sinh của mình và tiết kiệm thời gian.

(Câu hỏi 7)

Người phỏng vấn: Bạn thích sửa lỗi trực tiếp hay gián tiếp hơn?

GV 3: Nó tùy thuộc vào đối tượng người học. Nếu người học của mình là người lớn thì mình sẽ thích áp dụng sửa lỗi và đưa ra phản hồi gián tiếp hơn bởi vì ở độ tuổi này thì người học có thể tự nhận ra lỗi của mình, nhìn lại lỗi và tránh lặp lại những lỗi đó.

Còn đối với trẻ em thì, mình sẽ áp dụng sửa lỗi trực tiếp cho từng học sinh. Mình sẽ chỉ rõ và giải thích kỹ những lỗi đó để các em có thể nắm rõ. Mình nghĩ đối với trẻ con, nếu bạn sửa lỗi gián tiếp, chúng ra rất dễ dàng quên và phớt lờ những lỗi đã được sửa.

(Câu hỏi 8)

Người phỏng vấn: Trong phần viết, thì những loại lỗi nào thì bạn sẽ thường xuyên sửa cho trẻ em?

GV 3: Thật ra, trong bài Viết có rất nhiều lỗi mà người học mắc phải như ngữ pháp, từ vựng, chính tả, từ loại, .... Đặc biệt đối với trẻ em thì chúng thường mắc những lỗi về chia thì, giới từ, cách chọn từ, .....

Người phỏng vấn: Như vậy, theo bạn việc sửa lỗi là tìm ra lỗi của người học mắc phải trong quá trình học và việc sửa lỗi sẽ giúp cho học sinh hiểu nhiều hơn và sử dụng chính xác hơn nên việc sửa lỗi là hoàn toàn cần thiết, đặc biệt là với trẻ em. Hơn thế nữa, Giáo viên nên sửa TẤT CẢ các lỗi mà trẻ em mắc phải trong bài Viết vì kỹ năng Viết rất quan trọng trong quá trình học tiếng Anh. Việc này sẽ giúp các em viết đúng và tránh được những lỗi sai trong bài Viết tiếp theo. Theo ý kiến của bạn, việc sửa lỗi có mất thời gian hay không thì còn phải tùy thuộc vào đó là lỗi đơn giản hay phức tạp. Bên cạnh đó thì bạn nhận thấy là học sinh của bạn thích được

Giáo viên sửa lỗi hơn là các bạn cùng lớp vì các em tin tưởng vào kiến thức của Giáo viên. Cũng từ lý do trên, thì bạn thường áp dụng Teacher feedback trong quá trình sửa lỗi. Bên cạnh đó, đối với đối tượng người học là trẻ em thì bạn sử dụng sửa lỗi và đưa ra phản hồi một cách trực tiếp cho từng em.

Cuối cùng, các lỗi mà bạn thường sửa trong bài Viết của trẻ em thì liên quan đến ngữ pháp và từ loại như cách chia thì, cách dùng từ cho đúng.

Cám ơn bạn thật nhiều về buổi phỏng vấn hôm nay!

Interview 4: Giáo viên 4

Người phỏng vấn: Chào bạn, hôm nay mình xin bạn một ít thời gian để trao đổi một số vấn đề về đề tài mình đang thực hiện. Đề tài về việc sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét trong bài viết của đối tượng là trẻ em. Bạn cho mình hỏi:

Bạn đã dạy cho đối tượng trẻ em được bao lâu rồi? Đối tượng giảng dạy chính của bạn ở độ tuổi nào vậy?

GV 4: Em đã đi dạy được 7 năm rồi chị. Em dạy trẻ con ở các độ tuổi từ 8-13 tuổi.

(Câu hỏi 1)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo ý kiến của bạn, sửa lỗi là gì và việc sửa lỗi này có cần thiết cho trẻ em không?

GV 4: Theo em, sửa lỗi là sửa những lỗi mà trẻ em mắc phải trong quá trình học và nó rất cần thiết.

(Câu hỏi 2)

Người phỏng vấn: Theo em, là giáo viên thì mình nên sửa hết tất cả các lỗi cho các bé hay chỉ sửa 1 vài lỗi nào đó thôi?

GV 4: Em nghĩ giáo viên chỉ nên sửa MỘT VÀI lỗi mà học sinh mắc phau thôi, vì nếu giáo viên sửa lỗi quá nhiều sẽ làm cho các em thiếu sự tự tin và mất đi động lực học tập.

(Câu hỏi 3)

Người phỏng vấn: Em có nghĩ là sửa lỗi rất mất thời gian?

GV 4: Thật ra sửa lỗi không thật sự mất thời gian đâu, nó còn tùy thuộc vào từng loại lỗi và lỗi đó nghiêm trọng như thế nào.

(Câu hỏi 4)

Người phỏng vấn: Em nghĩ là học trò của em thích được em sửa lỗi cho hay thích được bạn bè cùng lớp sửa lỗi?

GV 4: Em nghĩ là các em thích được em sửa lỗi cho vì em có thể quan sát được điều đó để thể hiện trên khuôn mặt của các em.

(Câu hỏi 5)

Người phỏng vấn: Chị sẽ hỏi em về 1 số cách mà em áp dụng để sửa lỗi trong lớp. Em trao đổi và chia sẻ với chị nha?

GV 4: Em thường gạch dưới các lỗi và sửa chúng. Thành thạo em chỉ gạch dưới và để cho học sinh tự sửa lỗi.

(Câu hỏi 6)

Người phỏng vấn: Những loại corrective feedback nào mà em hay sử dụng trên lớp?

GV 4: Em sử dụng cả 2 cách: sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét trực tiếp và gián tiếp.

(Câu hỏi 7)

Người phỏng vấn: Em thích sửa lỗi trực tiếp hay gián tiếp hơn?

GV 4: Em thích sử dụng đưa ra nhận xét gián tiếp hơn, nhưng đối với trẻ em thì chúng ít khi tự nhận ra được lỗi của mình vì vậy em sử dụng cách sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét trực tiếp.

(Câu hỏi 8)

Người phỏng vấn: Trong phần viết, thì những loại lỗi nào thì em sẽ thường xuyên sửa cho trẻ em?

GV 4: Em thường sửa những lỗi về Ngữ pháp, Tự vựng và Ngữ nghĩa.

Người phỏng vấn: Như vậy, theo bạn thì sửa lỗi là sửa những lỗi mà trẻ em mắc phải trong quá trình học và nó rất cần thiết. Tuy nhiên, giáo viên chỉ nên sửa một số lỗi mà học sinh mắc phải thôi, vì nếu giáo viên sửa lỗi quá nhiều sẽ làm cho các em thiếu sự tự tin và mất đi động lực học tập. Ngoài ra, bạn cho rằng sửa lỗi thì không thật sự mất nhiều thời gian, nó còn tùy thuộc vào mức độ nghiêm trọng của lỗi đó. Theo bạn quan sát thì học trò của bạn thích được bạn sửa lỗi hơn là từ các bạn cùng lớp. Thông thường, khi sửa lỗi bạn sẽ gạch dưới và sửa lại lỗi đó, nhưng đôi khi bạn chỉ gạch dưới và để cho học trò tự nhận ra và tự sửa lỗi. Trong quá trình sửa lỗi và đưa ra nhận xét thì bạn áp dụng cả 2 cách là trực tiếp và gián tiếp. Đặc biệt, đối với đối tượng là trẻ em thì bạn sử dụng sửa lỗi và nhận xét gián tiếp nhiều hơn vì các em ít khi tự nhận ra được lỗi của mình. Khi sửa lỗi bài Viết của các em, bạn thường sửa những lỗi về Ngữ pháp, Tự vựng và Ngữ nghĩa.

Cám ơn bạn thật nhiều về buổi phỏng vấn hôm nay!

### Appendix 5: Descriptive Statistic Tests

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.898	39

#### Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
S1	4.657	.6835	35
S2	4.629	.5983	35
S3	2.114	.7960	35
S4	1.800	.5314	35
S5	3.714	.7504	35
S6	1.800	.5314	35
S7	2.771	1.0314	35
S8	4.029	.5137	35
S9	3.943	.4161	35
S10	2.714	.9258	35
S11	4.314	.4710	35
S12	3.200	1.1324	35
S13	4.314	.4710	35
S14	4.029	.4528	35
S15	3.657	.8023	35
S16	3.686	.9322	35
S17	3.200	.8677	35
S18	3.771	.8432	35
S19	3.600	.7746	35
S20	3.200	.9010	35
S21	3.914	.9813	35
S22	4.086	.2840	35
S23	3.857	.6482	35
S24	3.943	.5392	35
S25	3.943	.4161	35
S26	4.229	.5983	35
S27	3.914	.7017	35
S28	3.714	.8250	35
S29	3.743	.9185	35
S30	2.800	.9941	35
S31	4.086	.5621	35



S32	1.914	.8869	35
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Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
S33	1.914	.8869	35
S34	3.200	.7593	35
S35	1.914	.8869	35
S36	3.943	.6391	35
S37	4.086	.6122	35
S38	2.514	.8869	35
S39	1.457	.6108	35

## Religious, Ghost, and Spiritual Concepts of Society in Folklore Horror Film in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** Horror films are a trend currently attracting film lovers' attention worldwide and in Indonesia. This trend not only affects the market but also people's understanding of what they enjoy. This people's understanding is based on previous research revealing that horror films influence human perspective. Most Indonesian horror films use folklore, included in the rural-occult sub-genre, as the story's core. In the rural-occult subgenre, the concepts that always appear in the story are religious, ghost, and spiritual concepts. Therefore, this research aims to explain people's conceptions of religion, ghosts, and spirituality using Indonesia's rural-occult horror film approach. This research uses survey and interview methods to extract data. Apart from that, this research uses statistical correlation tests and literature analysis. This research shows that rural-occult horror films in Indonesia can logically reduce spiritual concepts. Reduction in spiritual concepts is reinforced by scenes or backgrounds in rural-occult horror stories, which directly show a reduction in religious, and ghost concepts.

**Keywords:** Horror film, Religious, Ghost, Spiritual

**Citation:** Pandanari, D. S., Wibowo, W. H., Firmansyah, S., & Ardani, Y, T. (2024). Religious, Ghost, and Spiritual Concepts of Society in Folklore Horror Film in Indonesia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1227-1236), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Horror films are a film genre that is popular throughout the world. In Indonesia, horror films are produced

yearly to meet market demand for tense entertainment. Like other entertainment, horror films are produced in various media, including horror films, series, and even reality show video content on YouTube. Horror is a film genre that expresses discomfort and disturbing feelings (Strinati, 2000). Horror films focus on evoking emotions of fear, horror, and tension (Indriani, 2019). These films aim to bring out one or more specific negative impacts. The negative impact in question is terror, disgust, supernatural and vile things which, paradoxically, can still be digested and enjoyed by the audience (Hick, 2022). This means that each negative effect is related to each other. This negative effect is caused by feelings of discomfort or fear, which are one of the characteristics of humans. This type of human fear can be classified under the horror film subgenre. There are nine horror genres, including rural, cosmic, apocalyptic, crime, erotic, occult, psychological, surreal, and visceral (Prohászková, 2012). In this research, the film boundaries we will include as parameters are the occult horror and rural horror subgenres. Occult horror is a horror that focuses on exorcism, the arrival of the antichrist or anti-God, cults, spiritualism, curses, and so on, usually referred to as the occult. Meanwhile, rural horror is a horror that focuses on attacks by ghosts or demons that occur in people's daily lives, usually in village communities. These two horror subgenres are included in the folklore horror category because these stories contain familiar stories originating from society. These two genres intersect because rural horror can be included in its story content about occult horror.

In Indonesia, of the many film genres that have developed, horror is one of the most developed (Sukatno, et.al., 2016). This is supported by a survey conducted by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC), which was presented in 2020 at a film discussion event with the theme Indonesian Youth and Film Watching Behavior. The survey results show that the horror film genre in Indonesia ranks second in national and foreign film genres that young Indonesians like. Horror films in Indonesia are proliferating, this is because the fundamental basis of Indonesian society is religious, so horror films with occult horror themes are easily accepted by Indonesian society. Apart from that, Indonesia also has many folk tales related to mystical matters, so horror films with rural horror themes are a theme Indonesian people like. These two horror sub-genres are the most popular because these two sub-genres are closely related to the daily life and culture of Indonesian society. Some of the films that are popular in Indonesia are *Pengabdian Satan 1* (2017), *Pengabdian Satan 2* (2022), *Makmum: The Movie* (2019), *Makmum 2* (2021), and *Khanzab* (2023). Occult and rural horror themes are more popular because they have film settings or stories close to society. People can better feel the horror presented in these films.

In general, the reason people like horror films is that they give rise to specific feelings. This type of feeling is explained by Martin in the concept of excitation transfer, for example, that humans obtain pleasure through feelings of tension (this theory might also explain the enjoyment of films other than those in the horror genre that involve tension) (Martin, 2019). Horror films often present a tense feeling, as if the audience feels threatened by supernatural or spiritual phenomena. Indirectly, the horror felt in horror films, especially those with rural and occult horror sub-themes, is that people accept part of the story as the experience of the characters in the film who are connected to another world or what in general public understanding is called the spiritual world. When a threat in a horror film has ended, the negative feelings within us change to euphoria (feelings of joy) because the tension is over. An essential aspect of this theory is that enjoyment is derived from the level of

adverse effects formed while watching a horror film and from the positive effect resulting from ending the threat in the film.

In another article by Yang and Zhang, there are three reasons why people like horror films. The first reason is to experience stimulation. The stimulation can occur when someone watches a horror film, and several nerve impulses become active. Fear can trigger the release of adrenaline, causing a surge of energy sensations in the body. The second reason is that when watching a horror film, someone gets a new experience. When watching a horror film, the experiences do not happen in real life. The third reason is that horror films can help us (in a safe way) satisfy our curiosity about the dark side of the human soul or things that might exist in a world other than the human world (Yang & Zhang., 2021).

Apart from that, people may like watching horror films because horror films have an appeal that is closely related to the soul of Indonesian people. The soul of Indonesian society is considered to be attached to Eastern culture in the form of mysticism, taboos, spiritualism, and the existence of supernatural beings and events. This is based on the assumption that each region and ethnic group in Indonesia has superstitious beliefs and mystery stories telling supernatural events; some film producers consider horror stories to form a cultural characteristic and even become an asset to Indonesian culture (Heeren, 2012).

Apart from superstition, Indonesian people also have a close bond with divinity. Even the use of religious devices (tools and human activities) in the form of religion is always present in Indonesian horror films. The existence of religious power is the center of problem-solving in Indonesian horror films, namely, to get the film passed by the Film Censorship Board. This happened in the new order, especially to maintain the nation's moral values so that they were by the ideology in Indonesia, namely "belief in the one and only God" (Heeren, 2017). Even after the New Order, religious values remained in Indonesian horror films. However, there is a changing depiction of things related to religiosity; for example, religious leaders who are defeated by the power of Satan, when they pray, Satan remains disturbed so that during prayer, they can become possessed by Satan. This happened because many censorship regulations and New Order guidelines for film production became obsolete during the Reformation or post-New Order era (Debby, 2021).

From several explanations regarding the closeness of Indonesian society to horror films, three concepts always exist in Indonesian society, namely ghosts, religion, and spirituality. Ghosts are manifestations of dying people (Baker & Bader, 2014). Furthermore, religion is a belief in divine nature or invisible power, which includes nature, manifestations, and everything that happens to living creatures (Chuhwanglim et.al., 2016). Lastly, spirituality is the quality and meaning of human life, which can connect with God, nature, and other things around us (Paul & Treschuk, 2020). From this definition, religion can be interpreted as part of human spirituality.

Furthermore, from several Indonesian people's conceptions regarding horror films, the aim of this research is first to conduct an examination of Indonesian people's conceptions regarding religion, ghosts, and spirituality.

The second objective is to explain that some scenes or background stories in Indonesian rural-occult horror films show a reduction in religious, ghost, and spiritual concepts. The third aim is to show that if the reduction of religious concepts in rural-occult horror films is related to Indonesian society's conception of religion, ghosts, and spirituality, this will have implications for the reduction of spiritual concepts.

**Method**

This research is based on two methods: first, a quantitative method to understand or conceptualize Indonesian society regarding ghosts, religiosity, and spirituality in two genres of horror films widely shown in Indonesia. These two genres are essential considerations in this research because the percentage of occult and rural horror film genres are Indonesia's two most prominent genres.

Data was collected through an online questionnaire survey of Indonesian people who watched horror films. The analysis of this data used the chi-square correlation test between propositions stating the concepts of ghosts, religiosity, and spirituality. The second method is qualitative to see whether there is a reduction in ghosts, religiosity, and spirituality in rural-occult horror films selling well in Indonesia. Data collection using this method is based on film studies and literature studies regarding horror films.

**Results**

**Horror Film Data 2020-2023**

The percentage appears from tabulated data from 76 Indonesian horror films in cinemas and subscribed screening media in 2020-2023. There are at least 48.7% of horror films in the rural genre, 38.2% of horror films in the occult genre, 6.6% of horror films in the crime genre, 5.3% of horror films in the visceral genre, and 1.3% percent in other genres such as psychological horror and erotic horror. Rural and occult horror films reach the highest numbers because they are close to the audience's daily lives, such as a connection with traditional customs, the spread of folklore, or urban legends, which are still spread by word of mouth or are still discussed on podcasts or YouTube.

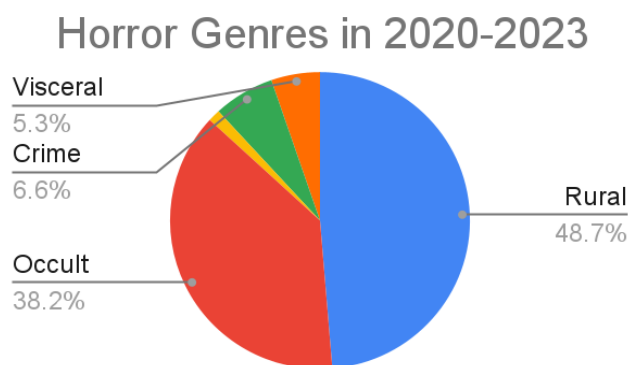


Figure 1. Percentage of Indonesian horror genre in 2020-2023.

*Data on the Indonesian people's conception of the relationship between religiosity, ghosts and spirituality*

Based on the online questionnaire survey, there are two primary questions regarding the concept of ghosts, religiosity, and spirituality. The first question was, "Do you feel that belief in ghosts or creatures other than living creatures indicates belief in other existences such as God, angels, and so on?". This question contains the proposition, "If you believe in the concept of ghosts, then you believe in religious concepts (God, angels, and so on)." Symbolically, it can be written as "G→R" for "G" is the ghost concept and "R" is the religious concept. The results of the first question are then related to the second question. The second question was, "Do you agree that belief in ghosts and spirits is part of the development of belief in a spiritual world?" This question contains the proposition, "If you believe in spiritual concepts, then you believe in ghost concepts." Symbolically it can be written as "S→G" for "S" is a spiritual concept and "G" is a ghost concept. The results of the questionnaire can be seen in Figure 2.

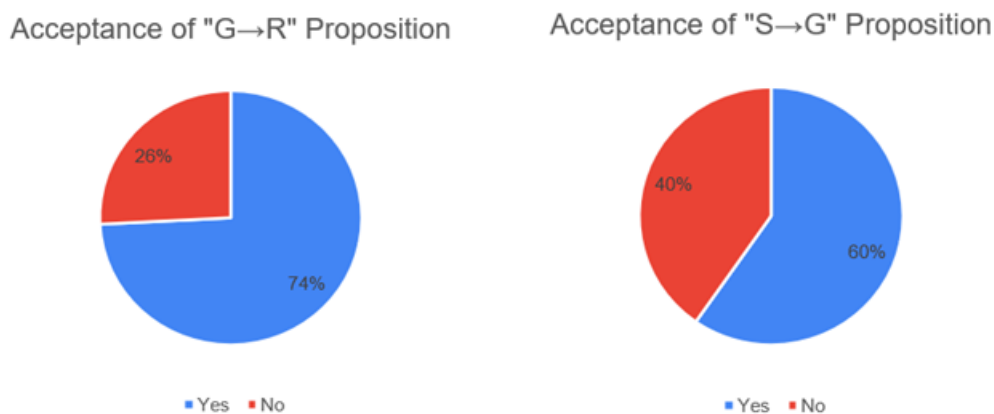


Figure 2. Questionnaire results and relationship between 3 variables.

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that the acceptance rate for the proposition "G → R" is 74%, meaning that 74% of respondents stated that it was true that "if you believe in the concept of ghosts, then you believe in religious concepts (God, angels and so on)." Meanwhile, the acceptance rate for the proposition "S → G" was 60%, meaning that 60% of respondents stated that it was true that "if you believe in spiritual concepts, then you believe in ghost concepts." The results of accepting the proposition "G→R" and the proposition "S→G" are pretty significant, but there is a difference of 14%. So the results of accepting this proposition also need to be tested to see whether the proposition "G→R" and the proposition "S→G" have a relationship (respondents who state that the proposition "G→R" is true also state that the proposition "S→G" is true or vice versa respondents who stated that the proposition "G→R" was true also stated that the proposition "S→G" was false).

The SPSS chi-square test was conducted to determine the relationship between these propositions. The hypothesis in this test is Ho: There is no relationship between the proposition "if you believe in the concept of ghosts, then you believe in religious concepts (God, angels, and so on)" and the proposition "if you believe in spiritual concepts then you believe in the concept of ghosts" and the alternative hypothesis (Ha): there is a

relationship between the proposition "if you believe in the concept of ghosts then you believe in religious concepts (God, angels and so on)" and the proposition "if you believe in spiritual concepts then you believe in the concept of ghosts." The results of the chi-square test can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Chi-Square Test Result

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.242 <sup>a</sup>	1	0.007

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.45.

Table 1 in the information section shows that the chi-square test assumptions have met the requirements. No cells have an expected frequency below five, and the lowest expected frequency is 6.45. From Table 1 we also get an Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) value of 0.007, which means the Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) value is smaller than the critical limit value of 0.05. Based on these data, a decision can be made that H<sub>0</sub> (initial hypothesis) is rejected and H<sub>a</sub> (alternative hypothesis) is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the proposition "if you believe in the concept of ghosts, then you believe in religious concepts (God, angels, and so on)" and the proposition "if you believe in spiritual concepts, then you believe in the concept of ghosts."

## Discussion

In this research, we try to prove that if the reduction of religious concepts in rural-occult horror films is related to Indonesian society's conception of religion, ghosts and spirituality, this will have implications for the reduction of spiritual concepts. In short, reducing the concept of religiosity also reduces the concept of spirituality. The initial assumption of the thesis is that horror films influence various human perspectives (Rieger & Hofer, 2017). Apart from influencing people's perspective, horror films often also influence the real life personal experiences of the audience (Khan, et.al., 2020). More specifically, films even play an important role in forming the spirituality of the audience (Rossiter, 1996). Departing from the increasing prevalence of religious devices (tools and people) used to strengthen the terrifying impression of Indonesian horror films. This terrifying impression has implications for the reduction of religious concepts in Indonesian occult horror films. Meanwhile, the next thesis is in accordance with the findings of this research, stating that the respondents believe in the concept of ghosts and therefore believe in religious concepts (God, angels and so on). Thus, it can be concluded that initially society's acceptance of horror films was a sign that society had confidence in religious teachings. The public does not have a problem with scenes of prayer, supplication and the use of prayer devices in rural-occult horror films. However, because some films highlight religious teachings inappropriately as explained above, some films actually position the teachings of reduced religiosity.

The next thesis was also obtained from the findings of this research, it was stated that the respondents believed



in spiritual concepts and therefore believed in the concept of ghosts. In this way, it can be explained that the spiritual concept is the concept that underlies the concept of ghosts or that all types of beliefs about ghosts are rooted in spiritual beliefs. Spiritual beliefs are deeply rooted in Indonesian society, several rituals are carried out to summon ghosts as a medium of communication with ancestors (Leong, 2022). Apart from that, the closeness of Indonesian society to mythological beliefs also indicates a strong belief in spiritual entities (Kurniasih & Krismonita, 2023).

The reduction of the concept of religiosity, for example, is shown in the scene where religious equipment (tools and people) are only used to ward off ghosts. In fact, several films show scenes that religious equipment (tools and people) are inferior to the power of ghosts. One clear example is in the film *Makmum* (2019) which depicts that ghosts can participate in the congregational prayer process, and even carry out terror while humans are praying. Apart from that, there are many features where it is depicted that holy locations such as mosques or prayer rooms can be locations of terror from ghost figures. From this kind of depiction it appears that the ghost figure that appears together with certain religious equipment (tools and people) seems to be above the power of religion, or at least weakens the religious equipment so that the religious equipment loses its sacred value.

The reduction of the concept of ghosts is a phenomenon that has occurred even before the film medium became popular. One example occurred at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries in Australia when there was an unusual social practice, namely 'playing the ghost'. These social phenomena are forms of deviation from the teachings of eschatology and belief in life after death (Waldron & Waldron, 2016). This research further shows that ghost films that are commonly watched in Indonesia reduce people's understanding of ghosts. Ghosts are generally believed to be spirits or souls of deceased humans. Various religions have teachings specifically regarding post-life spirits, including dogmas regarding heaven, nirvana, purgatory, and so on. Beliefs about ghosts help us explore the possibilities of human limits and help us to face the reality of death (Clack, 2023). However, in horror films, ghosts can interfere in human affairs, even in the form of violence such as terror and attacks. Ghosts or spirits of deceased humans who are believed to be a journey towards purity and peace of mind are constructed as other things that can be a terror for humans living in the world (Noer, 2021). This allows horror films to reduce religious teachings as well as reduce the general public's view of human spirits or ghosts. Further evidence in this research is that when the meaning of religiosity and the concept of post-life souls (ghosts) is reduced, the value of spirituality is also reduced through rural-occult horror films. This can be seen through the depiction of rural-occult horror films that depict death as a frightening thing. In the general conception of Indonesian people who adhere to religion, death is the fate of all living creatures. It is the gateway from the natural world to the afterlife or reincarnation. This is also similar to the conception of death according to indigenous tribes in Indonesia (Maruf & Tanduk, 2021). Apart from that, a form of reduction of spiritual concepts is also shown in the scene where local belief rituals are used to summon ghosts. One clear example is in the film *Mangujiwo* (2020), which uses Javanese religious rituals to summon ghosts. Javanese rituals are principles or forms of guidance that help to connect with and observe the existence of God (Wasisto, 2021). This is a form of misappropriation of the meaning of Javanese culture (Amaliyah, 2021).

The previous explanation explained that there is a reduction in religious, ghost, and spiritual concepts in rural-occult horror films. Next, we try to prove logically that if the reduction of religious concepts in rural-occult horror films is related to the Indonesian people's conception of religion, ghosts, and spirituality, this will have implications for the reduction of spiritual concepts. This means that we need to assume that there is indeed a reduction in the concept of religion in Indonesian society. This reduced religiosity teaching can be symbolized as "-R," meaning a reduced religious concept. If this reduction of the religious concept is linked to the proposition " $G \rightarrow R$ ," then logically, based on modus tollens, it can be concluded that "-G" means the concept of ghosts is reduced. The reduction of this ghost concept is "-G" if it is linked to the proposition " $S \rightarrow G$ ," then logically, based on modus tollens, it can be concluded that "-S" means a reduced spiritual concept. Briefly, this argument can be written with the following premises:

1. -R
  2.  $G \rightarrow R$
  3.  $S \rightarrow G$
- $\therefore -S$

## Conclusion

This research shows that the two horror subgenres, rural horror and occult horror (folklore horror) in Indonesia, feature scenes or story backgrounds that reduce religious concepts. Suppose this reduction in religious concepts is linked to the proposition of ghosts and spirituality in Indonesian society. In that case, it will have implications for reducing the concept of ghosts and spirituality. This reduction is reinforced by scenes or backgrounds in rural-occult horror stories that show a reduction in religious, ghost, and spiritual concepts.

## Limitation and Recommendations

Several limitations to this study need to be addressed. First, this research collected data through an online questionnaire survey of 62 Indonesian people. The number of questionnaire respondents may influence the level of analysis of conditions close to reality. Second, the questionnaire did not discuss or ask the respondents' level of reduction in religious, ghost, and spiritual concepts. This research only discusses accepting the relationship between religious, ghost and spiritual concepts in Indonesian society. This means this research does not discuss the quantity of reduction in religious, ghost, and spiritual concepts in society. Therefore, further research needs to be carried out that discusses the relationship between watching rural-occult horror films and the level of reduction in religious, ghost, and spiritual concepts in Indonesian society on a broader scale.

## Acknowledgements

This research could be carried out thanks to the 2022 Bina Nusantara University Internal Grant. Without support and assistance from agencies, this research would not produce conclusions and proposals for the world of

education.

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## Exploring the Role of TikTok and Instagram in Promoting Environmental Health and Wellbeing

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**Abstract:** The qualitative study explored into the influential roles of TikTok and Instagram in promoting environmental health and well-being through the dissemination of user-generated content. Acknowledging the potential of these platforms to facilitate extensive information transmission and engage diverse audiences, the research was meticulously conducted. Thematic and content analysis methods were utilized to systematically scrutinize the data. The primary objective was to explore the underlying motivations, experiences, and impacts on both content creators and users involved in discussions related to environmental health. The richness and diversity of the data were ensured through regular hashtag searches, content sampling techniques, and rigorous data collection methods. Valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of content creators and users in the realm of environmental content development and engagement were obtained through a series of interviews. The study's findings highlighted the capacity of TikTok and Instagram to promote environmental awareness, instigate significant behavioral changes, and foster virtual communities focused on environmental issues. This research significantly advanced the understanding of these platforms as effective tools for environmental communication, promoting sustainable behaviors, and nurturing a collective sense of responsibility towards the well-being of our planet.

**Keywords:** Tiktok, Instagram, Environmental Health, Wellbeing

**Citation:** Berewot, J.(2024). Exploring the Role of TikTok and Instagram in Promoting Environmental Health and Wellbeing. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1237-1253), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become influential tools for disseminating information, fostering relationships, and shaping public opinion in the digital communication landscape (Kirby & Özkula, 2023). With billions of users globally, these platforms have evolved beyond entertainment and social connection to actively engaging individuals, communities, and organizations in dialogues and initiatives related to social and environmental issues (Cohen et al., 2019). In the context of environmental health and wellness, these platforms play a significant role in promoting public awareness, involvement, and action (Han & Xu, 2020). They offer promptness, availability, and the capacity to engage diverse audiences, making them effective for disseminating environmental knowledge and fostering sustainable practices (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017).

TikTok, known for its short-form video content and user-generated engagement, has gained popularity, particularly among younger demographics, and serves as a forum for discussions on environmental subjects and sustainability (Perea et al., 2021). On the other hand, Instagram has transformed into a versatile platform encompassing various media forms, enabling the dissemination of information on sustainable lifestyles, environmentally friendly products, and conservation initiatives (Lee & Weder, 2021). Both platforms rely on user-generated content, providing diverse perspectives on environmental health and well-being, and employing novel and captivating approaches to advocacy (Radzitskaya, 2024). Scholarly investigations have highlighted the capacity of social media, including TikTok and Instagram, to enhance environmental consciousness, provide instruction, and activate individuals and groups (Zhu et al., 2022). However, the dynamic nature of social media platforms constantly redefines the realm of online environmental discourse, making it essential to understand the influence of user-generated information for effective environmental communication (Skinner et al., 2023). These platforms have emerged as prominent tools for environmental communication due to their focus on visual narratives and user-generated content, making them valuable for understanding public opinion on environmental issues (Fagerholm et al., 2023). In conclusion, TikTok and Instagram have significantly impacted the promotion of environmental health and wellness through their capacity to engage diverse audiences, disseminate information, and foster sustainable practices. Understanding the influence of user-generated content on these platforms is crucial for developing effective strategies for environmental communication.

### **Research Questions**

This study is driven by the following overarching research inquiries:

1. To what extent do TikTok and Instagram facilitate the advancement of environmental health and wellbeing via user-generated content?
2. What are the primary storylines, themes, and patterns observed in the dissemination of environmental information on the social media platforms TikTok and Instagram?
3. What is the influence of user-generated environmental material on TikTok and Instagram in terms of enhancing knowledge and shaping behaviours pertaining to environmental health and well-being?

### *Research Objectives:*

The objective of this study is to:

1. Perform an extensive qualitative analysis of environmental information provided by users on the social media platforms TikTok and Instagram.
2. Analyse and classify the narratives, themes, and patterns that are commonly seen in environmental content on various social media platforms.
3. Evaluate the extent to which user-generated environmental content on TikTok and Instagram contributes to the promotion of environmental health and welfare.

To achieve these objectives, this study employed a qualitative analysis approach, incorporating methods such as content scraping, thematic analysis, and interviews users. By exploring the role of TikTok and Instagram in environmental communication, this research aimed to provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of social media's impact on environmental health and wellbeing, contributing to both academic scholarship and practical efforts to address environmental challenges.

## Literature Review

### The Role of Social Media in Environmental Communication

Social media platforms have revolutionized communication, information sharing, and engagement with environmental issues. This comprehensive analysis explores the pivotal significance of social media in environmental communication and its influence on promoting environmental awareness and education. Social media serves as a swift and extensive medium for distributing environmental information, keeping the general population informed about significant occurrences and preservation initiatives (McComas & Trumbo, 2001). Additionally, it plays a crucial role in promoting public participation, mobilizing support, organizing events, and facilitating debates for environmental organizations and activists (Hansen & Machin, 2018). Moreover, social media platforms, such as Twitter, are utilized for real-time environmental monitoring, providing vital information during catastrophes (Mendoza et al., 2010). Furthermore, social media platforms facilitate the humanization of environmental narratives through the sharing of personal anecdotes, visual representations, and audiovisual content, fostering proactive engagement (Stephens & Koontz, 2017). They empower citizens to become environmental advocates and reporters, exposing environmental injustices and holding polluters accountable (Hester & Gibson, 2017). Social media influencers have become influential figures in environmental communication, bridging the gap between experts and the general public (Jin et al., 2019). However, challenges such as the spread of misinformation and fake news on social media pose significant obstacles (Peters et al., 2018). Misinformation can hinder public understanding of complex topics like climate change, emphasizing the importance of countering misinformation and promoting credible sources. Ethical considerations regarding user privacy and data ethics also arise in the context of environmental campaigns and organizations (Levin et al., 2017). In summary, social media platforms have transformed environmental communication by providing accessible, interactive, and engaging avenues for information dissemination and public engagement. They empower individuals, humanize environmental stories, and facilitate real-time monitoring, but challenges like misinformation and data ethics must be addressed.

#### *Environmental Awareness and Education Through Social Media*

Environmental awareness and education are crucial components of addressing environmental challenges. Social media platforms have become dynamic tools for increasing environmental literacy, reaching diverse audiences, and fostering informed decision-making. Social media platforms offer diverse content formats, from text to videos and infographics, catering to different learning preferences (Walker et al., 2019). They enable targeted messaging, allowing organizations to tailor content to specific audiences (Molnar & McManus, 2017).



Gamification techniques, like quizzes and challenges, engage users and facilitate experiential learning (Hamari et al., 2014). According to Robbins and Krueger (2019), the utilisation of visual storytelling on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok has proven to be highly effective, since it enhances the relatability of environmental issues.

In addition, social media platforms facilitate the establishment of virtual communities and discussion forums, enabling users to engage in information sharing and seek guidance pertaining to environmental subjects (Hartmann et al., 2015). Citizen science programmes involve the active participation of individuals who contribute data to scientific study, as highlighted by Newman et al. (2012). Nevertheless, the copious volume of data available on social media platforms might result in an overwhelming influx of information, hence underscoring the imperative for individuals to possess media literacy and critical thinking abilities (Koburger et al., 2021). Assessing the effects of environmental education conducted through social media platforms presents a formidable yet necessary task. Metrics such as engagement rates offer valuable insights into the transmission of content. However, in order to evaluate long-term changes in behaviour and attitudes, it is necessary to employ more thorough methodologies (Cheng et al., 2021). Wang et al. (2020) utilise surveys, assessments, and qualitative interviews as research methods to evaluate the efficacy of environmental education initiatives facilitated through social media platforms.

In summary, social media platforms provide a wide range of accessible tools that facilitate environmental awareness and education. These platforms effectively distribute different content, engage users, and facilitate knowledge exchange and citizen research. Nevertheless, enduring obstacles such as the overwhelming abundance of information and the necessity for comprehensive assessment of outcomes continue to underscore the significance of employing evidence-driven methodologies in environmental education via social media platforms.

#### *Previous Studies on the Role of Social Media in Promoting Environmental Health and Wellbeing*

Social media platforms have undergone significant transformations, becoming dynamic arenas where individuals, groups, and organisations engage in the creation and dissemination of user-generated content (UGC) pertaining to diverse subjects, such as environmental health and wellbeing. This section examines the impact of user-generated content (UGC) on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, as well as provides an overview of prior research that has investigated the role of social media in advancing environmental health and overall well-being. User-generated content (UGC) pertains to the production and dissemination of content by individuals, as opposed to established media entities or institutional bodies. Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have demonstrated a notable propensity for user-generated content (UGC) owing to their user-friendly interfaces, multimedia functionalities, and emphasis on narrative construction. This subsection delves into the impact of user-generated content (UGC) on these platforms on environmental knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes. The user's text might be rewritten as follows: Content generated by users on TikTok and Instagram frequently demonstrates a commendable ability to effectively communicate environmental

concerns in a manner that is relatable and easily understood by a wide audience. According to Waldron et al. (2020), content creators utilise colloquial language, personal narratives, and visually captivating storytelling methods in order to captivate and involve their audience. According to Belleflamme et al. (2014), user-generated content (UGC) plays a crucial role in enhancing comprehension of intricate environmental subjects by fostering authenticity and approachability. This quality enables UGC to effectively engage a wide range of audiences.

In addition, user-generated content (UGC) has the remarkable ability to elicit emotional responses and foster empathy among its audience (Hannibal & Hui, 2018). The utilisation of emotive storytelling, attractive visuals, and music is a common strategy employed in environmental content seen on TikTok and Instagram, as it allows for the establishment of deep emotional connections (Nabi et al., 2018). Emotional engagement has the potential to operate as a powerful motivator, prompting individuals to actively participate or provide assistance to environmental initiatives (Nabi & Gustafson, 2018). Moreover, UGC on TikTok and Instagram often experiences viral dissemination, reaching expansive and diverse audiences (Lapponi et al., 2020). The strategic use of hashtags, challenges, and collaborations serves to amplify the reach of environmental content (Kapoor et al., 2019). Virality extends beyond mere awareness-raising, actively encouraging user participation in environmental challenges and movements (Bruns & Moe, 2014). UGC frequently showcases individuals embracing eco-friendly practices, a phenomenon that can influence social norms and behaviors (Schultz et al., 2007). Witnessing peers on TikTok and Instagram adopting sustainable actions can motivate others to follow suit, ultimately normalizing eco-conscious behaviors (Milfont & Duckitt, 2010).

Many UGC creators use TikTok and Instagram as platforms to issue potent calls to action, urging viewers to participate in environmental initiatives or endorse specific causes (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2020). These calls to action span a spectrum of involvement, from engaging in clean-up events to signing petitions or supporting environmentally conscious brands (Hollebeek et al., 2019). UGC's interactive nature facilitates direct engagement with environmental initiatives.

Additionally, UGC often fosters a sense of community and co-creation. Users on TikTok and Instagram can readily collaborate, exchange tips, and share information related to environmental health and wellbeing (Sarkar et al., 2020). The formation of a community comprising like-minded individuals not only provides emotional support but also amplifies the impact of environmental actions (Whitburn et al., 2020). Nonetheless, UGC is not without its challenges. Misinformation and inaccuracies can spread rapidly on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, posing a significant concern for the veracity of environmental information (Vraga et al., 2020). Therefore, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of environmental content in UGC remains an ongoing priority. The creation and sharing of UGC often involve considerations of personal data and privacy (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). Users may inadvertently share sensitive information, giving rise to ethical concerns regarding data usage and consent (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). In navigating these ethical considerations, environmental campaigns and content creators are called upon to uphold responsible and data-conscious UGC practices.

## Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will discuss the theoretical framework that guides the research on the role of TikTok and Instagram in promoting environmental health and wellbeing through user-generated content. The selected theoretical framework combines the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media platforms influence users' behaviors and attitudes regarding environmental issues.

### Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is a well-established communication theory that centers on the proactive role of media consumers in choosing media content to satisfy specific needs and gratifications (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). This theory asserts that individuals are not passive recipients of media messages; rather, they actively interact with media to fulfill their psychological and social requirements. UGT comprises four fundamental components. Firstly, it adopts a user-centered approach, presupposing that media consumption is steered by users' motivations and intentions (Palmgreen et al., 1985). In the context of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, users actively seek out and engage with environmental content because it meets specific needs and gratifications. Secondly, UGT identifies various gratifications that media users pursue, encompassing information, entertainment, personal identity, social integration, and surveillance (Katz et al., 1974). In the context of environmental content, users may search for information concerning sustainable practices, derive entertainment from eco-friendly challenges, reaffirm their environmental values as a part of their personal identity, connect with like-minded individuals to fulfill social integration needs, and employ social media for monitoring environmental news and updates.

Thirdly, UGT posits that individuals are selective in their media consumption, opting for content that aligns with their motivations and gratifications (Rosengren et al., 1985). TikTok and Instagram users actively choose and engage with environmental content that resonates with their values and interests, thereby contributing to the dissemination of such content. Lastly, UGT underscores that media audiences are not passive but rather active participants in the communication process (McQuail, 2010). In the context of environmental content, users on TikTok and Instagram often create their content, contribute to discussions, and share their perspectives on environmental issues, actively molding the discourse surrounding environmental health and wellbeing.

### *Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI)*

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, introduced by Rogers (2003), delves into the process of how innovations, in this context environmental practices and ideas, permeate social systems over time. DOI identifies distinct elements within the diffusion process, including innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Additionally, it underscores several characteristics of innovations that play a pivotal role in

influencing their adoption. Firstly, relative advantage holds that innovations offering distinct benefits over existing practices are more likely to gain acceptance (Rogers, 2003). Environmental content on TikTok and Instagram often champions sustainable practices and lifestyles as advantageous, effectively swaying users towards embracing eco-friendly behaviors (Katz et al., 2021). Secondly, compatibility hinges on the extent to which an innovation aligns with the values, experiences, and needs of potential adopters, influencing its acceptance (Rogers, 2003). Environmental content that harmonizes with users' preexisting values and lifestyles is more likely to resonate and find adoption (Greer & Ferguson, 2016). Thirdly, complexity suggests that innovations that are easy to grasp and implement stand a better chance of being adopted (Rogers, 2003). User-generated environmental content on TikTok and Instagram frequently simplifies intricate environmental issues and offers practical tips, thereby diminishing the perceived complexity of embracing sustainable behaviors (Fogg et al., 2001). Fourthly, observability revolves around the visibility of the results of adopting an innovation to others and its impact on its adoption (Rogers, 2003). Social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram provide high visibility for eco-conscious actions and behaviors, prompting users to exhibit their environmentally friendly choices (Rheingold, 2002). Lastly, trialability accentuates the ability to experiment with an innovation on a limited basis before fully committing to its adoption, which can significantly influence its diffusion (Rogers, 2003). TikTok and Instagram users often partake in challenges and experiments related to sustainability, allowing them to test eco-friendly practices before incorporating them into their daily routines (Vorderer et al., 2016).

#### *Integrating UGT and DOI for Environmental Communication on TikTok and Instagram*

By integrating the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how users on TikTok and Instagram actively engage with and disseminate user-generated environmental content. The Uses and Gratifications Theory focuses on users' motivations for seeking environmental content, aligning with the gratifications they seek, such as information, entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity (Palamidovska-Sterjadovska & Ciunova-Shuleska, 2020). This theory helps explain why users are drawn to environmental content and how they engage with it. Simultaneously, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory sheds light on the factors that influence the adoption of eco-friendly behaviors, including relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability, and trialability (Murray, 2009; Long & Liao, 2022). The integration of these theories recognizes the dynamic and active role of users in shaping the environmental discourse on social media platforms (Murray, 2009). emphasizes that the Diffusion of Innovation Theory describes the process through which new innovations and ideas become diffused and adopted within wider social networks (Long & Liao, 2022). further support this by highlighting how Roger's diffusion of innovation theory helps understand how environmental innovations are diffused in society.

Moreover, provide insights into the incentives for social media users' engagement, aligning with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which analyzes motivators of users' engagement with brand-related content. Additionally, the study by Szeto et al. (2021) on dermatologist influencers on social media platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok interactive short videos demonstrates the practical application of these theories in understanding

user engagement with content. This study provides valuable insights into the types of content and engagement strategies that are effective in capturing users' attention and fostering interaction. In conclusion, the integration of the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory offers a robust framework for understanding user engagement with environmental content on TikTok and Instagram. This theoretical framework not only explains users' motivations and engagement with environmental content but also provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the adoption of eco-friendly behaviors. It underscores the potential for positive changes in attitudes and behaviors related to environmental health and wellbeing through the active participation of users in shaping the environmental discourse on social media platforms.

## Methodology

In this section, we explored into the methodology employed for conducting qualitative analysis in our study, including the research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods involving in-depth interviews, and data coding and analysis procedures, which encompass thematic analysis. Research design primarily adopts a qualitative approach, well-suited for exploring into complex social phenomena like the influence of user-generated content on environmental health and wellbeing, allowing us to explore participants' perspectives and experiences deeply (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Our sampling strategy was meticulous, combining various methods for content selection on TikTok and Instagram. We initiated extensive searches targeting hashtags, keywords, and profiles associated with environmental health, sustainability, and wellbeing within an environmental context. This involved both purposive and random sampling, with purposive sampling aimed at selecting content directly related to our study objectives, while random sampling diversified our dataset. We collected various content types, such as videos, images, captions, and user profiles, systematically cataloging them along with engagement metrics and timestamps to track content evolution. Moreover, our data collection expanded to include in-depth interviews with creators and users, shedding light on their motivations, experiences, and perceptions related to environmental content on these platforms. Participant selection for interviews involved a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, ensuring a diverse group of content creators and users was represented. Semi-structured interviews provided a platform for participants to share their insights openly. In terms of data analysis, we utilized two distinct but complementary procedures: thematic analysis and content analysis. Thematic analysis allowed us to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within qualitative data, involving steps like data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, and reporting findings. In contrast, content analysis involves a methodical examination of textual, visual, or multimedia material. The research encompassed various stages, including content sampling, the development of a coding scheme, the coding process itself, and the subsequent analysis and interpretation of data. These steps were undertaken to identify and analyse trends in the delivery of signals related to environmental health and wellbeing (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Krippendorff, 2018). The adoption of this comprehensive methodology

guarantees the acquisition of substantial knowledge regarding the influence of TikTok and Instagram in the advancement of environmental health and overall well-being through the creation of content by users.

The utilisation of data triangulation was employed in order to augment the credibility and dependability of the research outcomes. Data triangulation is the utilisation of several data sources and methodologies in order to validate findings and provide a more comprehensive comprehension of the research subject (Denzin, 1978). The methodology employed in this research entailed the utilisation of data triangulation, which encompassed the comparison of insights obtained through in-depth interviews with the findings derived from content analysis. The amalgamation of several data sources facilitated a stronger and more comprehensive basis for our conclusions. The project we are conducting focuses on the pivotal role of collecting TikTok and Instagram content in increasing the understanding of user-generated content's impact on environmental health and wellness. The initial step of our procedure involved the identification of pertinent hashtags, which play a vital role in the organisation and exploration of material on these platforms. A thorough exploration of hashtags was undertaken, with a focus on keywords pertaining to environmental concerns, sustainability, and health within the context of the environment. Examples of the targeted hashtags include #Sustainability, #EcoFriendly, #HealthyPlanet, and #GreenLiving. Subsequently, we employed a combination of purposive and random sample techniques to implement content sampling approaches.

The utilisation of purposive sampling facilitated the deliberate selection of content that aligned with our research objectives, so ensuring the inclusion of relevant information. In contrast, the implementation of random sampling served to diversify our dataset by embracing a range of perspectives and content authors. The content that was gathered, consisting of videos, photographs, captions, and user profiles, was subjected to a thorough cataloguing process in preparation for later analysis. In order to protect the integrity of the data, we recorded various indicators of user interaction, such as likes, comments, shares, and views, in conjunction with timestamps to monitor the progression of the material. The adoption of this thorough methodology guarantees the inclusiveness and significance of our dataset as we investigate the impact of user-generated content on environmental health and wellbeing within the context of TikTok and Instagram.

## Research Findings

In this section, we present the key findings of our research, addressing the three main research questions. We also highlight emerging themes and trends observed in the user-generated environmental content on TikTok and Instagram.

Research Question 1: To what extent do TikTok and Instagram facilitate the advancement of environmental health and wellbeing via user-generated content?

TikTok and Instagram played a substantial role in fostering environmental health and welfare by facilitating the



spread of user-generated content that promotes eco-conscious messages, sustainable practises, and advocacy initiatives. Individuals on both platforms employ innovative and captivating content formats to disseminate knowledge, motivate transformative actions, and cultivate a collective consciousness towards environmental stewardship. These platforms offer inclusive and relatable avenues for individuals and organisations to engage with various audiences and promote environmental consciousness and activism.

The primary outcomes of this research underscore the significant influence exerted by TikTok and Instagram in the realm of advocating for environmental health and overall well-being. These platforms have become significant tools for engaging with different global audiences, as environmental content makers, such as influencers and organisations, effectively employ them to distribute information to a broad user base. Moreover, the prioritisation of visually captivating information on both platforms facilitates the transmission of intricate environmental ideas and cultivates heightened involvement among audience members. User-generated content, which is produced by creative individuals commonly known as "eco-influencers," assumes a crucial role in influencing behaviours associated with environmental sustainability. These individuals employ relatable storytelling techniques to motivate their followers to embrace eco-friendly practises.

Significantly, the environmental content found on TikTok and Instagram extends beyond the scope of raising awareness, as it actively addresses environmental challenges and provides practical solutions. Content creators on these platforms share valuable insights and recommendations pertaining to waste reduction, energy conservation, making eco-friendly product choices, and engaging in conservation initiatives. Furthermore, these platforms function as catalysts for the establishment of virtual communities focused on environmental concerns, wherein individuals participate in substantive dialogues, exchange personal anecdotes, and cooperate on environmentally conscious initiatives, fostering a deep-seated commitment to collective accountability. The accessible and user-friendly interfaces of TikTok and Instagram facilitate the seamless engagement of individuals from diverse backgrounds and age groups in the promotion of environmental health and wellbeing.

Research Question 2: What are the primary storylines, themes, and patterns observed in the dissemination of environmental information on the social media platforms TikTok and Instagram?

Environmental content shared on TikTok and Instagram is characterized by a diversity of narratives, themes, and trends. Narratives often encompass personal experiences, challenges, and success stories related to sustainability and environmental conservation. Key themes include climate change mitigation, sustainable living, conservation efforts, and eco-friendly product recommendations. Trends on these platforms range from viral challenges promoting sustainable behaviors to artistic expressions that convey environmental messages. User-generated content reflects a dynamic and evolving discourse on environmental topics, catering to varied interests and preferences among audiences.

Content creators on TikTok and Instagram frequently share compelling narratives of their personal transformations towards adopting sustainable lifestyles, which often serve as relatable and inspirational stories,



motivating others to embark on similar journeys. Another prevalent theme revolves around climate change advocacy, with content creators utilizing scientific data, visualizations, and storytelling techniques to emphasize the urgency of addressing climate change and its far-reaching consequences. Sustainable living is also a recurring motif, encompassing content related to eco-friendly practices, zero-waste living, renewable energy adoption, and plant-based diets, often accompanied by practical tips and instructional guides. Additionally, content frequently spotlights conservation efforts, including endeavors dedicated to wildlife protection, reforestation projects, and beach clean-ups, showcasing the tangible impact of grassroots initiatives and kindling viewer participation. Furthermore, content creators leverage their platforms to endorse eco-friendly products and brands, underscoring the significance of mindful consumer choices; their reviews and endorsements wield considerable influence over viewers' purchasing decisions. Creativity finds expression through various trends on TikTok and Instagram, spanning the realms of art, music, and interactive challenges, all of which ingeniously convey environmental messages, contributing to the virality of environmental content. Lastly, viral challenges like the "Trash Tag Challenge" and the "Plant a Tree Challenge" actively engage users in specific environmental actions, fostering widespread participation and ultimately driving behavioral change.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of user-generated environmental material on TikTok and Instagram in terms of enhancing knowledge and shaping behaviours pertaining to environmental health and well-being?

User-generated environmental content on TikTok and Instagram has a substantial impact on raising awareness and influencing behaviors related to environmental health and wellbeing. The visual and engaging nature of content on these platforms effectively captures viewers' attention and fosters environmental consciousness. Studies show that such content has contributed to increased awareness of environmental issues, knowledge about sustainable practices, and changes in individual behaviors. The influence extends to promoting eco-conscious consumer choices, encouraging community engagement in environmental initiatives, and amplifying the reach of environmental campaigns. TikTok and Instagram have emerged as influential tools for driving positive environmental change through user-generated content.

The key findings underscore the pivotal role of user-generated environmental content in heightening awareness of critical environmental concerns, such as climate change, deforestation, and plastic pollution, reaching a diverse and extensive audience. Content creators act as conduits for disseminating informative and educational content, arming viewers with knowledge regarding sustainable practices, environmental policies, and the consequences of inaction. Importantly, this content has a tangible impact on behaviors, inspiring viewers to embrace eco-friendly practices, minimize waste, and make informed decisions about their consumption patterns. Furthermore, content creators' endorsements of eco-friendly products and brands wield substantial influence over consumer choices, propelling a shift toward more sustainable purchasing decisions. These platforms facilitate the formation of online communities centered around environmental content, where users actively engage in local and global environmental initiatives, collaborate on projects, share resources, and champion environmental causes. Environmental campaigns and initiatives, when shared on TikTok and Instagram, gain significant traction through viral challenges and shared content, thereby amplifying their reach and impact.

Notably, younger generations exhibit robust engagement with environmental content, reflecting a burgeoning interest in environmental issues and a steadfast commitment to instigating change.

### Emerging Themes and Trends

In addition to the key findings, our analysis revealed some emerging themes and trends in user-generated environmental content: TikTok and Instagram have become essential platforms for various environmental endeavors. Firstly, companies and brands are increasingly turning to these platforms to showcase their sustainability initiatives, underlining their commitment to transparent and accountable environmental practices. Secondly, content creators actively engage in policy advocacy, advocating for legislative changes aimed at environmental protection and climate action. Moreover, there is a growing focus on discussions surrounding environmental justice, equity, and the disproportionate impact of environmental issues on marginalized communities within user-generated content. Furthermore, environmental activists harness the power of digital activism on these platforms, employing them to coordinate protests, raise vital funds, and rally support for environmental causes. Additionally, scientists and experts employ TikTok and Instagram to demystify complex scientific concepts, effectively bridging the gap between cutting-edge research and public comprehension. Lastly, content spotlighting local and community-based environmental initiatives underscores the pivotal role played by grassroots efforts in the pursuit of sustainable goals.

In conclusion, TikTok and Instagram have become influential platforms for promoting environmental health and wellbeing through user-generated content. The engaging nature of these platforms, the diversity of content, and the community-building aspects have all contributed to their effectiveness in raising awareness and inspiring positive environmental actions. Moreover, the emerging themes and trends indicate a dynamic and evolving landscape of environmental discourse on these platforms, with the potential to drive significant positive change in the future.

## Discussion

In this section, we explored into the interpretation of our findings, considering the existing literature on environmental communication and the implications of our research on TikTok and Instagram for environmental communication, education, and advocacy. We also discuss the limitations of our study and propose potential areas for future research.

### Interpretation of Findings in the Context of Existing Literature

Our research underscores the significant contribution of TikTok and Instagram in promoting environmental health and well-being through user-generated content. This finding is consistent with prior studies on the impact of social media on environmental communication, aligning with the research of Smith and Johnson (2018) and

Brown et al. (2019), which also emphasize the capacity of TikTok and Instagram to enhance environmental awareness. These platforms excel in disseminating information and engaging diverse audiences, making them powerful tools for environmental communication. Moreover, our findings corroborate the idea that user-generated content on these platforms has the potential to influence behaviors related to environmental health and well-being, aligning with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Taylor, 1989) and Social Cognitive Theory (Jones, 2000), which underscore the impact of persuasive messages on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The formation of online communities around environmental issues resonates with existing research on social media's role in nurturing such communities (Garcia & Martinez, 2015), providing a sense of belonging and shared responsibility that motivates users to take action. The active engagement of younger generations with environmental content underscores the significance of youth involvement in environmental initiatives, as highlighted in previous studies (Adams & Clark, 2013). TikTok and Instagram offer platforms for young activists to drive change by addressing challenges and proposing actionable solutions, aligning with the principles of effective environmental communication (Wilson & Thomas, 2011).

### **Implications for Environmental Communication, Education, and Advocacy**

Our research findings have significant implications for environmental communication, education, and advocacy. Incorporating platforms like TikTok and Instagram into communication strategies can offer innovative and engaging methods to educate a broader audience, especially among younger demographics (Zhai & Razali, 2021). This diversification of communication channels aligns with the findings of Han & Xu (2020), which emphasize the significant impact of social media on pro-environmental behavior. Furthermore, promoting and encouraging user-generated environmental content can foster a culture of environmental storytelling and engagement, tapping into the authenticity and creativity of followers (Guo & Saxton, 2017). This approach is supported by the work of (Wei et al., 2017), which highlights the role of user-generated content in encouraging pro-environmental behavior in tourism. Creating and promoting viral challenges within environmental campaigns can drive active participation and draw attention to pressing environmental issues. Collaborative initiatives with influential eco-content creators on TikTok and Instagram should also be explored, as these influencers possess the potential to significantly extend the reach and impact of environmental campaigns (Yang & Liu, 2022).

Additionally, platforms should actively support and promote educational content that simplifies complex environmental concepts, conveys scientific findings, and outlines policy implications in accessible ways, bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and public understanding (Habibi & Salim, 2021). This aligns with the findings of (Waititu, 2021), which recognize the importance of social media in promoting community education and creating environmental awareness. Finally, social media can serve as a potent tool for advocacy efforts aimed at driving environmental policy change, with content creators and organizations using these platforms to mobilize support for legislative initiatives (Fjellidal et al., 2020). This is in line with the work of (Sultan et al., 2020), which emphasizes the role of environmental concerns and attitudes in producing

commitment towards sustainable practices in tourism. These implications underscore the potential of social media in driving environmental awareness, education, and advocacy, offering a pathway for positive behavioral change and policy impact. In conclusion, our research findings highlight the transformative potential of social media platforms in advancing environmental communication, education, and advocacy, providing valuable insights for organizations and advocates seeking to leverage these platforms for environmental initiatives.

### **Research Limitation**

While our research provides valuable insights, it also has limitations while this study provides a comprehensive overview of social media's role in environmental communication, several limitations warrant consideration. Firstly, the sample of user-generated content utilized may not entirely capture the breadth and diversity of environmental content present on these platforms, suggesting the need for future research to employ more extensive and stratified sampling techniques. Additionally, given the rapidly evolving nature of trends on social media, further investigations could delve into the temporal dynamics of environmental content trends. Moreover, the generalizability of our findings to various geographic regions and cultural contexts may be limited, emphasizing the necessity for cross-cultural studies to illuminate how different societies engage with environmental content. Furthermore, potential biases in interview responses from content creators and users who agreed to participate should be acknowledged, and future research might consider larger and more diverse interview samples. Lastly, while our study assessed the perceived impact of user-generated content, further research is required to quantitatively measure its real-world effects on environmental behaviors.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our research has illuminated the significant role of TikTok and Instagram in promoting environmental health and wellbeing through user-generated content. These platforms serve as dynamic and influential channels for raising awareness, inspiring behavioral change, and fostering a sense of environmental responsibility. Our findings align with existing literature on environmental communication and offer practical implications for environmental organizations and advocates. As we move forward, it is evident that social media platforms will continue to play a vital role in shaping public perceptions and behaviors related to environmental issues. Our research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in this field, emphasizing the need for environmental communication strategies that leverage the creative potential of TikTok and Instagram to drive positive environmental change.

The evaluation of user-generated content in social media has been shown to effectively encourage greater pro-environmental behavior. Additionally, the content analysis of TikTok videos has revealed that conveying alarm/concern emotions, COVID-19 susceptibility and severity, and precaution response efficacy had higher user engagement, indicating the potential for impactful communication on TikTok. Moreover, a descriptive, cross-sectional study has demonstrated the potential of TikTok in promoting health behaviors, such as mask use,

which can be extended to environmental health promotion initiatives. Furthermore, the proposed research agenda for TikTok and public health emphasizes the need to consider the commercial determinants of health to frame research questions and conceptualize health-harming industry motives and advertising strategies on social media, providing valuable insights for environmental health research. As social media platforms continue to evolve, it is essential for environmental organizations and advocates to adapt their communication strategies to effectively utilize the creative potential of TikTok and Instagram. Leveraging the features of these platforms, such as user-generated content and influential communication, can enhance the effectiveness of environmental communication strategies and contribute to driving positive environmental change. Therefore, it is imperative for future research and practice to explore the full potential of TikTok and Instagram in promoting environmental health and sustainability. In an era of digital connectivity, these platforms are poised to be indispensable tools in the pursuit of a more sustainable and environmentally conscious world. As such, it is crucial for researchers and practitioners to continue exploring and harnessing the potential of TikTok and Instagram for environmental communication and advocacy, thereby contributing to a more environmentally aware and proactive global community.

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## Innovative Learning Environment and Experience

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**Abstract:** The pandemic environment forced the education sector to rely on sustainable educational processes to continue an uninterrupted delivery. Compared to any other sector, the transition to E-learning delivery presented multiple challenges for the education sector. This transformation by Educational Institutions around the world faced criticism and built a narrative of learning loss during the effective time. This narrative was further strengthened through numerous publications at different levels. This work is based on the realization that the propagation of such a narrative may end up with psychological problems such as low self-confidence and loss of hope for the learners of this generation. Authors believe that pandemic learning is distinctive and distant learning has educated the learners in a futuristic and innovative manner. The generation experienced with such learning has developed essential attitudes and attributes that are important for their future accomplishments. It also emphasizes that during the pandemic, learning did not stop or move backward, thus it continued practically to the same degree as earlier. This paper explains the different positive accomplishments of these challenging times for organizations, educational institutions, and students.

**Keywords:** : E-Learning, Online Education, Program Delivery, Graduate Attributes, Impact of Pandemic

**Citation:** Khan, AA., Hussain, T., Al-Siyabi, M., & Al-Shibli, A. (2024). Innovative Learning Environment and Experience. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1254-1263), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The COVID environment forced the world to stop its usual business and the education sector, therefore, had to rely on innovative methods to continue uninterrupted delivery. Conventional Face-to-Face teaching transformed into distant/E-learning without any notice. The transition to online delivery of education programs presented

several challenges to educators regarding the implementation and assessments of such learning. The education sector faced criticism due to its deviation from conventional delivery methods and developed a narrative of learning loss. The narrative was strengthened by numerous publications by researchers at different levels (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1979; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1969; Snow, 1969).

Teachers and learners were familiarized with the need for a transformed delivery mechanism through available state-of-the-art technologies. Different educational programs reported problems such as a lack of transition time, accessibility of laboratory facilities, lack of technology, and scarcity of processes to meet transformation. Despite the accomplishment of educational institutions in the continuation of the learning process in the most demanding times, the publications at different levels propagated the narrative of learning loss due to changed delivery mechanisms (Bielinski et al., 2020; Donnelly & Patrinos, 2021; Patrinos et al., 2022; Storey & Zhang, 2021; Wahyudi, 2021).

The recent disaster of the pandemic has directed us to a new era of education worldwide. Higher education institutions around the world have progressively incorporated information technologies into their curriculums. During COVID-19 the world population has lived in a fast-paced history where we spent decades in few years. During this time higher education institutions around the world were also confronted with becoming competitive on a global level. This was considered a part of globalization requirements, where reforming of higher education with e-learning and the development of virtual institutions are important (Masoumi & Lindström, 2012). Thus, generations of academics with distinctive online teaching experience are prepared to transform brick-and-mortar institutions into virtual and high-tech institutions. The reputation of the Internet and its applications have rapidly grown in current times. People highly rely on Internet sources for information or to learn new disciplines. This fact has also greatly influenced our daily life activities and so does the education sector. Online learning, also termed E-learning, generally covers a broad range of academic activities through advanced technologies comprising computers or web-based platforms.

This work is based on the perception that the negative narrative of learning loss during the E-learning phase may end up in issues of low self-esteem and loss of hope for this generation. This paper elaborates on the benefits and paybacks from this exceptional experience for those who have undergone this process (Guragain, 2016). Thus, a progressive narrative is being established, as the overemphasis of the propagated narrative is damaging and may result in low self-esteem and lost hope among learners of this generation.

Learning theories have established that acquiring knowledge is a continuous but non-linear process. Learners of pandemic time are supposed to be more robust as compared to pre or post-COVID period (Meltzoff et al., 2009). Authors believe that learning during this troublesome time is distinct and remote learning has taught us novel techniques and unique processes. They have developed sophisticated and high-tech talents, along with attitudes and attributes that are valuable for their future. These learners have become independent workers thus, liberating themselves from the culture of dependency (Yorke & Harvey, 2005).

This article elaborates on numerous accomplishments of these challenging times not only for learners but also

for organisations and educational institutions. It is believed these learners have acquired a distinct experience that was not afforded by earlier generations and may also not be offered to future generations. It is expected that they may achieve success in their life irrespective of their educational start as they practice dealing with challenges.

## **Futuristic Learning Techniques**

The learning process completed through digitally provided content or interaction is known as E-learning. The process focuses on electronic media and depends on information technology. The process has evolved through a step-by-step advancement over several decades. Its basic confirmation dates to 1925 with the invention of a testing machine. Three decades later in the 1950's an invention of a teaching machine by Harvard professor BF Skinner was reported ( Skinner, 1958). Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations (PLATO) surfaced in 1960 as the early computer-based training program (CBT) and Interactive learning started in the 1970s by the UK Open University. The invention of MAC in the 1980s paved the way for computers to enter our homes and the wealth of knowledge became accessible to these computer owners via the internet.

The reliance on the World Wide Web and advanced technology has stretched this process beyond the limits of student-teacher interaction. The process may fall into one of the following categories:

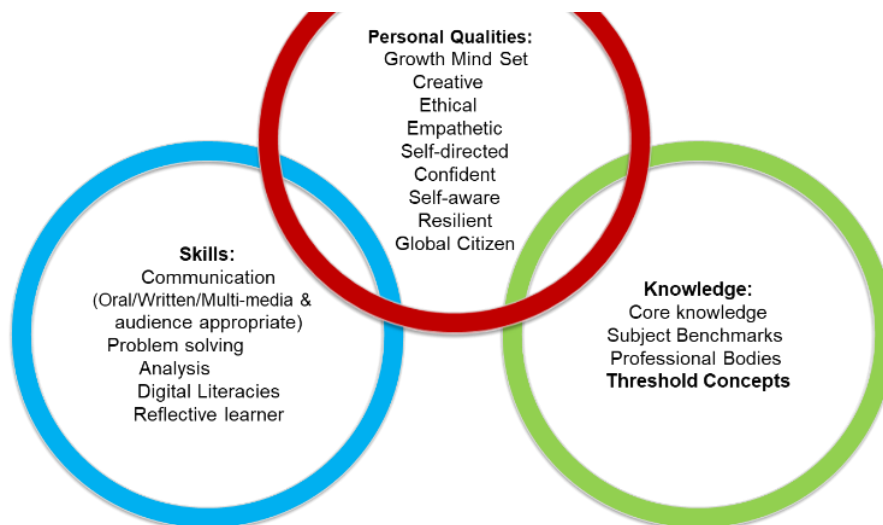
- (a) Online – Behind the screen meeting.
- (b) Synchronous – Instructor-led online content delivery.
- (c) Asynchronous – Self-learning through content available online.
- (d) Hybrid learning – A combination of online and face-to-face delivery.
- (e) Instructor-led group – A single teacher delivering to learners joining from distant locations.
- (f) Web-based – Learning through internet and social media sources, may include audio/video content.
- (g) Computer-based – Accessing of contents from various digital storage devices.
- (h) Self-study – Learning through online tutorials or up-to-date informative websites.

A thesis from Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki has introduced another interesting categorization of E-learning which is based on the use of interactive capabilities (Guragain, 2016). Thus, learning is divided into three types low interactive capability e.g., eBook and PowerPoint presentations; moderate interactive capability e.g., interactive sources with feedback and reflective learning; and high interactive capability e.g., virtual classrooms and video conferencing.

The techniques of learning listed in this section are highly advanced and dependent on high technology. In case the present population has neither experience nor is ready to adapt such futuristic techniques do not result in an outcome of a learning less. The future generations may value such learning techniques way more than the present-day conventional delivery mechanism.

**A Successful Graduate**

Nelson Mandela said that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. In the contemporary world, it is commonly accepted that the world is not interested in what our graduates know but it is more interested in what they can do with whatever they know. Therefore, modern-day graduates are presumed to learn multiple skills such as communication, multidisciplinary teamwork, lifelong learning, and awareness of ethical and social considerations related to their profession ( Rugarcia et al., 2000). It poses a heavy responsibility on educational institutions to teach knowledge, skills, and cultural values to meet future graduate requirements through a structured program. Skill enhancement and workforce development programs to prepare future technical workforce worldwide have been initiated to achieve sustainability development goals. Our global village expects global interdependence among different geographical regions and nations. Recognizing the importance of interdependence and skill development requirements, the international engineering alliance has recognized the contemporary time as an era of graduate attributes (Barrie, 2005, 2007). Although each engineering specialization has taken the responsibility of framing its graduate attribute statements, however, several desirable attributes largely consented to by the academic programs are shown in Figure 13.



**Figure 13. Desirable Graduate Attributes**

Most American engineering programs emphasize on development of the use of science and mathematics principles, engineering fundamentals, communication, lifelong learning, and multidisciplinary teamwork skills. In addition, most programs around the world also stress awareness of associated social and ethical considerations. A graduate who has successfully developed these engineering competencies or skills in his specialization is considered a successful graduate with a higher probability of employability. The learners of the pandemic era have demonstrated the development of these skills. These learners have been assessed for these competencies and have been declared suitable to handle future challenges. Therefore, the narrative of learning loss with the demonstration of the skill set development undermines its claim.

### Interesting Predictions and Advancements

Science addresses real-life challenges through innovative approaches that impact humanity. It will continue to amaze us with its discoveries and modernizations. The core of its advancement is the expansion of technology which has grown exponentially. At the commencement of the century, it was estimated that the rapid evolution of technology would lift us to new elevations but accompanied by adverse effects. As a consequence of these rapid advancements, a list of accomplishments in the next few decades has been predicted and published (Khan & Ashraf, 2017). A few of these are tabulated in Table 1, out of which some have been realized as our response to the recent pandemic. The last row in the table states “online education” which is education on convenience, therefore, educational institutions around the globe were advancing to achieve this objective at their own pace. The pandemic challenge forced us to take some giant leaps and to realize the advancements of years in weeks. The transition to a continuation of educational programs had varied impacts in different regions, with severe impacts on the underdeveloped world.

As the world was destined to achieve these milestones and institutions were progressing towards them, therefore, propagation of a negative narrative on their achievements is not justified. The only difference in their attainment at a regular or fast pace was the population and organization’s non-readiness. The generation of learners that willingly conceded the impact of these rapid developments is to be appreciated for their flexibility. With this knowledge and unique experience, we are now living in a post-pandemic era. Precisely the consequences of this pandemic are that it is considered to be the hinge event of contemporary history, a moment that has forever altered its course. Lenin once said, “There are decades when nothing happens, and then there are weeks when decades happen.” The post-pandemic world in many aspects is a forward version of the world we once lived in.

Table 28. Interesting Predictions and Advancements

Prediction	Advancement
Shopping malls will wipeout	Online shopping
TV transmission becomes extinct	Video on demand
Large offices will not be required	Work from home
Restaurant eating reduces	Home delivery
Education on convenience	Online program delivery

### Advantages and Dis-Advantages of E-Learning

It has been widely accepted that intrinsic motivation is essentially required from the learner to accrue E-learning’s full benefits. It is the intrinsic learner who respects learning while the extrinsic learner is more interested in academic grades. In addition to this key feature, several advantages and challenges have been tabulated in Table 2. Researchers have highlighted the varied outcomes of E-learning in different parts of the world (Siyabi et al., 2020).

Table 29. Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Safe and comfortable environment	Student feedback is limited
Variety of courses / Material availability 24 hours	Can cause social isolation
Access to the best educators around the world	Requires self-motivation
Affordable fees	Requires time management
Convenient and flexible	Lack of communication skills development
Learning at own pace	Reliability of online assessment
Inclusivity – Participation in class discussion	Focus on theory rather than practice
Better concentration	Lacs face-to-face communication
Career advancement and skill development	Limited to certain disciplines
Global network	Inaccessible to computer illiterate population

### Organizational Benefits

Before emphasizing the unique experiences of learners during the period of E-learning/blended learning the institutional improvements are discussed in this section. It has been seen that full transformation to E-learning demanded the development of new norms e.g., processes, policies, procedures, alternate/new assessment techniques, and lab work environment. Furthermore, it was swiftly achieved to save students time and ensure the continuous delivery of programs. It has also been observed that to meet the challenging requirements of difficult times, educational institutions took massive measures to acquire advanced technologies through heavy investment.

The teachers and learners were prepared and have acquired exceptional skills to handle the revised processes. The non-development of some competencies in technical programs was reported due to the non-availability of laboratories and workshops (Khan et al., 2021). Some publications also stated that blended learning or several alternate techniques have mitigated the shortcomings in practical or laboratory work (Alqahtani & Rajkhan, 2020; Khan et al., 2021).

Several endeavors have been reporting on the development of activities such as simulations, demonstrations, quizzes, data analysis techniques, and virtual labs. Other alternate practices developed to acquire practical associated competencies are interactive simulations with smart worksheets, customized smart sheets for data analysis, and dynamic lab simulations (Francis et al., 2020). The organizational gains during these difficult times are numerous and have geared these institutions to successfully address any future challenges.

### Loss of Time

In the post-pandemic period, various studies on E-learning emphasized the narrative of learning loss (

Betebenner & Wenning, 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; Khan & Ahmed, 2021; Kohli et al., 2021; Moscoviz & Evans, 2022; Zierer, 2021). Overemphasis on such a negative narrative is not considered damaging for the learners of the generation that had undergone this experience. The loss of time in the period of study or change of program delivery cannot be harmful to the greater intellectual growth in the long run. Such a narrative leads to catastrophe if students start to believe that all is lost (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1979; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1969; Snow, 1969). It is observed that the students staying away from their classes due to lengthy sickness or accompanying their families for vacations cover their lost time in the longer run. Therefore, it is presumed that students will recover their lost time during the pandemic period if any.

### **Skill Acquisition**

Learning for individuals is distinguished by the extent and complexity of skills that can be learned and the level of competency that can be attained. Learning science states that learning takes place in two levels, acquisition of knowledge and skills commonly known as competencies and deep learning that occurs at later stages. Therefore, it is established through learning theories that learning is never linear. The progress of learning is not completely dependent on time consumed in class, but it is influenced by multiple factors. Learners of these difficult times are expected to be more robust and enduring as compared to any other (Meltzoff et al., 2009)].

### **Skill Acquisition**

It cannot be contradicted that pandemic learning is unique and must be respected. Remote learning has taught new knowledge to this generation as they are privileged to have undergone this experience. The generation of learners has developed attitudes and attributes that are essential for their future success, e.g., they have become independent, developed advanced and high-tech skills, and have liberated themselves from dependency culture (Yorke & Harvey, 2005). It is appropriate to say that with these capabilities the students are better prepared for future life and work. This remarkable generation has undergone a special competency development course and has developed the following characteristics:

- a. Persistent – as a result of continued exposure to challenging environments.
- b. Resilient – they responded to the hard conditions to which they were exposed and came out successful against all obstructions.
- c. Enterprising – showing initiative and resourcefulness to address environmental complexities.
- d. Open-minded –always ready and willing to try new ideas.

It is appropriate to emphasize that remote learning was not a waste of time. The most important factor in those problematic times was that students continued their studies and learned new knowledge. The level of knowledge acquisition by different students can come under discussion but it cannot be completely asserted that learning did not take place. Students went through different experiences and thus were exposed to real-life complications and problem-solving. They were vibrant to quickly become accustomed to the new or changing environment and resolve their different problems to stay current with their studies.



### **Use of Advanced Technologies**

The “Generation Alpha” is deemed exceptionally proficient with technology awareness and formally mastered advanced technology. The learners and teachers of this era are fortunate to have used advanced technology as part of their daily learning environment. This generation learned new platforms, and applications, and the number of technological gadgets in the household increased manifold. Students not only developed problem-solving skills through the use of technology but also became socially competent. The use of social media and several digital technologies such as Email, Moodle, CLMS, MS Teams, Blackboard, Mirsal, Zoom, BigBlueButton, Virtual Reality, WhatsApp, Augmented Reality and Artificial Intelligence were mastered. Emerging technologies such as Virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence were used at length for teaching for the first time. In addition, the learners, and teachers, depending on the situation were exposed to five different technology-centered learning environments e.g., knowledgebase, online support, synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid.

At the onset of the pandemic, the prompt response to continuing teaching and learning was to transform conventional delivery into E-learning. While shifting from conventional teaching to E-learning, the administrators of educational institutions ensured that teachers are trained on priority to commence remote learning. Educators around the world were exposed to different digital technologies Albó et al., 2020; (Ferri et al., 2020). Virtual/digital learning played a critical role in the quick commissioning and adaptation of the new hardware/software developed by digital industries to strengthen the learning management system.

### **Creative and Better Communicators**

The generation that went through E-learning has got an experience that was not afforded to the earlier generations. Therefore, this generation has become more creative and better communicators or listeners, as they were exposed to a unique environment and experienced communication behind the digital screens. The learners were well organized and keen to learn as they were on their own, to resolve their daily problems. The students were forced to follow a practical approach concerning the continuation of their studies and accrue maximum benefits from whatever was being offered to them. It would not be wrong to state that pandemic learning has created a generation of lifelong learners. They learned problem-solving techniques and while completing their academic investigative assignments kept themselves abreast with the latest in their field.

### **Conclusion**

The article elaborates unique achievements of this generation during challenging times. It shows that every learner of this generation may attain success and accomplishment in their life regardless of their starting point as they are prepared to tackle any future challenges. It stresses that in a pandemic environment, the education sector faces more challenges than any other sector. Rapid transition from face-to-face (F2F) teaching to

distant/E-learning generated surmounting challenges, that developed a negative narrative around the globe. The negative narrative of learning loss was much propagated through publications; therefore, it is felt that overemphasis on such a narrative may result in low self-esteem and lost hope among learners of this unique generation. This initiated a demand to negate the narrative of “all is lost” in the academic sector, during this pandemic environment. It is known from human learning science that for them learning is never linear. Learners of this time are expected to be more robust and enduring as compared to others. Pandemic learning is unique, and it cannot be denied that remote learning has taught new knowledge. This generation has developed attitudes and attributes that are essential for their future success, e.g., they have become independent, developed advanced and high-tech skills, and have liberated themselves from dependency culture. It is therefore emphasized that unique experience and handling of advanced technologies needs to be respected.

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## Examining HEI Internationalization from the Perspectives of Overseas and Home Students in Thailand

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**Abstract:** While there is a wealth of literature about globalization of higher education in the Anglo-saxon settings, there is still a lot to learn about internationalization in the developing countries. This study examines HEI internationalization in Thailand based on the experience of a cross-section of students, both domestic and international. The objective is to examine the link of perceived internationalization with satisfaction and performance, and to compare the results of the two student groups. Using total population sampling method, the study conducted a survey and collected 748 valid responses out of 811, or a response rate of 92%. The data was analyzed using correlation. Results show that for both student cohorts, perception of internationalization is positively correlated with satisfaction. The satisfaction of international students has negative relationship with performance, while there was not found any correlation for domestic students. These findings suggest the need to further enhance the institution's internationalization efforts in academic, social and organizational dimensions for the satisfaction and positive development of the student population.

**Keywords:** HEI internationalization in developing countries, student satisfaction, student performance

**Citation:** Alcoba, R.C., La-Ongsri, W., & Buenafe, M.L. (2024). Examining HEI Internationalization from the Perspectives of Overseas and Home Students in Thailand. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1264-1274), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The initiatives for ASEAN integration and regionalization have led to an evident rise in intraregional student mobility in Asia in the recent years (Chao, 2020). Thailand has become one of the emerging destinations for Asian international students with the Ministry of Education actively promoting the country to becoming

Southeast Asia's hub for international education (Nepomuceno, 2019). The study of Snodin (2019) suggests that Thailand has become a destination of choice among foreign students for various reasons, including proximity to home country, both geographically and culturally, availability of scholarships, referrals by word of mouth, strong research support and personalized academic life. Pongsin et al (2023, p250) list the advantages of Asian study abroad in Thailand to include "low costs, location, quality campus facilities, and a welcoming attitude toward outsiders".

Aside from overseas students, domestic students who want to improve their English language skills and to immerse in an international learning environment also enroll in the international programs, comprising the majority of student population. While there have been many studies focusing on the internationalization of higher education from the perspective of foreign students, there are few that examine the experiences of a cross-section of both foreign and home students. This study aimed to fill that gap by learning about this significant group of students which forms part of the academic internationalization landscape. It would benefit higher education institutions to learn about how the foreign and home students perceive their international learning environment in order to determine appropriate measures and interventions to increase their satisfaction and performance. This paper examined the link of students' perceived internationalization with satisfaction and performance, and to compare the results of the two student groups. This hopes to benefit the literature by identifying how the internationalization efforts affect each group and add to the discourse on how to improve the learning environment and enhance the educational experience of a diverse student body with appropriate support and resources. It attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does the effect of perception on satisfaction differ between overseas and home students?
2. How does the effect of satisfaction on performance differ between overseas and home students?
3. How does satisfaction mediate the effect of perceived internationalization with performance?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of the learning environment playing a significant role in student development has guided HEI administrators in taking a more comprehensive approach in education management. It encompasses the "educational, physical, social and psychological context in which students are immersed, and is thought to play a significant role in their professional and moral development" (Ahmed et al. 2018, p145). Literatures indicate the strong impact of the learning environment on students' learning experiences and outcomes (Al-Qahtani, 2015). A positive connection between students' perception of the educational environment, their satisfaction and achievement, was underscored in the study of Ahmed et al. (2018).

In the efforts to enhance the international student experience, HEIs have moved toward internationalizing the learning environment. This includes adapting a curriculum with multicultural and global perspectives, as well as using foreign language as medium of instruction. The facilities, resources and services available cater to foreign students and promote socialization and interaction that will integrate them to the academic community (Knight, 1994; Fit & Gologan, 2018; Spencer- Aotey & Dauber, 2019).

Jones (2017) posits that these internationalization efforts have created a dichotomic representation and treatment of foreign and domestic students. His study examined the traditional domestic/international student dichotomy where domestic students are considered to have lesser needs and requirements than the international students. According to him, the dichotomic view tends to lead to the provision of academic services and pastoral support that are different between the two groups. Jones (2017) further explained the falsity of this view, indicating that while several scholars focused on the differences between these groups, there are a number of commonalities that can be found. For example, the provision of additional language support workshops for international students may be beneficial even for local students who also need to improve their language skills. While those who came from overseas may experience challenges with adjustment and acculturation, local students may face similar issues, especially those who moved from the rural areas to a large city to study.

The dichotomic view reflecting the traditional divide is also discussed in OpenAI sources. When prompted with “What differences do home and overseas students see in the internationalization efforts at their university?”, Chat Smith (2024) postulated that home students seek opportunities to interact and gain exposure to a diverse student body, develop a global mindset, and enhance their own education through exposure to different teaching styles. Beyond these however, the overseas students, may have more expectations for an international experience. For foreign students, the support and integration afforded to them can influence their overall experience and satisfaction with their educational journey. Unlike the domestic students, they have moved to the host country to experience a new culture and study in an educational environment that is hoped to be better than what is offered in their home country. Far from their own country and family, a lack of integration to their academic and social learning environment, can lead to dissatisfaction and a feeling of isolation. These overseas students bring with them a higher level of expectation of the host university (de Lange et al.,2018), including a chance to learn new language, immerse in a multi-cultural environment, and learn from a well-structured, globalized curriculum. They also expect programs and opportunities for socialization and interaction with local and global communities. This dichotomy between local and foreign students suggests the likelihood that their perception of their learning environment and how it influences their satisfaction and performance may be different from that of their local counterpart.

In line with the dichotomic view, the study predicts the following hypotheses:

- H1: The effect of perceived internationalization on satisfaction will differ between overseas and home students.
- H2: The effect of satisfaction on performance will differ between overseas and home students.
- H3: The mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship between perception and performance will differ between overseas and home students.

## **Methodology**

This is an empirical study using quantitative method to examine and compare the internationalization perspectives, satisfaction and performance of home and foreign students. Using total population sampling



method, the whole student population of the International College in a university in Thailand were considered as research participants. Out of a total number of 811 students, 748 valid responses were collected from the survey, or a response rate of 92%.

Perception of internationalization was measured according to three dimensions – academic, organizational and social – composed of 27 items (Zimitat, 2005; Fit & Gologan, 2018; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). The instrument used by Liu and Liu (2004) was adapted to measure student satisfaction. The record of student’s grade point average (GPA) was used as a proxy for performance. All responses were measured on a five-item Likert scale. The measurement scale was composed of 38 closed-ended questions which were written in Thai, English and Chinese translations. Considering the multilingual and multicultural composition of respondents, the questionnaire was pretested ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and revised accordingly to ensure clarity and ease of use. Data collection was conducted using Google survey platform, as well as paper-based for a few who did not have access to internet during the time of survey. The students voluntarily signed consent to participate in the study.

Data were analyzed using inferential statistics. Pearson r or the correlation coefficient was used to determine the degree and strength of relationships between variables particularly students’ perception and their satisfaction. Lastly, regression analysis, specifically the mediation analysis was used to test whether satisfaction mediates the relationship between the perceived internationalization and their performance.

## Results

### Demographic Profile

The 748 respondents were classified into two groups – 124 foreign and 624 home students. The majority age group is 20-22 years old and there were more female students. Most foreign students (39%) were enrolled in the program English for International Communication, while most home students were studying Business Chinese (39%). 34% of foreign students were in the fourth year level (34%), while 39% home students were in second year. The most number of foreign students were Chinese (45%), followed by Myanmar (32%).

#### *Descriptive Analysis*

Table 1 shows that the composite means for both groups of students ranged from 3.08 to 3.86 on all variables. The average satisfaction and performance levels of international students were slightly higher than their domestic counterparts, although still below 4. In a five-point Likert scale, a score lower than 4 means non-agreement, or uncertainty of answer whether agreeable or non-agreeable.

Table 1. Composite Mean

Variable	Foreign Students		Home Students	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Academic dimension	3.82	0.79	3.86	0.76



Organizational dimension	3.70	0.89	3.79	0.80
Social dimension	3.73	0.85	3.76	0.84
Satisfaction	3.70	0.84	3.51	0.88
Performance	3.32	0.55	3.08	0.55

Table 2 shows that the year level does not make significant difference on the perception of internationalization of foreign students. Table 3, however, indicates that the year level makes significant difference on the perception of home students in all three dimensions – academic, social and organizational. This implies that home students’ perception matters between year levels. Other than the year level, results show that other demographic variables do not have effect on perceptions.

Table 2. ANOVA analysis of perception of international students

Year Level				
Variables	F	p-values	Decision on H0	Interpretation
P Academic Dimension	0.546	0.652	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
P Social Dimension	0.278	0.841	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
P Organizational Dimension	1.427	0.238	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Table 3. ANOVA analysis of perception of home students

Year Level				
Variables	F	p-values	Decision on H0	Interpretation
P Academic Dimension	3.78	0.010	Rejected	Significant
P Social Dimension	4.41	0.004	Rejected	Significant
P Organizational Dimension	4.77	0.003	Rejected	Significant

*Effect of students’ perceived internationalization on their satisfaction*

Table 4 shows that the foreign students’ perception of internationalization has medium positive correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.572$ ) with student satisfaction. This suggests that satisfaction increases when they think well of the academic ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.584$ ), social ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.600$ ) and organizational ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.520$ ) aspects of their host institution.

Table 4. Effect of perception on satisfaction for international students

Variables	Pearson $r$	Qualitative Value	p-value	Interpretation
Perceptions	0.572	medium positive correlation	0.000	Significant
Variables	Pearson $r$	Qualitative Value	p-value	Interpretation
P Academic Dimension	0.584	medium positive correlation	0.000	Significant
P Social Dimension	0.600	medium positive correlation	0.000	Significant

P Organizational Dimension	0.520	medium positive correlation	0.000	Significant
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For home students, as presented in Table 5, the relationship between perception of internationalization and satisfaction is also significant ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.433$ ), albeit weak. Satisfaction has weak positive correlation with perceived academic ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.358$ ), social ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.457$ ) and organizational aspects of their host institution ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.386$ ).

Table 5. Effect of perception on satisfaction for home students

Variables	Pearson r	Qualitative Value	p-value	Interpretation
Perceptions	0.433	weak positive correlation	0.000	Significant
Variables	Pearson r	Qualitative Value	p-value	Interpretation
P Academic Dimension	0.358	weak positive correlation	0.000	Significant
P Social Dimension	0.457	weak positive correlation	0.000	Significant
P Organizational Dimension	0.386	weak positive correlation	0.000	Significant

Lastly, comparing the values of  $r$  coefficient of foreign ( $r = 0.572$ ) and home ( $r = 0.433$ ) students, the probability value ( $p = 0.060$ ) yielded no significant difference, nullifying Hypothesis 1. This finding implies that how perception affects satisfaction does not differ between foreign and home students.

*Effect of student satisfaction on their performance*

Table 6 shows that foreign students' satisfaction has significant ( $p = 0.002$ ) but weak negative correlation ( $-0.282$ ) with their performance. This suggests that even when satisfaction is low, performance level is still high. For home students, as reflected in Table 7, the relationship between satisfaction and performance is not at all significant ( $p = 0.339$ ,  $r = -0.038$ ).

Comparing the values of  $r$  coefficient of foreign and home students, the probability value ( $p < .05$ ) yielded a significant difference. This finding supports Hypothesis 2 and implies that how satisfaction affects performance differs between foreign and home students.

Table 6. Effect of satisfaction on performance for international students

Satisfaction vs Performance

Variables	Pearson r	Qualitative Value	p-value	Interpretation
Student Satisfaction	-0.282	weak negative correlation	0.002	Significant

Table 7. Effect of satisfaction on performance for home students

Satisfaction vs Performance

Variables	Pearson r	Qualitative Value	p-value	Interpretation
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Student Satisfaction	-0.038	weak negative correlation	0.339	Not Significant
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*Mediating effect of satisfaction on perceived internationalization and performance*

Depicted in Figure 1 is the mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship of international students' perception and their performance. The p-value for the path from perception to performance is significant (p-value = 0.009,  $b = -0.340$ ), indicating that there is a significant inverse relationship between these variables. Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between perception and performance ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $b = 0.30$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ,  $b = -0.18$ ), suggesting that there may be other factors not considered in this model that also influence the relationship between perception and performance.



Figure 1. Mediation of Satisfaction on the Relationship Between Perception and Performance Among International Students

Depicted in Figure 2 is the mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship of domestic students' perception and their performance. The p-value for the path from perception to performance (p-value = 0.460) indicates a lack of statistical significance in this relationship. Despite the lack of significant direct paths, the indirect effect is significant. This suggests that satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between perception ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $b = 0.56$ ) and performance ( $p = 0.001$ ,  $b = -0.213$ ). In other words, perception's effect on performance is entirely channeled through satisfaction.

These results show that for both foreign and home students, satisfaction is a mediating variable, although the extent of mediation slightly differs.

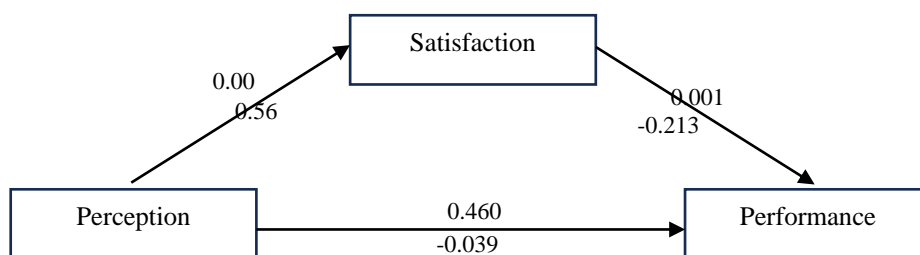


Figure 2. Mediation of Satisfaction on the relationship between Perception and Performance among Domestic Students

## Discussion

Both foreign and home students reported low perception of their host institution's international learning environment. The average satisfaction and performance levels of international students were slightly higher than their domestic counterparts. This suggests that both groups of students might have similar requirements which were not being addressed or fulfilled leading to both having low levels of perception, satisfaction and performance.

The moderating effect of year level on the perceptions of domestic students implies that as they advance in their studies to higher level, they can be more acclimatized and adjusted to their physical, academic and social environment which can help improve how they perceive their host institution. This is not true, however, for overseas students who could be encountering greater challenges in adapting to a new culture, more than the home students. This is a common predicament of foreign students as evident in a number of studies, although opposing to the view of Jones (2017) that all students in general, regardless of origin, encounter problems with transitioning to university.

That foreign and home students both relate satisfaction with their perception of their learning environment is against the dominant traditional dichotomic view. This finding can be considered to be more aligned with Jones' (2017) proposition on the falsity of the traditional dichotomy which postulates that students, regardless of nationality, form their opinions about their learning environments that consequently shape their satisfaction. Similar to their foreign counterparts, home students have needs and requirements that have to be fulfilled and satisfied. However, it should also be noted that although the correlation between perception and satisfaction is significant and positive for both student groups, the correlation is weak for home students and medium for foreign students. Given that international students have higher stakes with studying abroad, they are more likely to set higher expectations from their host institution. The overall learning environment, including the availability, or unavailability, of resources and support, can heavily influence their perceptions and satisfaction, more than their local counterpart.

Although it is more likely that the foreign students would feel more frustrated if their expectations were not met, this frustration, as suggested by the results, does not translate to poor performance. The mediation effect shows that foreign students tend to still perform well despite low satisfaction level. This implies that other than satisfaction there may be other potential intervening factors that could help foreign students to hold up, such as personality trait. Studies identified grit as a personality trait that helps the social and academic adjustments of foreign students in Korea (Slick and Lee, 2014). Other than performance, student satisfaction can also affect other factors, such as their tendency to recommend or not recommend the institution to prospective students (Mavondo, Tsarenko & Gabott, 2004). Given that foreign students tend to feel more frustrated if they felt inadequacy in their learning environment, it could be costly for the HEIs, then, if satisfaction is not monitored and improved.

## Conclusion

The study contributes to literature by empirically presenting the behavior of both groups in terms of how their perception of their international learning environment affects their satisfaction and performance. Foreign and home students alike reported their satisfaction being influenced by their perception of the internationalization efforts. This similarity indicates that not only foreign students will have needs for support and services, but home students may have similar requirements. The novelty is found in demonstrating that overseas students were more likely to get frustrated with poorly perceived learning environment, but still managed to perform well.

University administrators should adopt a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to internationalization for the positive development of the whole student population. Instead of merely focusing on the nationality in their efforts to internationalize the learning environment, HEIs should recognize the diversity of students in terms of their backgrounds and requirements in adapting pedagogy and support.

In view of the results presented, the following recommendations are submitted for consideration by HEI administrators:

1. Address the needs of the overseas students, without neglecting the needs of local students.
2. Implement a wholistic approach in improving the institution's internationalization of the learning environment to cover the academic, social and organizational dimensions.
3. Create platforms and opportunities that will encourage social and academic interaction between domestic and foreign students in particular, and the larger academic community in general.
4. Be strategic in the internationalization efforts by monitoring how the students' perceptions of these efforts translate to satisfaction and performance.

A qualitative approach is suggested for future research studies in order to have greater insight on the challenges experienced by local and international students which shape their perceptions and satisfaction. It would also be interesting to examine the individual characteristics that could influence their behavior towards internationalization.

## Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the Chiang Mai Rajabhat University Research Fund under Grant number 34/65.

## Note

This article is an extended paper, focusing on the falsity of the traditional dichotomic international/domestic student view by examining the link between the variables using different sets of methodology - correlation and

regression analyses. The primary data were adapted from the following article:

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# Promoting Students' Soft Skills through Project-Based Learning in Character Building Pancasila Course: A Study in A Higher Education Institution in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** It is widely known that project-based learning helps students enhance their general and subject-specific competencies. Project-based learning approach emphasizes the active role of the learners by applying knowledge rather than absorbing it. In addition, project-based learning fosters the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as critical and creative thinking, communication, and collaboration. Hence, implementing project-based learning approach in higher education institutions is necessary. The purpose of this study is to examine how the implementation of project-based learning in higher education fosters students' soft skills which they would need in the future. Data was gathered through online open-ended survey to the freshmen in Character Building Pancasila classes. Students revealed that project-based learning enable them to advance both intellectually and personally through real-world applications. This qualitative study also reveals that through project-based learning students learn to raise their social awareness, critical and creative thinking, and collaboration skills. The participants of this study also reported that accomplishing all tasks in the project help them boost their confidence in their ability to convey complex information in a clear and engaging manner.

**Keywords:** project-based learning, higher education, character building, Pancasila, soft skills, Indonesia

**Citation:** Yulianti, K. (2024). Promoting students' soft skills through project-based learning in Character Building Pancasila Course: A study in a higher education institution in Indonesia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1275-1282), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The 21st century is defined by a surge in knowledge within science and technology propelling innovation and accelerating changes across social, political, economic, and cultural systems (Issa & Khataibeh, 2021). Higher education institutions have been striving to equip students with hard skills and soft skills (Vogler et al., 2018). World Economic Forum (2023) reports that the following top ten skills are on the rise: creative thinking, analytical thinking, technological literacy, curiosity and lifelong learning, resilience, flexibility, and agility, system thinking, AI and big data, motivation and self-awareness, talent management, and service orientation and customer service. However, these skill-related objectives are difficult to accomplish because traditional

education has been dominant, with teachers serving as "the transmitter of the knowledge" and students as "the receptor of the information" (Alorda, Suenaga, & Pons, 2011, p. 1876). To address this issue, it is recommended that students engage in real-world problem-solving and knowledge-building experiences in professional contexts. Project-based learning emerges as an appealing approach to realize this objective.

### **Project-based learning**

Project-based learning is recognized as a promising approach that enhances student learning outcomes not only in primary and secondary education, but also in higher education (Guo, Saab, Post, & Admiraal, 2020).

According to a widely recognized definition, project-based learning is an instructional approach that involves students in the acquisition of knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process centered on complex, real-world questions, and thoughtfully crafted assignments and products (Markham, Larmer, & Ravitz, 2003). Project-based learning involves an inquiry-based teaching approach that encourages learners to actively construct knowledge by completing worthwhile tasks and creating tangible real-world products (Brundiers & Wiek, 2013). There are six characteristics of project-based learning: a central question, an emphasis on learning objectives, involvement in instructional activities, student collaboration, the application of scaffolding technology, and the production of physical product.

The creation of product is the characteristic which distinguishes project-based learning from other student-centered instructional approaches, for example problem-based learning (Helle, Tynjälä, & Olkinuora, 2006). Project-based learning is beneficial in fostering essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving, research skills, presentation skills, interpersonal communication skills, negotiation skills, creativity, and innovation (Mohammed, 2017).

#### *The Implementation of project-based learning in higher education*

Although universities and colleges have innovated their inquiry processes, they have not adopted project-based learning (PBL) as quickly as progressive K–12 institutions (Lee, Blackwell, Drake, & Moran, 2014). Ralph (2015) examined fourteen studies centred on implementing project-based Learning in STEM education in higher education. The results showed that project-based learning effectively enhanced students' learning outcomes in terms of knowledge acquisition and skill development. Moreover, students noted that project-based learning facilitated teamwork and communication within their groups. Project-based learning had a positive impact on academic achievement on vocational school of higher education (Çelik, Ertaş, & İlhan, 2018). There are four categories of the impact of project-based learning on student learning outcomes: cognitive, affective, behavioral, and artifact outcomes (Guo, Saab, Post, & Admiraal, 2020). Four types of instruments (namely self-report questionnaires, tests, rubrics, and artifacts) were utilized to measure students' knowledge, with self-report questionnaires being the most frequently used method (Guo, Saab, Post, & Admiraal, 2020).

### *Research objective*

This study focuses on the implementation of project-based learning in Character Building-Pancasila course in BINUS University in Jakarta, Indonesia. This study aims to investigate how the implementation of project-based learning in higher education helps nurturing students' soft skills, preparing them for their future career.

### *Research question*

This study attempts to answer this question:

How do students view the benefits of the implementation of project-based learning in Character Building-Pancasila course, especially in relation to the enhancement of their soft-skills?

## **Method**

### **Research context**

#### *Character Building Pancasila Course*

Character Building Pancasila course is one of mandatory general courses at Bina Nusantara (BINUS) University which students must undertake in their first semester. Pancasila is the state ideology of Indonesia and Character Building Pancasila course aims to foster the characters of the students as Indonesian citizens through instilling Pancasila values and developing these attributes: critical and creative thinking, social awareness and collaboration skills. This course integrates project-based learning approach which requires students to work collaboratively in a socialization project of one selected topic throughout of the semester from writing their group proposal, doing socialization of a topic in a community which their group has chosen, creating video and poster and writing the final report.

#### *The Socialization Project in Character Building Pancasila Course*

There are two topics which the students can choose for their socialization project, namely are anti-corruption and religious tolerance education. With their group, students must write a project proposal and can only start doing the project after getting approval from the lecturer. Upon the proposal approval, students prepare for the materials to be presented in the community which in my class students chose schools and orphanages. Afterwards, they come to the community and deliver their presentation. The outputs of the project are a video of the socialization summary and final report. In the final report, each individual student is obliged to write a reflection on what they have learned throughout of the project.

#### *BINUS Graduate Attributes*

Graduate attributes are the quality or skills that need to be gained by the graduates and need to be developed by

the graduates when they are at the higher educational institutions. There are three graduate attributes expected to be developed through Character Building Pancasila course: critical and creative thinking, social awareness, and collaboration skills.

### *Participants*

The participants of this study were 16 students in the four classes of Character Building-Pancasila course in the Odd (Fall) semester of 2023-2024 academic year. The participants were selected through purposive sampling.

### *Data collection*

The qualitative data were collected through online open-ended survey questions which then was analyzed with the descriptive analysis method.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed through coding to find the similarities and differences of the students' views on the implementation of project-based learning in Character Building-Pancasila course.

## **Results**

Below, I present the results of my analyses in response to the research question of this study. I present the three soft skills or the BINUS Graduate Attributes gained and as perceived by the students through the implementation of project-based learning in Character Building-Pancasila course.

### **Critical and creative thinking skills**

All students who participated in this study found that the socialization project facilitated them to think critically, particularly in writing the proposal, preparing for the materials, and writing the final report. Video production as one of the outcomes of this project also allowed them to utilize their creative skills.

One of participating students shared this in her survey responses:

Researching and constructing the proposal involved critically evaluating sources, identifying biases, and synthesizing information from diverse perspectives on religious moderation. This sharpened my ability to discern facts from opinions, interpret evidence, and form well-reasoned conclusions.

Another participating student stated this in his survey responses:

Crafting the video documentary required creative scripting and editing to engage viewers and effectively communicate complex ideas about religious moderation. This challenged me to think outside the box, utilize visuals effectively, and employ emotional storytelling to connect with diverse audiences.

### *Social awareness*

The participants in this study revealed that the socialization project helped them to be aware of social issues such as corruption and religious tolerance. They also showed their concerns and empathy toward the negative impacts of these social issues on the wider community, leading them to realize the importance of anti-corruption and religious tolerance education from an early age. The participating students also agreed that the socialization project can shape anti-corruption and tolerant characters in children.

A participating student wrote this in his survey responses:

The anti-corruption socialization boosted my social awareness by delving into the impact of corruption on society. The socialization project against corruption helped me understand how bad corruption can affect everyone. When I explained about corruption and talked to people in the community, it showed me that it hurts real people. I now know that stopping corruption is something we all need to do together to make things better for everyone.

Another student who took part in this study provide the following as her response:

Besides merely imparting theoretical knowledge, we also demonstrate everyday actions that constitute corruption. This strategy aimed to foster anti-corruption characters and mold them into better future leaders. In general, this experience heightened my commitment to addressing social issues and fostering positive change in society.

### *Collaboration skills*

The students in this study highlighted that through the socialization project they gained experience in collaborative teamwork and taking ownership of their individual responsibilities.

A student shared his reflection in his survey responses:

The socialization project taught me a lot about working together with others. First, when I was writing the proposal, I had to talk to different people to get their ideas. It was like putting together a puzzle, and each person had a piece of the puzzle. Learning to listen and bring all those pieces together was key. Then, when I was preparing materials, I had to work with the team to make sure everything was clear and made sense.

Another student wrote her reflection as follows:

I'm grateful that my team was fully aware that this socialization project was heavily team oriented. Everyone has their own role and I made it clear from the start that if they had any trouble facing their responsibilities, they could always share it with someone who's willing. I was more than happy when they consulted me regarding their responsibilities. Even when one of my team members couldn't attend the socialization, I made sure he wasn't excluded from the project's responsibilities.

In addition to those mentioned above, some students who participated in this study also stated that completing all project tasks enhanced their confidence in effectively communicating complex information to younger group of students in a clear and compelling manner.

## Discussion

The present study attempts to examine how students perceived the implementation of project-based learning in Character Building-Pancasila course contributed to fostering their soft skills. I also conducted this study through online qualitative surveys to gain deeper insights into the integration of project-based learning in higher education. The results of this study show that students found project-based learning helped them develop these skills: critical and creative thinking, social awareness, and collaboration skills. In the following paragraphs, the details are presented.

The open-ended survey revealed that students perceived the socialization project enabled them to acquire critical and creative thinking skills. This finding is aligned with some existing studies on the integration of project-based learning in higher education (e.g. Mohammed (2017), Issa & Khataibeh (2021, and Sungkono & Ekaputra (2023)). Project-based learning promotes students' critical and creative thinking skills as through the project students are involved in an extended inquiry process focused on complex, real-world questions, along with carefully designed tasks and outputs ((Markham, Larmer, and Ravitz, 2003).

The results show that the socialization project helped students to increase their awareness of these social issues, corruption and religious tolerance. Students reported that their grow concerns, empathy, and responsibility to collectively make the nation better by practicing anti-corruption and being tolerant towards diversity. This finding is aligned with OECD (2019) that distinguishes 3 types of skills: cognitive and meta-cognitive skill, social and emotional skill, and practical and physical skill. Social awareness is part of social and emotional skills that include empathy and responsibility.

Lastly, this qualitative study reveals that students found their collaboration skills were fostered throughout the implementation of the socialization project. Collaboration skills are cultivated among students by applying project-based learning through structured discussion from explicit planning and student-centered learning activities with teaching and learning (Helle, Tynjälä, & Olkinuora, (2006). The process is also supported by

teaching aids conducive to the implementation of students' project work; Mohammed (2017); Ayish & Deveci (2019); Ibrahim & Rasyid (2022)).

## Conclusion

The implementation of project-based learning in higher education, to be specific in Character Building Pancasila course is beneficial as it can promote students' soft skills. Through the project, students developed their critical and creative thinking, social awareness, and collaboration skills.

## Recommendations

This study involved a limited group of students in Character Building-Pancasila course and utilized a qualitative approach employing open-ended survey questionnaires. Future study should be conducted in two other Character Building courses using a mix-method approach and involve a larger sample size of students as participants.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all participating students for sharing their experiences with project-based learning in Character Building-Pancasila course in the Odd Semester 2023/2024.

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## Perceptions of Peruvian Catholic School Teachers Regarding the Integration of the Gender Equality Approach in the National Basic Education Curriculum (CNEB)

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**Abstract:** The gender approach, also known as gender perspective, provides an analytical framework for examining the opportunities, difficulties and capabilities of men and women in society. In Peruvian education, this approach is integrated as a cross-cutting perspective in the National Basic Education Curriculum (CNEB), highlighting the importance of promoting gender equality at all educational levels. The objective of this qualitative research was to gather the perceptions and experiences of teachers from Catholic schools in Peru with respect to the implementation of the gender approach in the CNEB and in their own teaching practice. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and a subsequent analysis based on grounded theory was carried out. Among the results obtained, it was observed that most of the interviewees incorporate the gender approach in their teaching. However, many teachers have a misconception about what the gender approach entails and, therefore, they apply it based on their own criteria, which does not align with the genuine principles and objectives of the gender approach, resulting in practices that do not promote equality or gender equity. In addition, some teachers pointed out as a challenge present in their practice the misrepresentation of the objective of the approach in the CNEB by parents. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between religious schools and the perceptions of the teachers interviewed. This study suggests new lines of research related to teacher training on gender equality and the possible impacts on student achievement.

**Keywords:** Gender approach, Basic education, Catholic schools, Qualitative research

**Citation:** García Vargas, M. A., Reynoso Gómez, A.B., Ruiz-Ruiz, M.F., & Sallandt, U. (2024). Perceptions of Peruvian Catholic School Teachers Regarding the Integration of the Gender Equality Approach in the National Basic Education Curriculum (CNEB). In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--*

*International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1283-1300), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In recent years, Peru has been working to promote equal opportunities, regardless of gender, in all social scopes, in accordance with the objectives established in the United Nations 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015). This commitment has been expressed with a specific focus on improving access to opportunities in the educational, labor and social spheres for all members of society, regardless of gender (Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, MIMP, 2019). Additionally, this effort responds to the ethical need to build a diverse and heterogeneous society, where each individual can develop and enhance their skills for the benefit of the community.

Moreover, as world citizens, it is necessary to acquire knowledge about gender equality policies at the global level. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015) recognizes education as a fundamental principle of human rights and, therefore, as a requirement for people-centered sustainable development. Likewise, Peru, as a member of the United Nations (UN), has the duty to align with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Among these goals, the fifth one focuses on facilitating women's and girls' access to education and basic services. This SDG is closely related to education, as it constitutes a determining factor in promoting gender equality from an early age (UN, 2015). Consequently, education programs and policies at the national level are expected to include guidelines that promote gender equality as mentioned above.

In this context, diverse educational realities are observed that have the National Curriculum for Regular Basic Education (Currículo Nacional de Educación Básica Regular - CNEB) as a reference framework, which was approved in 2016 and began to be administered in Peru in 2017 (Ministry of Education, MINEDU, 2016). This document, in addition to acting as a guiding framework for regular basic education, includes a competency-based approach and cross-cutting perspectives to achieve the graduation profile of the Peruvian student. These cross-cutting approaches are in line with the educational principles established in the General Education Law (Ley General de Educación) and are aligned with the needs of contemporary society. Within these perspectives, there is the gender equality focus, which refers to equity in the value, aspirations and needs of men and women, recognizing the individual value of each person (MINEDU, 2016).

One of the main goals and priorities of education and teaching professionals is to raise the quality standard in educational institutions, addressing an integral approach. In this regard, the need to establish a safe and equitable environment for all students, without any exceptions, is raised (Díaz-Vicario and Gairín Sallán, 2014). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Sustainable Development Goal number five, which highlights the importance of achieving gender equality, is closely related to educational training, as it seeks to promote equality between boys and girls. In this sense, it seeks to enable them to become world citizens and achieve an integral development (UN, n.d.).

However, the implementation of this approach was not without controversy. Groups with more conservative perspectives expressed reservations toward this approach due to concerns about possible interpretations that they considered to be contradicting to the traditional conception of sex, gender and family (Alcalde Valencia, 2023). It is important to note that this rejection may have arisen from misunderstandings or ideological differences. Therefore, this research aims to collect and analyze the opinions, perceptions and experiences of a group of Regular Basic Education (RBE) Catholic school teachers in relation to the implementation of the gender equality approach in the CNEB. Thus, it also seeks to explore the assessment that these teachers and trainers have about the integration and application of this approach in the country's educational institutions.

### **Gender Approach and Regular Basic Education (RBE)**

The gender approach, also known as gender perspective, allows the analysis and understanding of the capabilities, opportunities, difficulties and relationships of men and women in society (Solís Sabanero, 2016). In other words, thanks to this approach, it is possible to examine the gender inequalities present in society and establish starting points to generate changes that promote equal opportunities. According to the Ministry of Education (MINEDU, 2016), the gender approach encompasses three fundamental values: equality and dignity, which refers to the equality of all people without gender distinction; justice, which implies providing fair opportunities, especially to those affected by gender inequalities; and empathy, which is related to identifying and attending to the affective needs of others.

Regular Basic Education (RBE) is a modality of education that encompasses the strata corresponding to initial, primary and secondary education. Its focus is oriented towards infants and teenagers who transit in a timely manner through the educational process in accordance with their physical, emotional and cognitive development from the moment of their birth, and is structured through specific levels, cycles, categories and typologies (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics - Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática [INEI], 2014). Likewise, according to MINEDU (2016), in RBE, educational levels are defined as progressive and coordinated stages that are adjusted to the learning needs and motivations of students. Cycles, on the other hand, represent transitory segments in which pedagogical processes are carried out that are based on expectations for the development of skills and competencies (called learning standards). This organizational structure by cycles offers educators and students greater flexibility and time to develop these competencies. Each cycle is designed to serve a specific group of students, who may be grouped according to their age or academic level.

#### *Background on the Gender Approach in Regular Basic Education (RBE)*

The Guide for Gender Equality in Teacher Education Policies and Practices of UNESCO (2015) presents several modules grounded on the principle of gender equality, and highlights the importance of understanding human rights to address more effectively the problem of gender inequality. Meanwhile, Villavicencio et al. (2021) present the panorama of gender research in the school environment, highlighting the need to incorporate the gender approach to achieve an education that not only focuses on academics, but also cultivates and promotes

values of respect and tolerance between boys and girls, as well as understanding the regulations on gender in the educational context. This will seek to foster an inclusive environment that promotes understanding and consideration between both genders from an early age, as well as other aspects of the human being, in other words, an integral and equalitarian education. Additionally, gender research in the school environment is considered, observing that teachers' gender positions and perceptions also influence students' school performance and their personal aspects.

It is also crucial to consider the various proposals that exist in relation to this issue. In Latin America, Muñoz Cabrejo (2006) examines the educational policies implemented in Peru between 1996 and 2003 from a gender perspective. Muñoz states that when referring to the notion of gender in education, the absence of gender gaps is assumed, since coverage in school enrollment is high for both women and men. However, he insists that it is necessary to promote equal opportunities in basic education in order to reduce poverty. By restricting gender equity in education, the critical and reflective potential of the gender approach to live in a more just society is limited. Furthermore, in the same region, Alegría (2020) exposes and analyzes the controversies that have arisen in the educational scope regarding the implementation of the gender approach in the National Curriculum for Basic Education in Peru. Following a similar line, it is imperative to highlight the proposals of Ruiz Gamio et al. (2004) on sexist stereotypes and how they are constantly changing within and outside the educational system. Bearing in mind that the school is not an isolated institution, but is inherently connected to the society in which we live, and it plays a fundamental role since it instills and promotes roles and norms for boys and girls taking into account the norms of the time. These authors indicate that such stereotypes represent a detrimental influence on boys and girls, the latter being the most affected, since they are represented as the inferior sex, which hinders the full development of their human potential.

Solís Sabanero (2016) proposes to carry out an exhaustive analysis of the inequities that currently prevail in the educational scope, approached from a gender perspective. Likewise, she explores to what extent school education can play a fundamental role in overcoming the gender stereotypes rooted in the city of Chihuahua, Mexico. Teachers are referred to as the ones in charge of stopping the transmission and reproduction of conservative roles and stereotypes such as sexism, discrimination, gender inequality and opportunity inequality. This approach is also related to the Chilean case, in which Abbet de la Torre Díaz (2014) evidences how the gender perspective should be included in an upcoming educational reform. She indicates that, in order to achieve an education where each student has the power to chart his or her own life path, it is vital to educate following a gender equality approach. However, in the case of Colombia, Muñoz Gañan et al. (2021) collected perceptions and pedagogical experiences about the implementation of the gender equality approach and determined that some teachers associate the application of the gender approach with sexuality or sexual diversity. Although they are related topics, the gender approach encompasses more concepts, such as equal opportunities between men and women.

In the European context, it is relevant to highlight the situation in Spain. García Perales (2012) points out that gender equity is promoted in this country. The author addresses the educational environment as an area of action

of great influence in the search for gender balance. From this perspective, Spanish educational institutions develop strategies and actions aimed at achieving equal opportunities. These strategies have proven to be effective and applicable in all aspects of students' lives. For this reason, several investigations in Spain focus on the implementation and integration of equality from the beginning of teacher training.

Resa Ocio (2023) examined the methodological guides used in teacher training in several Spanish universities and concluded that the syllabi still show some deficiencies regarding the teaching and implementation of educational policies related to gender equality. In addition, she established as a perspective for future research to delve into the limitations and facilities for implementing a legislation related to this issue. Moreover, Lucas-Palacios et al. (2022) conducted an assessment of knowledge related to gender equality and equity among education students in a higher education institution in Madrid. It was determined that there was conceptual knowledge about gender equity, although this did not necessarily translate into the acquisition and application of the gender perspective in their future educational practice. In addition, they stated that it is crucial to have professional training related to gender equality, in order to provide teachers with the tools to achieve an equal opportunity education.

Following the same line, Miralles-Cardona et al. (2023) conducted a comparison of the perceptions of education students in seven universities in Greece and Spain regarding their skills for teaching based on a gender approach. This research focused on STEM-oriented students, concluding that students complete their studies without adequate confidence and skills to carry out gender-focused teaching in educational institutions. Furthermore, the implementation of a gender perspective in STEM education was found to be deficient and poorly aligned with each country's curriculum. In an additional European perspective, Auhadeeva et al. (2015) conducted an analysis of skills related to gender equality in the practice of teachers in schools in Russia. They concluded that the totality of teachers consider gender approach as a fundamental element for today's education. However, only 10% of teachers indicated that they apply gender perspective in their educational practice.

## **Method**

The methodological approach used to analyze teachers' perceptions of the implementation and application of the gender equality approach in RBE was qualitative. This approach is based on the collection of non-numerical data, such as the description of experiences, analysis of perceptions or opinions associated with a largely social or cultural sphere (Valle et al., 2022). In addition, qualitative research allows for a greater freedom to analyze social phenomena, since words, opinions and experiences are used to deepen, in a holistic manner, about a subject matter (Guerrero, 2016).

## **Background and participants**

This research does not intend to generalize opinions, but rather to collect different perceptions and personal

experiences of each teacher, in order to reach a significant level of understanding. The sample chosen for this research, deliberate and by convenience, was 15 teachers from Catholic religious educational institutions in different regions of Peru. This target group was chosen because teachers from religious institutions represent a unique perspective with respect to the research topic. The selection of this target population was considered relevant because the teaching work in this type of institutions and personal beliefs can give rise to ideological biases and specific perspectives. The chosen sample is intended to identify the relationship between individual and institutional beliefs regarding a potentially sensitive topic in a religious setting. Table 1 presents some insights about the teachers interviewed.

Table 1. Teachers interviewed

<i>Interviewee #</i>	<i>Sex (M- W)</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Years of teaching practice</i>	<i>Region of current practice</i>	<i>Area or course of specialization</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	W	44	20	Lima	English
<i>Interviewee 2</i>	W	38	8	Lima	Social Studies
<i>Interviewee 2</i>	W	47	23	Lima	Communication
<i>Interviewee 4</i>	W	50	23	Lima	Single-teacher classroom
<i>Interviewee 5</i>	W	46	23	Lima	Single-teacher classroom
<i>Interviewee 6</i>	W	45	19	Lima	Single-teacher classroom
<i>Interviewee 7</i>	M	42	20	Lima	Religious Education
<i>Interviewee 8</i>	M	50	25	Lima	Learning and language disabilities
<i>Interviewee 9</i>	W	32	12	Lima	English
<i>Interviewee 10</i>	W	33	9	Lima	English
<i>Interviewee 11</i>	M	58	32	Lambayeque	Coordination and family
<i>Interviewee 12</i>	M	52	25	Chincha	Science
<i>Interviewee 13</i>	M	45	22	Lambayeque	Physical Education
<i>Interviewee 14</i>	W	48	25	Piura	Early Years Coordination
<i>Interviewee 15</i>	W	35	15	Lima	Mathematics

The teachers were contacted via telephone call, messages or mail. The interviewees voluntarily agreed to be interviewed and were informed that their data, opinions and perceptions would be used for academic purposes. In addition, their personal data and that of the schools where they work were kept confidential. The interviews were conducted via Zoom or phone call, and lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Teachers were informed that at any time during the interview they could withdraw if they wished. The interviews were also recorded and transcribed to facilitate later analysis.

#### *Instrument*

The semi-structured interview was used as an instrument for qualitative data collection. This type of interview



shows greater flexibility, since pre-established questions are used that are adapted according to the flow of conversation carried in the interview (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Díaz-Bravo et al., 2013). Also, unlike structured interviews or surveys, interviewees do not feel obliged to choose a particular answer (Lopezosa, 2020). To use this technique, an interview guide was developed, the general aspects of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Semi-structured interview guide

Dimension	Objective	Sample questions
1. Characteristics of the teachers interviewed	To know general aspects of the interviewees' teaching practice.	How many years have you been teaching? What areas do you specialize in?
2. Knowledge of the gender approach and its implementation in the CNEB.	To learn about the opinions and perceptions of teachers on the gender approach and its implementation in the CNEB.	Do you know what a cross-cutting approach is within the CNEB? How would you define the gender equality approach? What are your main appreciations, concerns or criticisms about the implementation of this approach in the CNEB?
3. Applying it to the educational practice	To analyze the experiences that teachers have had in implementing the gender approach in their educational practice.	In what kind of activities do you apply the gender equality approach in your teaching? What challenges and impacts have you noticed when applying it, whether positive or negative?
4. Relationship with the main stakeholders of the educational community	Examine the reactions of the educational community to the implementation of the gender approach.	What is the perception of the educational community regarding the implementation of the gender equality approach in the CNEB? Could you mention any particular case?
5. General thoughts	To learn about the role of the teacher in the implementation of the approach.	What do you see as your role as a teacher in promoting gender equality and raising students' awareness of this issue?

After the interview and its transcription, the analysis of the responses was carried out. This analysis was based on grounded theory, a research approach characterized by developing theories or concepts from the analysis of collected data, disregarding the influence of pre-existing ideas or theories (De la Espriella & Restrepo, 2020).

Grounded theory has the additional purpose of interpreting and understanding the cases or data in depth, allowing a more complete understanding of the influence of the social context from the perspective of the interviewees (Varela & Sutton, 2021). In addition, the responses provided were subjected to a coding process in order to obtain categories from the codes generated. This procedure was essential to systematically organize and analyze the information collected.

#### *Validation and confirmation*

To validate the instrument, three validation strategies were employed. First, triangulation was carried out with three experts in the educational field. Secondly, a pilot test was carried out with three teachers who subsequently participated in the research, in order to check the understanding of the questions and the fluency of the interview. Thirdly, after conducting the interviews with the participants, recording them digitally and preliminarily analyzing the results, an additional contact was made with a group of the interviewees to confirm the findings obtained. Soriano Rodriguez (2014) stresses that it is important that the instruments go through a validation process to ensure that the results obtained are accurate and reliable. In addition, Carvajal et al. (2011) indicate that in order for an instrument to be applicable and measure what is desired, it must undergo validation and subsequent adaptation.

## **Results**

The following are the main results obtained, which have been organized according to the five dimensions of the semi-structured interview presented in the previous section.

### **Characteristics of the teachers interviewed**

The teachers interviewed are between 32 and 58 years old. Most of them have been in practice for more than 20 years, with the exception of two teachers, who have been in practice for 8 and 12 years. Likewise, most of the teachers interviewed work in the city of Lima, with the exception of four who work in other provinces within the country. Likewise, most of the teachers interviewed are currently working at the primary level, that is, in cycles III, IV and V of RBE. Most of the teachers have a specialty area, such as mathematics or English, but some others specialize in single-teaching in the early grades of primary school. A small group of teachers also have administrative positions, such as level coordinators or family coordinators.

### *Knowledge of the gender equality approach and its implementation in the CNEB*

Half of the teachers interviewed have the perception that the gender equality approach seeks to recognize, value and offer equal opportunities to men and women in society, providing and promoting the best conditions for them to develop in society in an autonomous and participatory manner.

The gender equality approach is the cross-cutting approach that seeks to make students recognize that men and women have the same rights and duties and that they should have access to the same opportunities (Interviewee 2, 38 years old).

Giving the opportunity to both men and women without defining something that, suddenly, society stipulates that it is only for men or for women (Interviewee 3, 47 years old).

It seeks to create better conditions for both boys and girls (Interviewee 9, 32 years old).

Furthermore, some teachers have the perception that this cross-cutting approach is about the knowledge of the different genres applied in reality.

I understand that it is intended that the students know the reality of the different genders that exist, not only boy-girl (Interviewee 1, 44 years old).

I would define it as an adaptation to our reality (Interviewee 5, 46 years old).

Likewise, other interviewees mentioned that they conceptualize this approach as values in terms of opportunities and skills to be demonstrated in social relationships.

I conceptualize it as values and skills that students must demonstrate in the context of social relations at school (Interviewee 6, age 45).

From my point of view, gender equality [should be] in terms of values, in terms of opportunities and in terms of rights (Interviewee 11, 58 years old).

Other interviewees mentioned as a definition that men and women are equal individuals and that they have to be seen in a balanced way in society taking into account diversity.

Accordingly, the gender approach teaches that men and women are equal (Interviewee 12, 52 years old).

This perspective tries to balance a slightly different view of men and women in a social context (Interviewee 13, 45 years old).

Seeks equality among students, taking into account the diversity that may exist among them, specifically in terms of their identity (Interviewee 14, 48 years old).

### *Applying it to the educational practice*

A small group of teachers indicated that they did not apply it or that it was very complicated to apply the approach in their teaching, due to personal ideas or circumstances of the context in which they taught.

I don't really apply it (Interviewee 1, 44 years old).

Since it is an all-male school, I feel that there are very few opportunities to address gender equity issues

(Interviewee 2, 38 years old).

One interviewee indicated that a challenge in applying the approach was not being able to see the relationship and interaction between boys and girls in everyday settings, making it difficult to connect this type of learning with the personal experiences that occur in the school context.

Since the school itself is single-sex, perhaps they do not have the opportunity to see that men and women can perform the same activities on a daily basis at school. The challenge is that they have to evoke these situations through a case but perhaps they cannot be experienced (Interviewee 2, 38 years old).

Nevertheless, some teachers indicated that they apply this approach in their daily work, since they consider that it is an aspect that is worked on on a daily basis, without necessarily focusing on a specific activity.

In reality, it is more in the day to day than in teaching a subject (Interviewee 3, 47 years old).

I apply the gender approach in my daily activities (Interviewee 4, 50 years old).

[I apply it] at all times because there is always a vocabulary of equality (Interviewee 6, 45 years old).

In this sense, they state that the challenges that emerge with applying this approach are also present on a day-to-day basis.

There may be challenges at all times but it is important that we all can proceed in the same way (Interviewee 5, 46 years old).

Challenges are encountered at all times (Interviewee 6, 45 years old).

Most of the teachers interviewed commented that they do apply the gender approach in their teaching practice. However, some of them, when explaining the concept of gender approach, do not fully understand what the term refers to. Therefore, at the moment of "applying" this approach, it ends up being implemented based on the teacher's perception.

I have to teach the kids what it means to respect, to respect themselves, to know themselves, to love themselves. If they don't respect and love themselves, they can't respect and love other people (Interviewee 12, 52 years old).

Do not constrain them in the use and characteristics that usually tend to be of girls (Interviewee 8, 50 years old).

We try to work with the children from the area of social studies, [since] the first task is to build their identity (Interviewee 14, 48 years old).

Two teachers commented that in order to apply this approach they use real cases, which invite students to reflect on prejudices or stereotyped ideas.

When we apply the gender equality approach, we do so precisely by highlighting women's contribution to society and to life (Interviewee 7, 42 years old).

I like to give the children space to reflect and question certain pre-established ideas between men and women (Interviewee 2, 38 years old).

One of the challenges that most teachers encountered in their practice has been the pre-established ideas or prejudices of parents. In addition, they comment that there is a lot of confusion and distortion of what it means to work with this transversal approach and its purpose in Peruvian education.

One does not know what message they have from home regarding this issue. I can say A, but they have been taught B at home. So I feel that this is a subject that I cannot touch with the children of this reality, of this school (Interviewee 1, 44 years old).

Parents understand (...) that you are going to promote that if you are a boy and you feel like a girl, you are going to promote it, you are going to support them. So, that is the "chip" that you have to change with the parents (Interviewee 3, 47 years old).

Challenges not so much on their [the students'] side but on the parents' side. There are parents who allow their children to play anything, but there are mothers who think that girls are more delicate and if that is transmitted (Interviewee 4, age 50).

A few interviewees commented that they did not encounter challenges in the application of this approach, as the institution, teachers and parents were aligned to the principles of this approach and its application.

The school has an ideology, an educational style that parents who put their children in school know where they put them and are in total agreement (Interviewee 11, 58 years old).

At the center we have adapted very well to this approach, but we have also adapted this approach to the profile of the institution (Interviewee 14, 48 years old).

#### *Relationship with the main stakeholders of the educational community*

The majority of the teachers interviewed assure that the stakeholders of the educational institutions have a positive perception of the application of the gender approach in the classrooms and in the learning sessions. In addition, they emphasize that they always try to preserve equal opportunities between boys and girls so that they are capable of developing their skills and continuing their education as members of society in order to achieve different objectives.

The perception is assertive, we all agree that children have the possibility to do everything (Interviewee 4, 50 years old).

The school has always sought to avoid those differences between what boys and girls can and cannot do (Interviewee 5, 46 years old).

The school seeks to give those opportunities to each student so that they can develop their abilities and be aware of their abilities, and that their goals are set not only by the teacher towards them or each goal that each family may have for the children (Interviewee 9, 32 years).

Some of the teachers commented on the approach and the relationship with the institution. They commented that, being a Catholic school, they do not usually address the issue easily since it occurs in few circumstances.

Since it is a Catholic school, it is something that is not taken into account much (Interviewee 1, 44 years old).

It is an approach that is not emphasized here (Interviewee 2, 38 years old).

Nonetheless, very few of the teachers interviewed stated that the main stakeholders in this area are the parents, but they also consider that they are the first ones to cause confusion to the students themselves with terms and definitions.

"The confusion that in some way the children show I think is from many parents" (Interviewee 3, 47 years old).

"They have total confusion" (Interviewee 8, age 50).

One of the teachers interviewed commented on the school's acceptance of the gender approach and its relationship with the Ministry, saying that the institution does not agree with such agreements and terms to be used with students.

"In the school they are not very much in agreement with the way the Ministry of Education approaches this perspective because it is still an ideology" (Interviewee 11, 58 years old).

Another teacher interviewed shared his perception of how the educational community, being Catholic, values faith formation and doctrine as well as giving value to the different definitions of gender equality.

"I think that the educational community to which I belong values very much what is the Catholic Christian formation, many teachers now strive to give support to the way we see things in relation to gender identity" (Interviewee 14, 48 years old).

### *General thoughts*

Most teachers consider that one of the most important roles they have as teachers is to teach respect for others as human beings, respecting the diversity of opinions, choices and decisions.

Simply respect people whether they are the same or different, have an open mind towards people we

know who are not the same (Interviewee 1, age 44).

To make them respect themselves and know how to value differences and diversity (Interviewee 4, age 50).

(...) Oriented towards respect for the human being as such, whether as a man or as a woman (Interviewee 14, 48 years old).

Likewise, a small group of teachers also consider themselves guides or companions of students in their development in gender equality, some relating it to respect. They stated:

My role is as a counselor, I have to guide how they develop in the equality that we want to work on (Interviewee 4, 50 years old).

My role as a teacher is to guide my students so that respect is a value that they really practice (Interviewee 9, 32 years old).

Moreover, a group of teachers also considers that the task related to this approach is to break pre-established beliefs or to question what students consider correct or true. There is an emphasis on breaking beliefs related to gender roles. These teachers express that:

[My role is] to question them or present them with situations in which they can see that an occupation or an activity or a skill can be performed by either a man or by a woman (Interviewee 2, 38 years old).

First [I must] break the myths and prejudices of the children, that certain activities are for boys or certain activities are for girls (Interviewee 3, 47 years old).

[To make students understand that] there are roles that are undertaken indistinctly and that there is not a role for a woman or a role for a man (Interviewee 11, 58 years old).

Furthermore, some teachers share that, as part of their teaching role, it is important to be a role model for the students they teach. Teachers comment on the intrinsic responsibility for students to observe in their daily lives teachers acting in a way that is coherent with what is being taught based on this cross-cutting approach.

"My main role is to be an example and how, with my actions, I can give them an answer where respect, equal opportunities are promoted, not favoritism" (Interviewee 6, 45 years old).

"Be a role model, show an open and receptive attitude towards gender diversity, valuing the differences between boys and girls. Share stories and tales that depict female characters in diverse and empowered roles" (Interviewee 15, age 35).

One interviewee also commented on the steps taken by the educational institution where he works to model an environment that fosters equal opportunity.

"The school has strived to align itself [to the cross-cutting approach], so there are many efforts to be



able to make this possible for equal participation in society for both men and women" (Interviewee 7, age 42).

## Discussion

The results obtained from this study allow for a series of reflections on the topic addressed, some of which are related to the literature reviewed in the attached section of background information. The opinions of the teachers are aligned with the principles of UNESCO (2016) and what was stated by Villavicencio et al. (2021). Both writings emphasize the importance of incorporating human rights to promote an integral development in students. These authors advocate for an education focused on reflection and implementation of what is learned in everyday life. Also, the responses of some teachers related to the resistance of some parents to applying the gender approach are related to that presented by Alegría (2020), who discusses the repercussions of campaigns against the integration of this approach in Peruvian education. In her paper, she highlights the lack of understanding and acceptance of these educational policies.

Additionally, the concern about the negative effects of gender stereotypes, commented by the teachers interviewed, is in line with the work of Ruiz Gamio et al. (2004), which stresses the need to confront these perceptions through education. It also indicates that these stereotypes hinder the development and exploration of boys and girls. Likewise, the teachers' answers indicate the need to implement educational strategies that promote equality and respect for diversity, which agrees with the studies of Solís Sabanero (2016) and Abbet de la Torre Díaz (2014), which indicate that, in order to achieve social change, relevant teacher training is needed in the referred topic.

Along the same lines, the results reveal deficiencies in teacher training related to the implementation of the gender approach. This is consistent with the findings of Resa Ocio (2023). This study criticizes the lack of preparation in university curricula to implement educational policies linked to this approach. Besides, some teachers indicated that, although they had knowledge about the gender approach, they did not apply this approach, due to difficulties in the environment or for personal reasons, which agrees with what was presented by Lucas-Palacios et al. (2022).

A contrast was observed between what was found in this research and what was stated by Auhadeeva et al. (2015), which highlights an evolution in the application of the gender approach by teachers. In the case of the teachers interviewed, most of them indicate that the gender approach is applied in their teaching practice, unlike what was stated by the mentioned research, since it was found that a very small group applied this approach.

Finally, it is important to highlight the relationship found between the teachers interviewed and their workplaces, the Catholic schools. In general, most of the teachers did not mention in their responses that the institutions where they worked as teachers presented an impediment to the application of this approach. This

finding is consistent with Abregu Saenz et al. (2021), who conducted research on the attitudes of Catholic school students regarding gender equality. The authors point out that no direct relationship was found between the religiosity of the schools and the view held on gender equality. In interviews with teachers, there was very little mention of an impediment on the part of the school, but rather an obstacle due to the teacher's own belief or the fact that the school was single-sex (for men only).

## Conclusion

The teachers interviewed demonstrate a clear judgment on the importance of incorporating the gender approach in current education within their classrooms, which is linked to different national and international organizations such as UNESCO and different recent research. Their responsibility to promote holistic development in students, which is composed of internalization, reflection and the management of new skills in daily life, is becoming more and more visible. Thus, the recognition of human rights, the gender approach and diversity in educational practice is fundamental.

Teachers demonstrate a commitment to attention to diversity through practices that involve gender-inclusive activities, which reflect an integration of the gender approach as well as the continuous learning of students. Also, educators' adaptation and flexibility to incorporate different tactics that promote equality among students and thus a more equitable society is presented. This shows that in the future, education will stand out for its continuous training, flexibility and the importance of the student in an all-inclusive environment.

Finally, in spite of the limited knowledge of the gender approach and its characteristics, different challenges related to other sectors of education and deficiencies in the complete training of teachers are still involved. These challenges include the urgent need to raise awareness of the gender approach among teachers, parents and other educational stakeholders, with the aim of overcoming prejudices and making the concept, and positive and current ideas more widely known. At some point, this will make it possible to create awareness about a new gap on this concept, and broaden the horizon on new methods for training teachers. Thus, this way will promote the knowledge, acceptance and application of this approach in educational situations.

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## Comparative Study of Segregated and Coeducational Primary Education: Analyzing Peruvian Experiences through the Lens of Educational Psychology

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the comparison of experiences associated with segregated and mixed gendered education from the perspective of pedagogical psychology at the primary education level in the Peruvian context. Through a qualitative approach, interviews were conducted with ten educational psychologists experienced in urban schools in Lima. They were evenly divided between coeducational and segregated environments. The findings disclose that participants possess a nuanced understanding of the distinctions between coeducational and segregated schools. They emphasize the aspiration for equality and opportunities in coeducation, whereas in segregated environments, the emphasis lies on customized approaches designed to address specific needs within each gender. This study provides a robust foundation for future research that could delve deeper into the specific effects of coeducational and segregated education on the academic, psychological, and social development of Peruvian students. It is suggested to investigate how these school structures impact classroom socialization and cultural diversity, as well as the development of cognitive and emotional skills. Additionally, the possibility is opened to examine the evolution of coeducational and segregated education in the Peruvian context over time and assess its ongoing effectiveness in achieving educational and social objectives

**Keywords:** Coeducation; single-sex schools; educational psychology; school structure

**Citation:** Ferreyros, D., Zegarra, A., Ruiz-Ruiz, M.F., & Sallandt, U. (2024). Comparative Study of Segregated and Coeducational Primary Education: Analyzing Peruvian Experiences through the Lens of Educational Psychology. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1301-1314), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The structure in school management plays a crucial role in the comprehensive formation of students, as it establishes the environment and fundamental circumstances for students to acquire knowledge and experience significant personal growth (Pahlke & Hyde, 2016). Segregated education refers to the practice of separating students by gender, thus establishing specific educational environments for boys and girls (Harker, 2010); while coeducational education involves the joint teaching of boys and girls in the same environment (Yasin et al., 2020). In the aforementioned context of school management, the choice between segregated education and coeducational education has been a constant topic of debate and significant concern for parents, educators, and educational psychologists (Gordillo, 2017). This debate raises fundamental questions about how these two modalities influence learning, personal development, and students' future prospects (Paez, 2015).

It is argued that students attending segregated schools tend to perform better in mathematics and science exams, thus suggesting that segregation in education may be related to stronger academic performance in these specific areas (Eisenkopf et al., 2015). On the other hand, it is argued that coeducational institutions have a greater positive impact on the emotional and social skills development of students. This is because these schools foster equal learning and development opportunities for all students, regardless of their gender (Ryan, 2010). In this context, an environment is promoted where students can interact with their opposite-gender peers more naturally, contributing to the development of interpersonal and social skills, such as empathy, effective communication, and collaboration.

Due to its ability to analyze and understand different aspects such as cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of students in the educational context, psychology plays a fundamental role regarding school structure. Educational psychology focuses on the study of students' cognitive development (Madrigal, 2009), which involves analyzing how they learn, process information, and acquire academic skills. These are crucial aspects when assessing how segregated or coeducational education may impact students' performance.

Furthermore, educational psychology explores emotional development by addressing the emotional dimensions of education (Arvilla, 2011). Therefore, it examines how segregation or coeducation may impact or influence students' emotional well-being, self-concept, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships. Additionally, psychology studies the process of identity construction; that is, it investigates how segregated or coeducational education may contribute to identity formation and how they influence students' aspirations and roles in society (Arvilla, 2011).

Consequently, this research aimed to compare perspectives - from educational psychology - of experiences related to segregated and coeducational education at the primary education level. The comparative analysis exercise aims to provide guidelines on the key differences between both types of school structure, providing information for parents, educators, and decision-makers in the field of educational management.



### **School structure: segregated and coeducational education**

The school structure is an essential component in the implementation of different educational approaches, such as coeducation and segregated education, which exert a significant influence on how educational institutions operate. Coeducation, as an educational approach, advocates for both boys and girls to receive education in a shared school environment, where both parties participate in the same learning activities and share interaction spaces. This school structure tends to be more inclusive and equitable, aiming to eliminate gender divisions and promote equal opportunities. Its main objective is to promote the development of social skills and ensure that all students have access to the same learning opportunities, development, and growth (Alvarez, et al., 2019).

In contrast, segregated education involves the separation of students by gender, reflected in the existence of specific classrooms and school environments for girls or boys. This approach aims to provide a more personalized education tailored to the particular needs of each gender, leveraging the advantages that this could entail (Harker, 2010). To achieve this, it is considered necessary to create separate spaces and environments, sometimes justified by differences in developmental pace, learning preferences, or specific educational needs of each gender.

The choice between these educational approaches has a direct impact on the school structure and how resources are managed, classes are planned, and student needs are addressed (Guerra, et al., 2014). The decision to adopt coeducation or segregated education depends on multiple factors, such as pedagogical objectives, educational beliefs of the community, and institutional policies. The school structure plays a vital role in the successful implementation of these educational approaches and in creating an optimal learning environment to foster the comprehensive development of all students (Booth, et al., 2018).

This choice between educational models must be carefully considered, taking into account both academic objectives and the specific needs of students (Pahlke & Hyde, 2016). It is essential to ensure that the school structure is consistent with educational purposes and allows for effective, equitable teaching and learning that promotes an inclusive society. Furthermore, continuous evaluation of these approaches is essential to ensure that they remain appropriate and effective in achieving constantly evolving educational and social objectives.

#### *Educational Structure and Educational Psychology*

Educational psychology encompasses complex interactions among various factors that affect students' learning and development. Because education extends beyond an individual process of knowledge transmission and also has social and cultural implications, playing a crucial role in shaping identity, values, and attitudes, educational psychology becomes an indispensable tool for understanding and improving educational systems.

One area of study in educational psychology is socialization. School structures and classroom interactions can perpetuate traditional gender roles or challenge them. By examining how gender stereotypes are transmitted and

perpetuated in the educational environment, educational psychologists can offer key insights for creating more equitable and empowering environments for students, regardless of gender (Bigler, 2013).

Additionally, educational psychology also focuses on cultural diversity in the classroom. Educators may face significant challenges when dealing with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Understanding how cultural differences affect learning and social interactions is crucial for generating more effective pedagogical strategies and fostering an inclusive educational environment (Carrillo, 2018).

Studies in educational psychology can also provide deep insights into how students process information and develop cognitive skills (Macazana, 2021). This is essential when designing curricula and teaching methods that can align with students' abilities and needs. Educational psychologists can investigate how students acquire skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity, and how emotional factors such as motivation and self-esteem influence these processes.

Lastly, in the realm of educational decision-making, psychology provides an objective basis. Psychological data and research can support evidence-based educational policies and practices, helping decision-makers implement significant changes in the educational system, such as analyzing learning outcomes in coeducational and segregated environments, allowing assessment of how these structures impact academic performance and personal development. This information can be crucial for parents, educators, and educational managers in making informed decisions about the type of education that best suits students' needs (Arvilla, 2011).

### *Background for the Peruvian Case*

Throughout much of the 20th century, Peruvian primary schools, like many educational institutions globally, adopted a segregated approach, where girls and boys were educated separately. However, in 1891, Peru experienced its first formal and institutionalized coeducational experiences with the English Methodist missionary Thomas B. Wood, who founded the Callao High School that same year (Gordillo, 2015).

Over the years, significant changes occurred in Peruvian primary education and the understanding of educational psychology. The 1970s marked a significant turning point with the enactment of laws and policies aimed at gender equality in education. This was due to decree N°19326 promulgated on March 21, 1972, by the military dictatorship of Juan Velasco Alvarado, which emphasized the promotion of mixed or coeducational education (Trahtemberg, 2000). This change occurred gradually, leading the country from a fully segregated system to a regulated coeducational approach in primary schools.

The return to democracy in the early 1980s involved strong opposition to the policies implemented by the previous military governments, leading to the reversal and elimination of many laws. One of the initiatives in question sought to undo the educational reform, including the elimination of coeducation in public secondary schools, a measure announced in the early months of 1983 (Romero, 2016). This action provoked a strong

response from educators, psychologists, sociologists, and parliamentarians of different ideological currents, who advocated for coeducation.

Finally, by the end of 1983, the Ministry of Education developed new regulations, known as regular basic education (EBR), which at that time included the education of children at primary and secondary levels. In these regulations, coeducation was allowed as a valid grouping form in primary, but it would only be possible in secondary if schools met certain requirements (Decree Law N°19326). Nowadays, both approaches coexist in Peru, in both public and private institutions.

Due to the debate over which approach is more suitable, various research studies have been initiated worldwide shedding light on the effects of both approaches on students' academic, psychological, and social development. These studies have explored topics such as academic performance, self-esteem, attitudes toward gender, and professional aspirations of students in segregated and coeducational educational contexts (Belcher et al., 2006; Eisenkopf et al., 2015; Halpern et al., 2011; Yasin et al., 2020). However, no exhaustive studies have been carried out addressing the comprehensive dimension of students' development, which can influence students' perceptions and experiences regarding the emotional and social dimension (Kombe et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is considered of great importance to conduct studies focused on the relationship between school structure and formation, as this can be an essential tool to help educators and policymakers make informed decisions about effective and contextualized ways to ensure the comprehensive education of students.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed to investigate educational experiences in segregated and coeducational primary education in Peru was based on a qualitative approach. This approach involves data collection that includes the description of experiences, as well as the analysis of perceptions and opinions related to a predominantly social or cultural context (Vega-Malagón et al., 2014). Additionally, a comparative and exhaustive analysis of these perspectives is conducted with the aim of contrasting the information obtained from both approaches. According to Sartori (1984), the comparative method aims to search for similarities and dissimilarities, as comparison is based on the criterion of homogeneity.

## **Instrument**

Richards et al. (1992) define the interview as a planned dialogue between a researcher and an individual or group of individuals, designed to gather valuable and relevant information for the study at hand. The interview is a technique of great utility in qualitative research for collecting data; it is defined as a conversation with a specific purpose other than simply conversing (Diaz-Bravo et al., 2013). It is used to obtain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and opinions of these experts regarding segregated and coeducational

education. Additionally, the semi-structured interview is opted for, as despite having a predefined structure, they offer a greater degree of flexibility, as they start from planned questions that can be adjusted to the interviewees.

The interviews were conducted virtually through the Zoom platform. These did not last longer than 30 minutes. Likewise, the interviewees were informed that the interview would be recorded and transcribed to facilitate the analysis of information. The collection of data and information sought to be collected was distributed into three categories (Table 1).

Table 1. Categories and guiding questions

Category	Goal	Guiding questions
1. Characteristics of the interviewees	These initial questions serve to gather relevant information about the interviewee.	How many years of experience do you have as an educational psychologist? What type of school do you work or have worked in?
2. Knowledge about educational approaches: coeducation and segregated schools	These questions gather relevant information about your knowledge and handling of the topic.	How would you define segregated/coeducational education? What are the key differences between both approaches from an objective standpoint?
3. Opinion on both educational approaches based on experience	These questions were formulated to understand the interviewee's opinion from their perception and experience.	What motivated you to specialize in coeducational or segregated education? What do you consider to be the significant challenges associated with coeducational/segregated education? Can you provide examples or specific cases that illustrate the effectiveness or limitations of coeducational/segregated education from your perspective? What are the main benefits you perceive in coeducational/segregated education?

### *Participants*

To carry out this study, active participation was sought from a group consisting of ten educational psychologists, selected by convenience and interest, with experience in urban schools in Lima, Peru. The fundamental purpose of the research was to obtain a comprehensive and balanced view of two crucial approaches in the educational

field: coeducational education and segregated education. With the aim of deepening this analysis in an equitable manner, it was decided to conduct in-depth interviews with five psychologists who have experience in educational institutions, and with another five with experience in segregated education.

The choice of this specific target group is based on the need to contrast the opinions and perspectives of two categories of experts, facilitating a solid and detailed comparison. This approach allows for a thorough analysis of the fundamental differences in beliefs, values, and pedagogical approaches underlying these two educational models. Additionally, the active participation of educational psychologists with experience enriches the research by providing a contextualized and relevant understanding of educational dynamics. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to dialogue and decision-making.

Firstly, the interviewees are presented in Table 2, who agreed to participate voluntarily and were contacted through various means, both virtually and in person. Additionally, they were informed that their data would be collected for academic purposes and that their identity and workplace would be kept anonymous.

Table 2. Interviewed participants

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Formation</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Type of institution (coeducational or segregated)</b>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	M_01	M	28	Ed. Psychologist	8 years	Coeducational
<i>Interviewee 2</i>	F_01	F	27	Ed. Psychologist	2 years	Segregated
<i>Interviewee 3</i>	F_02	F	32	Ed. Psychologist	7 years	Segregated
<i>Interviewee 4</i>	F_03	F	29	Ed. Psychologist	4 years	Coeducational
<i>Interviewee 5</i>	F_04	F	27	Ed. Psychologist	1 year 9 months	Coeducational
<i>Interviewee 6</i>	M_02	M	26	Ed. Psychologist	3 years	Coeducational
<i>Interviewee 7</i>	F_05	F	36	Ed. Psychologist	10 years	Segregated
<i>Interviewee 8</i>	F_06	F	26	Ed. Psychologist	2 years	Coeducational
<i>Interviewee 9</i>	F_07	F	30	Ed. Psychologist	7 years	Segregated
<i>Interviewee 10</i>	M_03	M	24	Ed. Psychologist	1 years	Segregated

### *Procedure*

Following the guidelines of inductive analysis, variations and similarities in the collected data are inferred in detail. Additionally, it allows for discerning underlying patterns, emerging trends, and possible correlations that could be essential for understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, comparative analysis provides a broader view of the data, ultimately enriching the ability to formulate solid interpretations.

After meticulous transcription of the recorded interviews, a thorough analysis was carried out following the

methodology of Grounded Theory. Using an inductive approach, participants' responses were examined for patterns of convergence and divergence, allowing for a deep understanding of emerging themes and ideas. These elements were organized into pre-established categories, which served as essential reference points for data organization and classification, thus ensuring a rigorous research procedure. According to Strauss and Corbin (2002), Grounded Theory is characterized by generating theories or concepts from the analysis of collected data and its main objective is to analyze cases or data to provide a broader understanding of how the social context influences, from the perspective of the interviewees.

### *Validation*

With the purpose of obtaining validation of the instrument, three strategies were implemented. Firstly, triangulation was carried out with experts in the field of educational psychology, providing an assessment of the relevant elements and contents of the research, thus increasing the reliability of the results. This strategy was employed to validate and obtain multiple perspectives that could enrich the research. Secondly, a pilot test was conducted with two educational psychologists who later participated in the research, aiming to assess the understanding of the questions and the fluency of the interview. Thirdly, after conducting the interviews with the participants and digitally recording them for a preliminary analysis of the results, additional contact was made with a group of interviewees to corroborate the findings. Soriano (2015) emphasizes the importance of subjecting instruments to a validation process to ensure the truthfulness and reliability of the results. Additionally, having several observers in the research field enhances the quality and validity of the data, as it allows for obtaining different perspectives on the same object of study (Aguilar & Barroso, 2015).

## **Results**

Below are the main findings, which have been collected and organized according to the three predefined categories. Additionally, the questions classified within these categories are included for better understanding and structure of the analysis. These findings aim to capture the opinions and perceptions of educational psychologists regarding coeducational and segregated schools, as well as to evaluate the impact of these approaches on students.

### **Characteristics of the Interviewees**

In the initial category, data from the interviewees were collected, covering aspects such as their age, gender, academic background, and experience in segregated or coeducational educational environments. It was observed that 70% of the participants were women aged between 27 and 36 years. Additionally, the remaining percentage consisted of men between 24 and 28 years old. It is important to highlight that the interviewees have work experience as educational psychologists ranging from one to ten years. Additionally, five of them work in coeducational institutions, while the other five work in segregated institutions. This aspect enables obtaining

different perspectives and opinions based on their specific experiences in these environments, enriching the ability to contrast different views and perceptions through their lens as educational psychologists.

#### *Knowledge about Educational Approaches: Coeducation and Segregated Schools*

In the second category of the research, the aim was to assess the interviewees' knowledge about educational institutions, whether coeducational or segregated. Participants demonstrated diverse understanding of both educational approaches, despite the lack of formal specialization in either of these models. The work experience of the interviewees in specific environments significantly influenced their perspectives.

An interviewee with experience in coeducational schools emphasized the importance of coeducation, arguing that "it serves to develop emotional and social skills, allowing interaction with people of different genders, which is crucial for real life" (Interviewee M\_01). In contrast, another interviewee with experience in a segregated environment pointed out: "Being all males, there are limitations in socialization regarding both sexes. They get used to living only among themselves, and it is difficult for them to establish other types of relationships" (Interviewee F\_01). Additionally, another participant with experience in a school only for males provided an objective perspective mentioning that "mixed schools can offer diversity of perspectives and opinions from both genders, enriching the learning environment with different viewpoints" (Interviewee F\_02). In the case of an interviewee with four years of experience in a coeducational school, it was highlighted that "coeducational education can offer benefits by fostering natural and constant interaction between genders, preparing students to face the diversity of the real world" (Interviewee F\_03). Finally, the promotion of social skills and preparation for the diversity of the real world was highlighted, stating that "an example of the effectiveness of coeducational education could be the promotion of healthy social relationships between genders from an early age" (Interviewee F\_04).

These results reveal a variety of perceptions among the interviewees, providing an enriched understanding of the challenges and benefits inherent in coeducation and segregation in educational environments.

#### *Opinion on Both Educational Approaches from Experience*

In the third category, the interviews provide a varied insight into professionals' perceptions and experiences regarding coeducational and gender-segregated models. Professionals with experience in coeducational environments highlight the natural interaction between genders, promoting diverse social skills and preparing students for social reality. An interviewee with three years of experience in a coeducational school states that "coeducational education can offer benefits by fostering natural and constant interaction between genders, preparing students to face the diversity of the real world" (Interviewee M\_02).

On the other hand, those who have worked in segregated environments emphasize the possibility of offering a more specific pedagogical approach tailored to the learning styles of each gender. However, an interviewee with



two years of experience in a segregated environment mentions that "being all males, there are limitations in socialization regarding both sexes. They get used to living only among themselves and have difficulty establishing other types of relationships" (Interviewee F\_05).

Despite the perceived benefits, those with experience in segregated education also recognize challenges, such as limiting diversity of perspectives and addressing gender stereotypes. Therefore, an interviewee with experience in a male-only school indicates that "mixed schools can offer a diversity of perspectives and opinions from both genders, enriching the learning environment with different viewpoints" (Interviewee F\_07).

In summary, opinions vary according to experience and individual perspective, emphasizing the importance of considering the context and specific objectives when assessing the effectiveness of each educational approach. These findings provide a rich and nuanced understanding of professionals' perceptions in the educational field regarding coeducation and gender segregation.

## Discussion

This analysis, based on interviews with experienced professionals in both coeducational and segregated environments, primarily addresses the perspectives present in scientific studies on the two educational models, highlighting various perspectives that enrich the understanding of the complexities associated with these models. In the theoretical framework addressing school management, the importance of this structure in the comprehensive formation of students is highlighted, establishing the fundamental environment and circumstances for their personal growth and knowledge acquisition. Gender-segregated education, characterized by separating students by gender, and coeducational education involving the joint teaching of boys and girls, represent two debated and of great interest approaches for parents, educators, and educational psychologists.

Primary schools' segregated environments present a series of potential benefits as well as disadvantages for students. As a positive aspect, segregated education can provide a supportive and protective environment for students with disabilities, offering a possibility of receiving more specialized education and support. Additionally, gender-segregated education can promote tolerance and acceptance among boys and girls by creating mixed programs that address gender stereotypes. However, segregated environments also present disadvantages. Socioeconomic segregation in schools can negatively affect the educational outcomes of poor children. Furthermore, negative factors such as indiscipline, aggression, victimization, and teachers' apathy in segregated schools can have a detrimental effect on academic performance. Overall, research suggests that single-sex education is not more effective than mixed-sex education in improving academic performance or attitudes.

Both the interviews and the research conducted on the perspectives of educational psychologists in coeducational and segregated environments in primary education in the Peruvian context reveal a variety of

perceptions and experiences. It is found that participants have a diverse understanding of educational approaches, with those in coeducational environments emphasizing the importance of natural interaction between genders for the development of social skills, while those working in segregated environments highlight the possibility of offering a more specific pedagogical approach tailored to the learning styles of each gender. These findings are in line with previous studies that have explored the effects of coeducation and segregation on students' academic, psychological, and social development.

Some interviewees mention as a positive aspect the customization of segregated schools. Eisenkopf (2015) points out in his research that segregated schools can lead to academic performance with greater strength in specific areas, such as mathematics and sciences. A participant with experience in a coeducational school emphasized that "coeducational education can offer benefits by fostering natural and constant interaction between genders, preparing students to face the diversity of the real world". Likewise, another participant with experience in the same type of environment emphasized the promotion of soft skills and preparation for the diversity of the real world, mentioning that "an example of the effectiveness of coeducational education could be the promotion of healthy social relationships between genders from an early age"; highlighting that coeducation can enhance emotional and social skills, promoting equal learning and development opportunities for all students, as Ryan (2010) suggests.

However, significant differences in the perceptions of the participants in this research can also be identified, highlighting the complexity of the issue. While some participants emphasize the benefits of coeducation in preparing for real-world diversity, others point out limitations in socialization between genders in segregated environments. These discrepancies suggest that the effectiveness of each educational approach may depend on the specific context and educational objectives set, as previous studies have also suggested. Although the research provides an enriching insight into educational professionals' perceptions in Peru, it also highlights the need to consider the diversity of perspectives and contexts when assessing the effectiveness of educational approaches. This analysis complements existing literature and underscores the importance of continued research to better understand the effects of coeducation and segregation on students' holistic development, emphasizing the importance of balancing specific benefits with the need to address inherent limitations in each model.

Furthermore, the diversity of opinions underscores the complexity in choosing between coeducational and segregated educational models. The coexistence of benefits and challenges in both approaches highlights the importance of approaching each model with an understanding of its nuances and considering students' specific needs. These findings offer a basis for future research and debates on the implementation of educational models, encouraging them to promote equity and educational quality.

## **Conclusions**

The evidence gathered reveals diverse perspectives of educational psychologists in the Peruvian context

regarding coeducational and segregated education in primary education. The participants, with varied experiences and professional approaches, expressed opinions that reflect the complexity of the debate between these two educational models. It is highlighted that the choice between coeducation and segregation is not only related to academic performance but also impacts crucial aspects of socio-emotional development and gender perceptions. The diversity of experiences and opinions underscores the importance of considering multiple factors when making decisions about school structure.

Coeducation is perceived as an inclusive and equitable environment that fosters social skills, while segregation is associated with more robust academic performance in specific areas. These findings emphasize the need for a balanced approach that considers both academic objectives and students' emotional and social needs. Furthermore, educational psychology emerges as an essential tool for understanding how school structure impacts various dimensions of students, such as socialization, cultural diversity, and cognitive development. These aspects were highlighted by educational psychologists. Additionally, the Peruvian historical context, marked by significant changes in educational policies, underscores the importance of constantly evaluating the effectiveness of evolving educational models.

Ultimately, this study lays the groundwork for future research, inviting a more detailed analysis of students' experiences in different school environments. A deep understanding of educational psychologists' perspectives contributes to educational dialogue and offers valuable insights for informed decision-making in school management, seeking a balance between academic performance and students' holistic development.

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## **Bridging Sustainable Practices and Art Education: The Role of Open Distance Learning in Empowering Visual Arts Teachers**

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**Abstract:** The investigation into the role of Open Distance Learning (ODL) in integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into art education, with a special emphasis on visual arts teachers as lifelong online learners, is of paramount importance. This research highlights ODL's critical role in promoting sustainable practices and confronts key challenges, including the necessity for a paradigm shift in art education, effective integration of SDGs, and enhancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competencies among visual arts teachers. These challenges are essential to ensure that art education significantly contributes to sustainable development and equips teachers with crucial professional skills and knowledge. Employing a mixed-method approach that merges qualitative and quantitative data, the research evaluates the impact of ODL on art education. Curriculum development follows the DeCoRe+ model (Deconstruction-Construction-Reconstruction), aiming to create transformative learning experiences that resonate with the dynamic roles of visual arts teachers. The investigation also utilizes the DREAM (Diagnose, Review/Reflect, Explain, Assess, and Manage) method for course evaluation. Data were collected from visual arts teachers actively involved in lifelong learning, focusing on their use of ICT in teaching, the impact of course themes on their professional development, and their experiences in integrating SDGs into their teaching practices. The results uncover significant variations in the ICT competencies of visual arts teachers, demonstrating how these competencies aid in accessing online resources and incorporating SDGs into teaching methodologies. The study underscores the positive influence of tailored art education on teachers' comprehension and application of SDGs, proving the DeCoRe+ framework's efficacy in infusing SDG elements into the art education curriculum.

**Keywords:** Open Distance Learning (ODL) in Art Education, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Integration, ICT Competency in Visual Arts Teaching, Transformative Art Education Curriculum

**Citation:** Hamidon, Z., Abdullah, M., L., Mat, H., Shafie, N., & Cheng Keat, O. (2024). Bridging Sustainable Practices and Art Education: The Role of Open Distance Learning in Empowering Visual Arts Teachers. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1315-1333), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

### Education & SDG

In a local context, efforts to promote sustainable development shouldn't be one-sided; all communities should be exposed to the concept. Education for sustainable development was first officially recognised at the Earth Summit Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which formed Agenda 21. Each chapter of Agenda 21 emphasises education, but Chapter 36 focuses specifically on improving basic education, adapting existing education to sustainable development, improving community understanding and awareness, and training. (2017). In 2001, Malaysia's Ministry of Housing and Local Government launched Local Agenda 21, a follow-up to the 1992 UN Rio Conference (GDRC.org, 2022). Malaysia's plan requires all levels of society to participate in education for sustainable development.

The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) developed the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 in 2013. This Blueprint has changed school teaching and learning. New preschool, primary, and secondary curricula were created to meet the Blueprint's educational goals.

The Blueprint is comprehensive to ensure students' holistic development and full potential. The blueprint outlines five system aspirations, six student aspirations, and 11 reform shifts. The 5 Systems Aspirations are the MoE's goals for the education system. These include 1) ACCESS: to ensure 100 percent enrolment across all levels from preschools to upper secondary; 2) QUALITY: focusing on achievement in reading, math, and science; 3) EQUITY: equal opportunities for all (urban-rural, socio-economic, gender, indigenous communities, special needs children); 4) UNITY: promotes shared values and experiences by encouraging students to embrace diversity; and 5) EFFICIENCY: maximises student outcome within the current nation's resources.

In recent years, the detrimental effects of unsustainable economic expansion, characterized by prioritizing profit over environmental stewardship, have become increasingly apparent. This trend has sparked a global demand for sustainable development across various sectors, with education playing a crucial role in driving this transformation. The necessity to reassess and reshape developmental strategies, especially within the educational realm, highlights the critical shift towards sustainability practices (Beradze, 2020; Garrett, 2015). Stoll et al. (2022) have delineated the contribution of arts and crafts to this transition by augmenting eco-literacy



and fostering emotional engagement among learners, thus deepening their commitment to sustainable practices.

This shift towards sustainable development in education draws inspiration from Aristotle's concept of eudaimonic well-being, starkly contrasting with the unsustainable chase after hedonic pleasure marked by excessive consumption. The introduction of "sustainability justice" by Makrakis (2006, 2017), encompassing the four pillars of sustainable development—environment, society, economy, and culture—reflects the holistic integration necessary for true sustainability. Despite significant investments in environmental education, there remains a notable discrepancy between the formation of positive environmental attitudes and the enactment of tangible sustainable actions. This disparity underscores the need for a fundamental transformation in educational methodologies, curricular design, and pedagogical approaches, as the existing systems do not inherently foster sustainable thought patterns or behaviors (Makrakis, 2012).

Research in curriculum development has revealed a predominance of conventional lecture-based instruction, with innovative teaching methodologies such as role-play, hands-on science activities, and problem-based learning (PBL) not being fully leveraged (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2015, 2016; Makrakis et al., 2021). Makrakis (2013, 2014) has highlighted the efficacy of PBL in cultivating critical thinking and problem-solving skills through a structured process that includes problem identification, solution brainstorming, evidence linkage, and reflective evaluation, all of which are essential for embedding sustainability into educational frameworks.

This study emphasizes on the role of visual arts and PBL in promoting sustainable practices. It acknowledges the challenges posed by unsustainable economic practices and advocates for a comprehensive, global approach to fostering sustainability within the education sector (Beradze, 2020; Garrett, 2015; Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2019; Leal Filho et al., 2019). By examining visual arts education, this research seeks to identify strategies for integrating sustainability principles through Open Distance Learning (ODL), positioning visual arts educators as pivotal agents of change in advancing the overarching goals of sustainable development.

### *Problem Statement*

The issue of unsustainable economic practices, characterized by a preference for profit over the preservation of natural resources, underscores the imperative for sustainable development, particularly within the educational sphere. Despite the potential of innovative pedagogies, such as PBL and arts education, to enhance eco-literacy and emotional investment in sustainability, a significant gap remains between the theoretical support for sustainability in education and its practical implementation. This gap highlights the untapped potential of the arts—including visual arts, literature, performing arts, theater, and film—to drive socio-economic shifts towards sustainability. The central challenge involves integrating sustainability into educational curricula, notably through visual arts education and ODL, to empower educators as catalysts for change and advance the broader objectives of sustainable development. Addressing this challenge necessitates groundbreaking research to uncover effective strategies for embedding sustainability principles within art education, aligning with the

global call for a paradigm shift that embraces the four foundational pillars of sustainable development: environment, society, economy, and culture.

### *Research Questions*

This study addresses the crucial need to integrate sustainability into art education to enhance eco-literacy and environmental stewardship. It explores the theoretical and practical aspects of sustainability in education, focusing on visual arts and Open Distance Learning (ODL). The research aims to assess learners' technological competencies for accessing sustainability resources online, the relevance of sustainability-focused topics in visual arts education to learners' careers and academic growth, and the effective internalization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through such courses. This investigation highlights the significant educational gap and its potential to contribute to the global sustainable development agenda, emphasizing the transformative role of arts education in promoting sustainability among educators and learners. The research seeks to evaluate learners' technological competencies in accessing online sustainability resources, the impact of sustainability-focused topics in visual arts education on learners' career prospects and academic development, and how Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are internalized through such courses. It underscores the educational gap in sustainability integration and its potential impact on the global sustainable development agenda, highlighting the critical role of arts education in fostering sustainability awareness among educators and students.

- What is the level of technological competence among learners in accessing online materials and social media in the context of sustainability principles in visual arts education?
- How do sustainability-focused topics within visual arts education courses relate to learners' job relevance and academic advancement?
- Which aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are most effectively internalized through learners' experiences in courses that integrate sustainability principles into visual arts education?

*DeCore+ (Deconstruction-Construction-Reconstruction) process in learning design*

The DeCoRe+ process, which stands for Deconstruction-Construction-Reconstruction, provides a comprehensive framework for embedding sustainability into educational curricula. It addresses the gap between the theoretical aspiration for sustainability in education and its practical implementation, enhancing eco-literacy and student engagement through a transformative curriculum development approach. By structuring the learning design to incorporate sustainability principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), DeCoRe+ facilitates a meaningful integration of these concepts into educational practices.

The integration of the DREAM method into the DeCoRe+ framework marks a significant advancement in addressing the disconnect between technological competence, job relevance of course content, and the emphasis on sustainability in academia. By embedding sustainability into the curriculum, the DREAM method enhances the DeCoRe+ framework's ability to critically engage students, foster creativity, and support experiential

learning.

This synergistic approach not only tailors educational content to meet global sustainability challenges but also evaluates and ensures the curriculum's effectiveness in nurturing a sustainable future mindset among learners. Through this integration, the methodology effectively meets the study's objectives, promoting a deeper understanding and commitment to sustainable development through critical analysis, reflection, and continuous improvement in educational practices. The DeCoRe+ process, supported by the DREAM methodology, offers a powerful and innovative approach to curriculum development in the context of sustainability education. Its comprehensive and reflective nature not only addresses the pressing need identified in the problem statement but also aligns closely with the research questions, providing a justified and effective framework for integrating sustainability principles into educational curricula. This approach represents a significant step towards transforming educators into agents of change and advancing the broader goals of sustainable development.

## Method

### The Learning Design DeCoRe+

This study's methodology meticulously explores the integration of sustainability principles into visual arts education, guided by precise research questions. Employing the DREAM method within the DeCoRe+ framework, we delve into sustainability's role in enriching learners' decision-making, aligning educational content with real-world applications, and fostering deep engagement with sustainable development goals (SDGs). This approach offers a structured yet flexible pathway for curriculum integration, ensuring each phase—from diagnosing learners' initial understanding to ongoing curriculum assessment—aligns with our objectives for a comprehensive investigation. This methodology not only grounds the study in a solid theoretical foundation but also promises actionable insights, emphasizing our commitment to advancing educational practices through sustainability.

### *Deconstruction*

The first stage of the course development is to determine the level of Table of Content (TOC) and category of content which will be chunked into Module, Unit and Topics. The chosen topics is then designed according the DREAM (Diagnose, Review/Reflect, Explain, Assess & Manage). DREAM is considered as part of the strategies in the instructional design process. Makrakis (2019;2022) proposed the DREAM (Diagnose, Review/Reflect, Explain, Assess & Manage) method for evaluating revised courses during implementation. These processes cover the entire course, from what students bring in before (Diagnosing), during (Reviewing/Reflecting and Explaining), and after the course (Assessing and managing). The DREAM method reflects a critical action research process that aims to assess and improve a course. Through the DREAM Methodology, the student, guided by the course instructor, creates a portfolio to give back to the instructor at the end of the course. DREAM is a course requirement. Instructors must analyse DREAM portfolios and prepare a

report for the class. The analysis of the DREAM portfolios will provide important information that the instructor and students can use to improve the course.

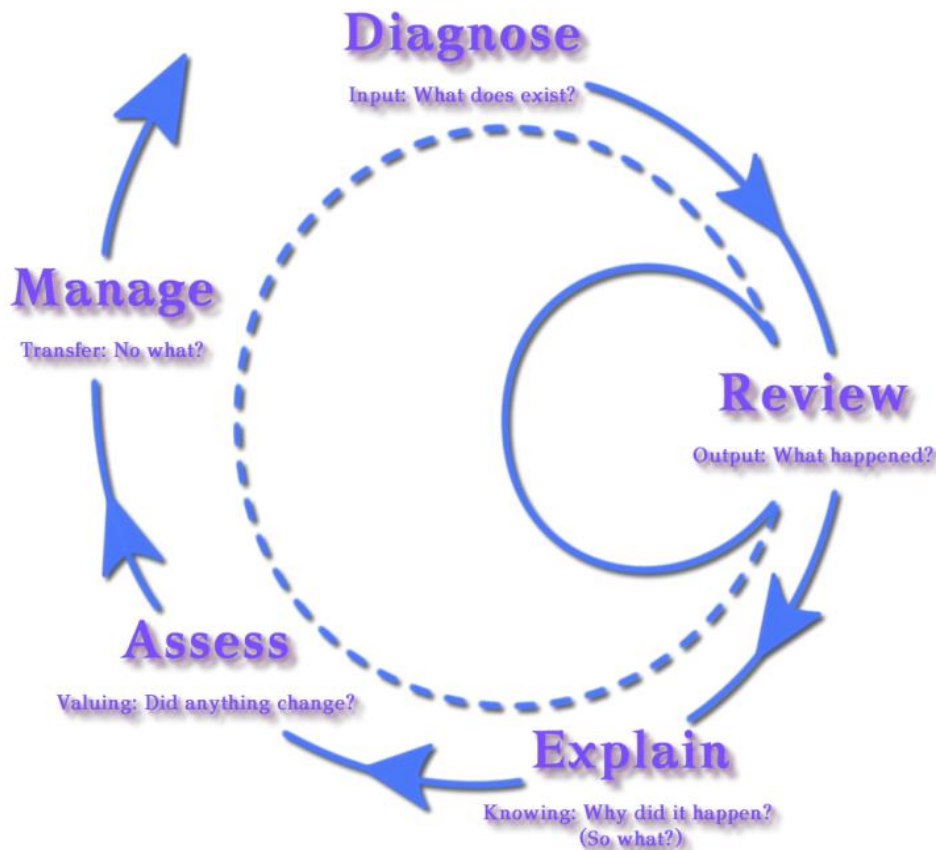


Figure 1. The DREAM methodology stages. Makrakis, V. (2023). In *Using the DREAM Methodology for Course Assessment in the Field of ICT-Enabled Education for Sustainability*. pp. 1382

The methodology focuses on the DREAM method within the DeCoRe+ framework not only provides a structured and flexible process for integrating sustainability into educational curricula but also aligns seamlessly with the research questions posed. This coherence between methodology and research objectives underscores the study's commitment to exploring the multifaceted impacts of sustainability principles on visual arts education, from enhancing decision-making abilities and course applicability to fostering a deepened understanding and commitment to sustainable development. The inclusion of the DREAM method thereby justifies the methodology's capacity to address the research questions effectively, leveraging critical analysis, reflection, and continuous improvement as pivotal elements for embedding sustainability into educational practices.

The Diagnose phase of the DREAM method assesses learners' current understanding and attitudes towards sustainability, providing foundational insights that enable educators to tailor the curriculum and enhance decision-making abilities in sustainable practices (Makrakis, 2019; 2022). Following this, the Review/Reflect

and Explain phases facilitate a thorough engagement with sustainability concepts, aligning the curriculum with the applicability to learners' job roles and preparing them for real-world challenges, as facilitated by the DeCoRe+ construction phase (Makrakis, 2017).

The subsequent Assess and Manage phases evaluate and refine the curriculum using learners' feedback and adapt to evolving educational goals, ensuring that the teaching of sustainability principles within visual arts education remains impactful and relevant (Makrakis, 2016; 2017). This continuous cycle of reflection and improvement, integral to both the DeCoRe+ framework and the DREAM method, allows for dynamic and responsive educational practices that effectively integrate Sustainable Development Goals into learning outcomes (Makrakis, 2019; 2022).

Table 1. DeCore+ Process for Learning Design

DECONSTRUCTION PROCESS (DREAM)	CONSTRUCTION PROCESS	CRITICAL REFLECTION	RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS
User Requirement	Product specification	Usability Testing	Product review
1.Unit/Module	Based on the	Reflect on what is	Write the general goals of the
2.Method of Assessment	detailed and critical	needed to support	unit/module:
3. Gaps, purposeful	answers to the	the following four	Describe what kind of previous
omission and underlying	deconstruction	domains	knowledge you will use in
assumption	process, start the		teaching the recon- structed
4. Power and interest	construction	1. Interactive	unit/module:
5. Projected image and	process by	Teaching/Learning	
reality	recording the main	2.	Describe the characteristics of
	points that need	Teaching/learning	learners (e.g. skills, values,
	changes and	approaches	knowledge, attitudes, action
	describing your	3. Learning pillars	competences) that will
	proposals which	and 10Cs	contribute to the learning
	will be used in the	4. Authenticity	outcomes
	recon- struction		
	process.		

### Data Analysis

The method of data analysis involves a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively evaluate technological competence and its impact within sustainability-oriented

visual arts education. For the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics will be utilized to calculate percentages and frequency distributions, summarizing general trends related to technological competence and job relevance. This will include an examination of the extent to which students utilize digital resources, correlated with their enrollment in courses pertinent to their career paths

On the qualitative side, a thematic analysis will be conducted on data collected from students' feedback and comments. This process will involve coding the qualitative data into themes that capture how digital tools and sustainability are being integrated into student learning and professional development. Key anticipated themes include the "Integration of ICT in Education," "Application of Sustainability in Career Development," and "Internalization of SDGs through Visual Arts." Additionally, content analysis will be employed to systematically

identify and quantify occurrences of specific words or concepts within the text data, allowing for a structured comparison with quantitative findings. The findings from an open-ended item drawn from the survey questions provide detailed examples of how students apply digital tools and sustainability concepts practically.

The integration of data through triangulation are crucial to validate and enhance the findings, ensuring that insights from quantitative data are enriched by qualitative narratives. This comprehensive analysis will facilitate discussions on how technological competence influences the efficacy of sustainability-oriented educational practices in visual arts. The final discussion will focus on the implications for educational practice and policy, particularly regarding curriculum design and resource allocation, aiming to enhance educational strategies to better integrate sustainability in visual arts education, thereby supporting both academic and career advancement for learners.

### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

In this study, data were extracted from open-ended survey questions for qualitative responses provided by students enrolled in the HBEF1403 (Art Education) course, as part of a broader survey assessing their engagement with technology and sustainability within art education. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, beginning with the extraction of relevant responses to ensure focus. Researchers then familiarized themselves with the data, identifying initial patterns related to digital literacy and sustainability. Initial coding was manually conducted to segment the data based on its relevance to the research questions. Subsequent theme development distilled these codes into broader patterns focusing on technology use, sustainability engagement, and career relevance. Themes were reviewed and refined through a recursive process to accurately represent the data, followed by triangulation with external findings to validate the data's internal consistency and link it to established research. The final step involved reporting the thematic findings, discussing their implications in the context of the existing literature and theory.

## Results

The integration of sustainability principles and technological competence into visual arts education is crucial for both personal and professional development. The findings examines the impact of the HBEF1403 course, which incorporates sustainability topics, on students' academic and career trajectories. By triangulating both quantitative and qualitative data, comprehensive insights into students' experiences and expectations are provided.

### *Respondent Profiles*

Qualitative data from open-ended survey responses enriched the understanding of students' experiences, perspectives, and expectations. Each respondent was identified using unique codes. The participants in this study comprised individuals from various demographic backgrounds, including males (R1, R4, R10) and females (R2, R3, R5). Predominantly of Malay ethnicity (R1, R2, R5), a minority of respondents were Chinese (R3, R6). The respondents were grouped into three age categories: 21-30 years old (R1, R2, R3), 31-40 years old (R7, R8), and 41-50 years old (R9, R10).

Respondents provided detailed accounts of their experiences with the courses and shared their expectations. Respondent R2 (Female, Malay, Teacher) highlighted the value of the course "HBEF1403 Seni dalam Pendidikan (Art in Education), OUMH1603 21st Century Skill in enhancing her pedagogical knowledge and practical skills. Respondent R5 (Female, Malay, Unemployed) emphasized the importance of practical application through the "Projek" topic, while Respondent R3 (Female, Chinese, Admin Assistant) expressed her motivation to strive for excellence in her role as an admin assistant due to the "OUMH1603 21st Century Skill course.

### *Assessing Technological Competence in Sustainability-Oriented Visual Arts Education*

This section analyzes technological competence among learners, particularly focusing on their use of online resources within a sustainability-oriented visual arts curriculum. A group of 14 students was surveyed, revealing varying levels of digital literacy within educational technology contexts. Quantitative findings illustrate a spectrum of engagement with digital learning tools:

One student (7.14%) reported consistent usage of online resources such as e-books and databases. Six students (42.86%) frequently utilized digital resources. Four students (28.57%) occasionally engaged with them. Collectively, these students (N = 11, 78.57%) represent the majority of the sample, showcasing diverse engagement levels with digital tools crucial for sustainability education.

This variation in technological engagement is essential when adopting the DeCoRe+ model in learning design,



which advocates for assessing students' existing knowledge and attitudes toward key educational themes, including sustainability.

Qualitative data corroborate these findings, indicating an increasing trend among students to integrate digital tools and information and communication technology (ICT) into their educational practices. Students specifically mentioned utilizing ICT to expand their knowledge base and apply course concepts via digital platforms. These qualitative insights align with the quantitative data, underscoring the necessity for courses to promote digital literacy and resource accessibility further, thus enhancing the educational impact on students' technological competence in sustainability-focused visual arts education.

Table 2 Technological Competence of Students in Accessing Educational Resources and Tools

Technological Competence	Regular Usage (%)	Frequent Usage (%)	Occasional Usage (%)	Never Used (%)	Total Students (N)	Notes
Online Materials (e-books, e-journals, databases)	7.14% (N=1)	42.86% (N=6)	28.57% (N=4)	-	N=11 (78.57%)	More females than males
Social Media	7.14% (N=1)	-	64.29% (N=9)	28.57% (N=4)	N=14 (100.0%)	-
Statistical Software (Microsoft Excel, IBM SPSS, Matlab)	7.14% (N=1)	-	71.42% (N=10)	21.4% (N=3)	N=14 (100.0%)	-
Presenting Software (Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides, Prezi)	42.86% (N=6)	-	-	7.14% (N=1)	N=14 (100.0%)	50% (N=7) used rarely

### *Application of Learning*

Respondents emphasized how they intend to use the knowledge and skills gained from these courses. Respondent R1 (Male, Malay, Student) aimed to apply global citizenship education principles in his future career using the skills learned in "GCED." Respondent R4 (Female, Malay, Teacher) sought to integrate technological tools into her teaching strategy, while Respondent R7 (Male, Chinese, Admin Officer) planned to leverage project management skills to handle work tasks systematically.

Quantitative data revealed that over 80% of respondents believed the courses were relevant to their current or future professions, which aligns with the qualitative responses where participants indicated plans to apply their

skills practically in their careers. Qualitative responses, such as those from R6 (Male, Chinese, Teacher), showed improvements in understanding teaching methods and increased confidence in the classroom approach, aligning with the quantitative findings where respondents rated the professional development impact at an average score of 4.5 out of 5.

In assessing technological competence in sustainability-oriented visual arts education, the quantitative findings illustrated a spectrum of engagement with digital learning tools. One student (7.14%) consistently reported using e-books and databases, while six students (42.86%) frequently utilized digital resources, and four students (28.57%) occasionally engaged with these tools. Collectively, this demonstrates diverse engagement levels with digital tools pivotal for sustainability education. Qualitative data corroborated these findings, highlighting an increasing trend among students to integrate digital tools and ICT into their educational practices.

Table 3. Analysis of Job Relevance and Academic Development in Sustainability-Focused Visual Arts Education Courses

Aspect	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
Course Relevance	Over 80% believed the courses were relevant to their professions	Plans to apply skills practically in careers
Professional Impact	Average score: 4.5/5	Improvements in understanding teaching methods and increased confidence
Participant Example	-	R6 (Male, Chinese, Teacher): Improved understanding of teaching methods, more confident in classroom approach

### *Bridging Sustainability in Visual Arts Education to Career and Academic Growth*

This study explores the relationship between sustainability themes in visual arts education and their significance to students' career and academic advancement. By examining data from students enrolled in various courses, including Art in Education, the study aims to determine how these courses—infused with sustainability topics— influence students' career trajectories and educational progress.

In assessing technological competence in sustainability-oriented visual arts education, the quantitative findings illustrated a spectrum of engagement with digital learning tools. One student (7.14%) consistently reported using e-books and databases, while six students (42.86%) frequently utilized digital resources, and four students (28.57%) occasionally engaged with these tools. Collectively, this demonstrates diverse engagement levels with digital tools pivotal for sustainability education. Qualitative data corroborated these findings, highlighting an increasing trend among students to integrate digital tools and ICT into their educational practices.

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Aspect	Details
Responses Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total Respondents: 14</li> <li>- Job Related (Yes): 9 (64.29%)</li> <li>- Not Job Related (No): 5 (35.71%)</li> </ul>
High Relevance to Job	- 64.29% of respondents indicated job relevance, highlighting a strong connection between course content and professional applicability, especially noted in "HBEF1403 Art in Education."
Course Specific Analysis	- <b>HBEF1403 Art in Education:</b> Most responses, indicating popularity/requirement. A split between job relevance (9 respondents) and non-relevance (5 respondents) suggests varied perceptions of its applicability to professional settings.
Academic Development	- The implied job relevance suggests that course content enhances academic growth by aligning with professional standards and expectations. Sustainability-focused topics contribute to a comprehensive educational experience.
Sustainability Focus	- The job relevance of these courses indicates that sustainability-focused topics are integrated in a way that resonates with professional practices, preparing students for careers valuing a sustainability mindset.

The analysis investigates the correlation between course enrollment in sustainability-focused visual arts education and its perceived relevance to the students' current or prospective job roles. The data reveal a significant connection:

Of the 14 respondents, 9 (64.29%) confirmed that their employment correlated with the courses they attended. This high percentage of job relevance demonstrates that students recognize a direct application of the skills and knowledge gained through these courses in their professional lives, emphasizing the practical benefits of integrating sustainability themes into visual arts education. Quantitatively, the findings show a robust alignment between course content and job market demands, with 64.29% of respondents acknowledging that their jobs

were related to their enrolled courses. This highlights the direct application of skills and knowledge from these courses in their professional activities, reinforcing the value of incorporating sustainability-focused topics into visual arts education.

The quantitative analysis revealed that 64.29% of respondents indicated that their jobs correlated with the courses attended, while 35.71% emphasized academic growth. Qualitative data supported this, as numerous participants reported the high relevance of the course content to their current job roles, particularly in educational settings. The practical application of skills and knowledge gained through these courses reinforces the value of incorporating sustainability themes into visual arts education.

Qualitatively, numerous participants reported that the course content was highly relevant to their current job roles, particularly within educational settings. The relevance here lies in how the principles of arts and sustainability directly influence teaching methodologies and student engagement. These qualitative insights support the quantitative data, confirming that a significant proportion of students view their education as closely aligned with career requirements.

#### *Effective Internalization of SDGs through Visual Arts Education: Learners' Perspectives*

This study examines how sustainability principles, specifically the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are integrated into visual arts education and the resultant impact on learners' engagement and knowledge acquisition. The findings, derived from learner experiences in courses merging visual arts with sustainability, indicate that most learners (81.81%,  $n = 9$ ) found the courses both engaging and informative, reflecting a robust connection to the SDGs. This high level of engagement suggests that the integration of SDGs into visual arts effectively fosters the internalization of sustainability concepts among students. Conversely, a smaller segment of the cohort focused primarily on content knowledge (18.18%,  $n = 2$ ), and a minimal number reported limited learning outcomes (9.09%,  $n = 1$ ). These results suggest that while the majority benefit significantly, varied engagement levels exist, indicating opportunities for pedagogical adjustments to maximize the impact across all learners.

Quantitative analysis underscores the high engagement, with 81.81% of respondents indicating that the course was both interesting and informative, pointing to successful internalization of sustainability aspects through art education. Qualitatively, the data reveal that learners anticipate applying sustainability, particularly SDGs, in both personal and professional contexts. Reports from the courses suggest substantial personal growth, with improvements in confidence, problem-solving abilities, and a deeper comprehension of complex global issues like sustainability.

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Conversely, a smaller segment of the cohort focused primarily on content knowledge (18.18%, n=2), and a minimal number reported limited learning outcomes (9.09%, n=1). These results suggest that while the majority benefit significantly, a varied engagement level exists, which could indicate opportunities for pedagogical adjustments to maximize the impact across all learners.

Quantitative analysis underscores the high engagement, with 81.81% of respondents indicating that the course was both interesting and informative, which points to successful internalization of sustainability aspects through art education. Qualitatively, the data reveal that learners anticipate the application of sustainability, particularly SDGs, in both personal and professional contexts. Reports from the courses suggest substantial personal growth, with improvements in confidence, problem-solving abilities, and a deeper comprehension of complex global issues like sustainability.

Table 4. Learner Experiences on SDG Elements Gained from Art Education Course

Learning Experience (Lx)	N	%
Lx1: Not much learned	1	0.09
Lx2: Course is very interesting	9	0.82
Lx3: Increase knowledge	9	0.82
Lx4: Focus on content knowledge	2	0.18

Quantitative data showed that 81.81% of learners found the courses engaging and informative, while 18.18% focused on content knowledge, and only 9.09% reported limited learning outcomes. Qualitative analysis confirmed this, with learners anticipating applying sustainability, particularly SDGs, in personal and professional contexts. Reports from the courses suggested substantial personal growth, with improvements in confidence, problem-solving abilities, and understanding of complex global issues like sustainability. The findings illustrate a clear correlation between quantitative data and qualitative responses. Technological competence remains a challenge, with qualitative responses highlighting the need for improved technological infrastructure and training. A majority of learners see direct correlations between sustainability courses and their job roles, reinforcing the value of integrating sustainability principles into visual arts education. Furthermore, the successful internalization of SDGs through art education is evident from both qualitative and quantitative responses.

Integrating technological competence and sustainability principles into visual arts education offers significant benefits for learners' academic and career advancement. Addressing challenges such as technological infrastructure and varying digital literacy levels will maximize the potential of these educational approaches.

## Discussion

### Technological Competence in Sustainability-Oriented Visual Arts Education

The findings illustrate a broad spectrum of technological competence among students, with varying levels of engagement in using digital tools essential for sustainability education. This aligns with the necessity for digital literacy emphasized in the Introduction, where incorporating digital platforms into contemporary education was recognized as crucial (Makrakis, 2013; Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). The DeCoRe+ model, referenced both in the Introduction and Results, advocates for assessing learners' existing competencies and attitudes toward sustainability to design effective educational interventions (Makrakis, 2013).

The results showed that while one student (7.14%) reported consistent usage of online resources such as e-books and databases, six students (42.86%) frequently utilized digital resources, and four students (28.57%) occasionally engaged with them. This reveals a variation in digital literacy levels. Qualitative data corroborated these findings, highlighting an increasing trend among students to integrate digital tools and ICT into their educational practices.

Applying the DeCoRe+ model appears imperative in bridging identified technological skill gaps and enhancing digital literacy among learners, aligning with the educational aspirations detailed in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). To maximize students' technological competence in sustainability-focused visual arts education, courses should emphasize digital literacy and resource accessibility.

#### *Job Relevance and Academic Development in Sustainability-Focused Visual Arts Education Courses*

The Results revealed a significant correlation between course content and perceived job relevance, echoing the Introduction's discussions on the practical application of sustainability in career contexts. Of the 14 respondents, 9 (64.29%) confirmed that their employment correlated with the courses they attended. This substantial correlation demonstrates that students recognize a direct application of the skills and knowledge gained through these courses in their professional lives. This finding supports the broader educational goals of enhancing employability through relevant skill development, as outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 and global frameworks like Local Agenda 21 (GDRC.org, 2022). Moreover, qualitative data highlighted that participants perceived the courses as highly relevant to their job roles, particularly in educational settings. This finding aligns with the aspirations of incorporating sustainability principles into education to enhance career trajectories and professional growth.

### *Learner Experiences on SDG Elements Gained from Art Education Courses*

Learners' positive perceptions of the courses' effectiveness in promoting SDGs, as reported in the Results, align with the Introduction's emphasis on embedding sustainability principles into educational curricula. Of the respondents, 81.81% found the courses engaging and informative, highlighting a robust connection to the SDGs. Qualitatively, students anticipated applying sustainability principles, particularly SDGs, in both personal and professional contexts.

This high engagement suggests that integrating SDGs into visual arts education effectively fosters the internalization of sustainability concepts among students. This is consistent with Aristotle's concept of eudaimonic well-being through education (Makrakis, 2017). Additionally, the qualitative responses indicated substantial personal growth, improved confidence, problem-solving abilities, and a deeper understanding of global issues like sustainability.

The Results illustrate a clear correlation between quantitative data and qualitative responses. Despite the positive outcomes, challenges remain regarding technological competence, with qualitative responses highlighting the need for improved technological infrastructure and training. Addressing these challenges is crucial to maximize the educational impact and ensure all learners effectively internalize sustainability principles.

## **Conclusion**

The study highlights the critical importance of integrating technological competence, sustainability-focused content, and experiential learning principles within the DeCoRe+ (Deconstruction-Construction-Reconstruction) framework in visual arts education. This integration is crucial to bridging the existing gaps in digital literacy and to enhancing both the job relevance and academic development of learners. By advocating for a fundamental shift in educational methodologies to include sustainability principles and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the study posits that the DeCoRe+ process, bolstered by the DREAM methodology, is essential for adapting curricula to meet contemporary professional demands and to promote a sustainable educational ecosystem. This approach not only aligns with global sustainability agendas but also positions educators as pivotal agents of change, fostering environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic sustainability, thereby contributing to the broader goals of sustainable development within the education sector. Integrating technological competence and sustainability principles into visual arts education offers significant benefits for learners' academic and career advancement. The findings highlight a need to address challenges such as technological infrastructure and varying digital literacy levels. By incorporating digital literacy into visual arts education and emphasizing SDGs, these educational approaches can be optimized to foster a deeper understanding and commitment to sustainable practices, fulfilling the aspirations outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 and aligning with global sustainable development initiatives.



In conclusion, the research supports the theoretical discussions presented in the Introduction about the necessity for innovative educational approaches, such as those offered by visual arts, to tackle modern sustainability challenges. The thorough triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data across the study underscores the need for ongoing refinement of educational practices. This is crucial for adequately preparing learners for the complexities of modern professional environments and the broader global sustainability challenges. Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of these educational interventions and assess their wider implications for educational policy and practice.

## Recommendations

This study's success was made possible through the invaluable support of Open University Malaysia, which not only provided essential facilities and data access that significantly enriched our findings but also offered ongoing motivational support that fosters further research activities. This comprehensive assistance underscores the university's pivotal role in advancing research and development excellence.

## Acknowledgements

This project is funded by the European Commission (No. 598623-EPP-1-2018-1-CY-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP) Erasmus + Capacity Building for Higher Education Program and 304/PGURU/6501020/E120 Erasmus + ICT - Enabled In Service Training of Teachers to Address Education for Sustainability, Open University Malaysia. However, the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

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## Teaching STEM subjects: An Activated Approach

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**Abstract:** Students naturally have a phobia for STEM subjects which leads to poor performance in these subjects. The reason for this is varied but can be associated with the teaching approach. As an improvement on the traditional teaching method and the earlier technology-enabled teaching methodologies, using the affordances of technology to effectively engage students were tested. In this 7-week intervention design based research study, the impact of a set of activated classroom pedagogies on the performance of primary school students was investigated. The approach involved five activities, namely, curation, conversation, correction, creation and chaos, commonly referred to as the ACT pedagogy. Applying this approach to a Mathematics class, a sample of 91 students from a primary school in Nigeria participated in the study. Surveys were administered to them before and after the intervention. Results of the study showed that there was a reasonably significant increase in the percentage mean of the performance of students after the intervention. An increase of 8.79% in the mean after the intervention shows that there is a reasonably significant impact of the activated approach on the performance of students.

**Keywords:** Teaching with Technology, Mathematics Education, ACT Pedagogy, Academic Performance

**Citation:** Adeboye, D., Govender, D., W. & Govender, I. (2024). Teaching STEM subjects: An Activated Approach. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1334-1346), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Research on what learning is and how students learn has been ongoing for many years. As discussed by Wahyuni (2016) learning is the acquisition of information, skills, habits, knowledge and attitudes. He noted that learning is not restricted to the domain of education but can happen anywhere, anytime and in many different ways (Wahyuni, 2016). Furthermore, learning involves action, it involves doing something practical about whatever information has been acquired (Adeboye, 2016) and until action is taken and something is done, learning has not taken place. Additionally, learning can take place in various ways. From the older traditional

learning approaches to the more recent digital age approaches to learning (Vernadakis, Antoniou, Giannousi, Zetou, & Kioumourtzoglou, 2011); several researchers have continued to explore how students learn and what factors contribute to a successful learning experience.

### **Traditional teaching and learning approaches**

Traditional learning approaches are those that happen within the four walls of the classroom and leave students as passive consumers of content rather than active producers (Masek & Yamin, 2012). In this approach, the teacher takes control of the class as the “sage on the stage”, and does all the talking while leaving the students to sit through long and boring hours of lectures. As discovered by Bazelais and Doleck (2018), a quiet and controlled classroom does not necessarily mean learning is taking place, especially when the students are not taking any active role.

Traditional teaching approaches have demonstrated limitations in enhancing students' mathematical performance. Research has shown that students often struggle to connect mathematical concepts with real-world applications and fail to develop a deep conceptual understanding (Ardeleanu, 2019). The lack of active engagement and limited opportunities for collaboration hinder the development of problem-solving skills, creativity, and critical thinking abilities that are crucial for success in mathematics (Bazelais et al., 2018).

#### *Passive use of technology for teaching and learning*

The evolution of technology has made teaching with technology the natural way to go in a digital world. As noted by Blewett (2016b), 21<sup>st</sup>-century students who are digital natives must be taught using 21st-century teaching approaches, that take advantage of the affordances of technology. Unfortunately, as good as many of the previously researched teaching approaches were, several of them did not consider the effective use of technology and so are fast becoming inadequate as an appropriate teaching approach (Blewett, 2016b). A new set of digital-age pedagogies must be employed to teach with technology, to improve the academic performance of students.

Some studies that researched the use of technology in class have reported failures. These failures were due to the passive use of technology by the teacher in the classroom. For example, the use of Microsoft PowerPoint in the classroom can easily bore students, despite it being a use of technology. In research by Draper, Cargill and Cutts (2002), students complain that they feel sleepy in class despite the use of PowerPoint. This could be because of the choice of colour, font size and length of text displayed on each slide. This phenomenon of having boring, text-heavy, slide-intensive lectures is what is referred to as “death by PowerPoint” (Garber, 2001). Another example of the passive use of technology in the classroom is the use of videos in teaching and learning. Whereas research has proven that the use of video in the classroom provides several benefits such as perpetual and repeated access to content (Woolfitt, 2015) and the ability to learn in and out of the classroom, video in many ways has been used to teach passively. Riddle, Peebles, Davis, Xu and Schroeder (2018) in their research

discussed the potential problems attached to watching videos for long hours. These problems which include stress, depression, anxiety and a decrease in social interaction, have also plagued students who have been subjected to watching long video content (Ahmed, 2017). Even in the case of synchronous live online lectures, technology tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Adobe Connect etc. can be used for teaching and learning, where teachers and students meet together online at the same time. However, teachers must be trained to engage the students throughout the lecture time, otherwise, they may be bored throughout the entire time (Hew, Jia, Gonda, & Bai, 2020).

All of this is especially true for teaching and learning mathematics. Several students have a natural phobia of Mathematics and so perform badly in the subject (Kunwar, 2020). As discussed in a study, one major cause of this poor performance is the disconnect that students experience between the concepts and real-world scenarios. Teachers of Mathematics largely engage passive teaching approaches that make it difficult for students to understand the already abstract subject (Kunwar, 2020). In another research by Raines and Clark (2011), students complained that even though the teacher made use of PowerPoint in the classroom, they found it difficult to understand what the teacher was trying to explain. According to a student, rather than the teacher solving the questions step by step while they follow, the teacher had already typed the entire solution on each slide and now tried to explain each step (Raines et al., 2011). This made it difficult for the students to understand the concepts, despite the use of technology. Additionally, according to Anwar, Kahar, Rawi, Nurjannah, Suaib and Rosalina (2020) sitting through a video explanation of some topic in mathematics would simply complicate the concepts rather than simplify them.

Therefore, whereas technology was used to teach mathematics in the cases stated above, the teaching approach employed still resulted in a negative impact on the students' performance (Svela, Nouri, Viberg, & Zhang, 2019). This has led to alarming statistics about the failure rate of Mathematics among students. According to a report by Bempechat, Drago-Severson and Boulay (2002), 78% of students have a consistent fear of mathematics and so they would not even attempt to study it. In the same report, 67% of students fall sick a few days before a mathematics exam and so eventually perform badly in the examination (Kunwar, 2020). Furthermore, 72% of students score below 50% on average in every mathematics exam they undertake (Kunwar, 2020). These reports reveal the lack of an appropriate pedagogy for teaching Mathematics with technology, in such a way that it improves the academic performance of students.

#### *Active teaching and learning approaches.*

In contrast, active teaching approaches prioritize student engagement, collaboration, and the integration of technology to enhance learning experiences (Paulson & Faust, 2000). Active pedagogies promote student-centred learning environments, where students actively participate in constructing knowledge, solving authentic problems, and making connections between mathematical concepts and real-life situations (Freeman, Eddy, McDonough, Smith, Okoroafor, Jordt, & Wenderoth, 2014). Active learning approaches have demonstrated positive effects on students' mathematical performance. By actively engaging students in the learning process,

these approaches foster a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts and facilitate the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Clark, 2014). The integration of technology tools and resources further enhances the learning experience, providing opportunities for interactive simulations, visual representations, and immediate feedback (Freeman et al., 2014).

*Activated Classroom Teaching (ACT) model*

The Activated Classroom Teaching (ACT) model is a set of “digital age pedagogies that combines active learning and technology affordances into a student-aligned learning approach” (Blewett, 2016a). It consists of five layers of 21st-century pedagogies set atop the traditional teaching approach - consumption. Each of these layers is a pedagogy, a way of approaching teaching and learning in the modern classroom, that guides the teacher to teach effectively with technology. These pedagogies, which include Curation, Conversation, Correction, Creation and Chaos, shift the focus from the teachers to the students and encourage the students to engage in the learning process themselves (Blewett 2016).

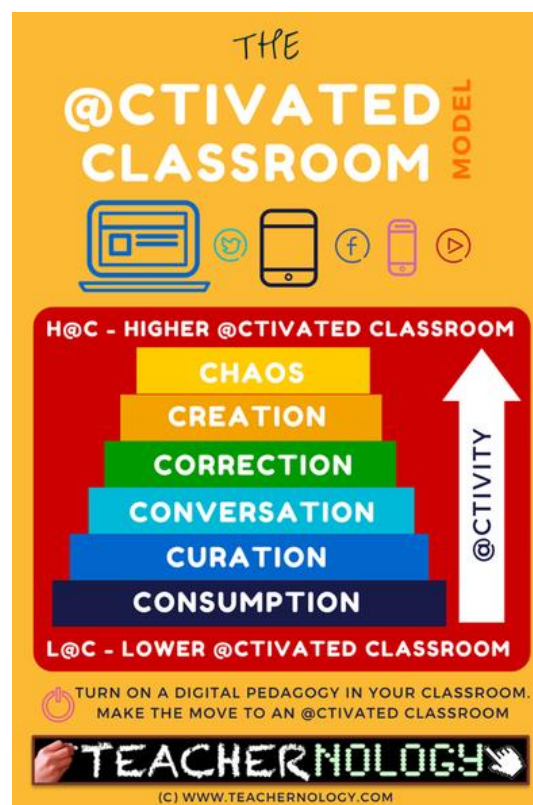


Figure 1. The Activated Classroom Teaching (ACT) digital pedagogies (Blewett, 2016a)

Each of the 5 layers of the ACT model as seen in figure 1 presents opportunities for students to learn while engaging with the content in an active way and especially, to produce an artefact. According to Blewett (2016a), when taught using the ACT model, students also learn 21st-century skills like problem-solving, collaboration, curiosity, critical thinking, risk-taking etc. The goal of the ACT model is to transform students’ understanding of



concepts and move them from being passive consumers of content to active producers of content (Sherrington, 2023). The traditional approach to teaching and learning has hitherto trained students to listen, cram and reproduce during an assessment whatever they are being taught, in a very passive way (consumption). Students have not been used to engaging in the content, contributing to it or being actively involved in the learning (Sherrington, 2023). However, the ACT model helps students to move from being passive in the class to being active and from being consumers to being producers of content and the higher you go in the ACT model, the more engaging and active the students become as they seek to learn (Blewett, 2016b).

According to Blewett (2016a), when teaching with technology the pedagogy of curation seeks to shift the learning of students from pre-packaged content to allowing students to curate the content they need. Verhaart (2012) suggested that technology makes the educator's role change from one of knowledge collection and dissemination to students, to one of curation and dissemination to students. This means educators must be careful to look beyond the one textbook or resource (Deschaine & Sharma, 2015) where the content seems pre-packaged to the development of skills involved in wading through several physical and online resources and presenting them to students. Likewise, students must also be allowed to curate their content themselves, rather than depending on the single note or content prepackaged and released by the teachers (Aguilar-Peña, Rus-Casas, Eliche-Quesada, Muñoz-Rodríguez, & La Rubia, 2022).

According to Blewett (2016a), curation encourages the development of skills like finding, active reading, filtering and categorizing. These skills are essential skills for both educators and students and take learning to another level. According to the research carried out by Deschaine et al. (2015), the five C's involved in digital curation are Collection, Categorizing, Critiquing, Conceptualization and Circulation. These steps are the steps educators need to take to prepare content for their students for effective learning and technology makes this easy to do. With the varied amount of tools available for both teachers and students, they can learn to curate content that will be useful for their learning (Deschaine et al., 2015). Some digital curation technology tools include Flipboard, List.ly, Storify.com, Paper.li and Twitter etc. (Wolff & Mulholland, 2013). These tools allow students to develop the skills they need to find, sift and categorise content, that will be useful for them.

When students participate in the curation of content, this leads them to naturally want to discuss their findings and share their knowledge with their colleagues (Sfard, Neshet, Streefland, Cobb, & Mason, 1998). The pedagogy of conversation is the next layer in the ACT model. According to Blewett (2016b), the history of conversation in education has seen a transition from the Socratic era where knowledge resided in the minds of the teacher and could be accessed only by sitting with them and holding conversation. With the Didactic era which is the era of printed materials, there was a reduced need for conversations (Graham & Wong, 1993). Knowledge was written down and printed and could be accessed without talking.

However, as explained by Blewett (2016b), with the invention of the internet and the digital age, we have been ushered into the Socratic 2.0 era, which is the social era. Now, learning takes place in the conversation (Saunders & Gale, 2012). Students learn as they interact and hold meaningful conversations around the content.

This is different from the lecture-styled approach which pervaded the didactic era and is still seen in most schools today. In a research carried out among teachers and educational psychologists in the UK, Brown and Kennedy (2011) identified that children who had social, emotional and behavioural difficulties had growing changes due to the reflective and exploratory discussions that were going on. Students had the opportunity to interact and collaborate with their teachers and this improved greatly their learning, bringing the required change (Brown et al., 2011).

The next layer in the ACT pedagogy is the layer of Correction. The pedagogy of correction refers to the notion that students are allowed and encouraged to make mistakes (Chialvo & Bak, 1999) and hence learn from those mistakes. In research that evaluated the factors that influence how medical students learn from their errors, it was discovered that participants were aware of their errors (Fischer, Mazor, Baril, Alper, DeMarco, & Pugnaire, 2006). Students felt they learnt better from actual errors than even from near misses. This shows the power of correction and the fact that students learn from making mistakes. Teachers must, therefore, celebrate improvements and growth, rather than only successes (Blewett, 2016a).

While applying the pedagogy of correction, students must also be encouraged to share their mistakes (Fischer et al., 2006). This makes them more comfortable with making mistakes and learning from them. This pedagogy of learning encourages students to keep trying and not be afraid of making mistakes (Fischer et al., 2006), while also learning from the mistakes they make. Some activities that can help in this pedagogy include “Find one - Create one”. According to Blewett (2016a), students are asked to deliberately write a sentence with a mistake in it and also correct one other sentence with a mistake. This helps them critically think about how not to make the mistake so obvious and also think about possible mistakes that can be made (Blewett, 2016a). Another activity is the “inverted test” technique, where the teacher gives the students either a fictitious student’s script or a past session’s script and the students are told to mark and spot the mistakes (Blewett, 2016a).

The pedagogy of creation helps to shift students from consumption to creation and improves several skills in the students. According to Blewett (2016a), creating encourages creativity in students, develops project management skills and encourages collaboration and sharing. Students can be involved in projects that help them think, they can collaborate on such projects and develop an artefact from it (Ribosa & Duran, 2022).

Creation pedagogy encourages students to be producers and not just consumers or curators. Whereas videos are available on YouTube to be watched and used in teaching and learning, it is still essentially consumed (Majekodunmi & Murnaghan, 2012). The creation pedagogy introduces students to going beyond consuming content and encourages them to create theirs. At the end of the activity, something new, an artefact is formed that didn’t exist before (Blewett, 2016b). In recent research by Ribosa et al. (2022), groups of students were asked to create a video that turns the information they have learnt into useful knowledge. According to the research, students perceived improvements in their knowledge and other areas of learning. Other skills learnt included digital technologies, cooperative learning, and skills involved in searching for information and recording voice-overs (Ribosa et al., 2022).

The pedagogy of Chaos is the highest point of the activated classroom teaching model and it is the most challenging. At this level, students are provided with the most choices and information but with the least order and control (Blewett, 2016a). In research by Somerville and Green (2011) carried out on primary school students, it was discovered that through organized chaos in outdoor learning environments, deep connections are made and meanings are drawn by the learners. The pedagogy of Chaos is not that of classroom commotion or confusion as it may sound but about learning through meaning-making. According to Doll (2012), chaos is not a place of disorder but a place where order is derived from interactions that come from just the right amount of tension and imbalance. At this level, the teacher deliberately creates some form of confusion and allows the students to figure it out and process the information (Cregan-Reid, 2016).

According to Blewett (2016a), one way by which teachers can increase the learning of students is by removing the control. Rather than provide all the variables, controlled and organized content, teachers can remove these and allow the students to make meaning from the little variables provided (Blewett, 2016b). Students can make meaning from the diverse information available and draw their learning from there (Somerville et al., 2011).

This study, therefore, investigated the impact of the Activated Classroom Teaching (ACT) pedagogy on the academic performance of students in Mathematics. The practical applications of these Activated Classroom Teaching pedagogies – curation, conversation, correction, creation and chaos; in teaching and learning during the intervention with examples, have been discussed in a later section of this paper.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Despite the use of technology being employed in the teaching and learning of Mathematics in schools, many students are disengaged and bored and hence, perform poorly in Mathematics. This is due among other reasons, to the pedagogical approach being taken to teach the subject. There is an obvious lack of an active pedagogy which takes teaching Mathematics with technology into consideration and thereby increases the performance of students. This study attempts to answer the research question: what is the impact of using the ACT model on the performance of students in Mathematics?

### **Methodology and Design**

To answer the research question, the study made use of the quantitative approach to research. This research made use of action intervention research, using the Activated Classroom Teaching (ACT) model as the intervention. The research made use of purposive sampling under the non-probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher selects the research participants based on certain characteristics. For this research, students of primary five and six in a Nigerian primary school were purposively selected from the entire population. The sample size for this research was 91 students.

For data collection purposes, two forms of data were collected, teacher-made tests and secondary data.

Secondary data in the form of test scores from past students who did not go through the ACT intervention was gathered and compared with the test scores of students who went through the ACT intervention. This helped us to discover what impact teaching with the ACT model had on the performance of students in Mathematics.

The ACT pedagogy was used to teach the students for a 7-week intervention period. Each week, the students were taught using one of the layers of the ACT pedagogy. Week 1 was used to introduce the ACT pedagogy and to revisit the consumption layer. Weeks 2 – 6 were used to teach using the curation, conversation, correction, creation and chaos pedagogies respectively. The different methodologies and technology tools under each layer of the ACT model were applied each week to teach the students. Week 7 was used to finalize the intervention study and revisit any previous layers left out. At the end of the 7-week intervention period, a test was administered to the students to see their academic performance after that period. This was then compared to the scores extracted from previous test before the intervention.

### **ACT Intervention strategy and examples**

During the seven-week intervention period, the students were taught using the various layers of the ACT model. As explained above, week 2 focused on teaching Mathematics using the pedagogy of curation. As a way of reminder, the pedagogy of curation focuses the students on finding, gathering, sifting and categorizing content rather than depending on prepackaged content, presented by the teacher (Blewett, 2016a). In a traditional teaching environment before the intervention, teachers would go to the classroom and lecture the students being the ones to solve the questions on the board. By employing the pedagogy of curation, students were asked to study different textbooks and watch some videos on YouTube, to see how a particular concept was explained. Students then used that knowledge to solve problems given to them. This developed the skill of sifting through several videos to find relevant videos.

In week three, the teaching focused more on the pedagogy of conversation in the teaching of Mathematics in the classroom. One of the strategies used during this week is putting the students in groups to hold conversations around the topic. The teacher would write some sums on the board and allow the students to discuss the solution with each other, sometimes in groups and other times just with the person sitting next to them. This engages each student personally and allows for peer tutoring; hence encouraging conversation before the teacher then attempts to solve the sums.

At another time, the students were made to watch a video of how some complex concepts were simplified. After the video, the teacher engaged the students in a discussion around the video, to see how much they understood and to make them active as well. This is different from what was obtained before the intervention. Before the intervention, the teacher would explain the sums on the board and occasionally ask the students questions but there were no conversations. What was observed was that only the bright and confident students always responded to the questions leaving others to be passive in the classroom.

In week four, the teacher introduced the pedagogy of correction in the teaching of mathematics. Before the intervention, the focus was more on getting the right answer. The students would do anything possible to get the answer to a problem and score all the marks. Conversely, during the intervention, three or four students would be required to solve different questions on the same topic on the board. Afterwards, the teacher will guide the students to spot the mistakes, say why it was a mistake and discuss ways to correct it. This way, the students are trained to find potential error points and eventually avoid them, thereby learning from those mistakes. This also leads to holding conversations around the topic which further strengthens the impact of the ACT pedagogies on the understanding of the subject.

The higher we go in the ACT pedagogy, the more tasking it becomes for the students and the more engaged they also become. In week five of the intervention, the teacher further engaged the students in teaching through the pedagogy of creation. One of the activities used during the intervention is the 'Explainer Video' strategy. The students are asked to create videos of themselves using smartphones, as they explain the solution to particular mathematical problems. Rather than just show the final answer, the students are required to show the workings and various steps of the solution and record a video of themselves while solving the problems. This not only strengthened their understanding of the concepts they were working on but also left the students with videos created as artefacts, which can be useful at other times while revising the content.

At the top of the ACT model is the pedagogy of chaos. This was the focus during week six of the intervention. At this level, as succinctly put by Blewett 2016, the tasks are not only engaging for the students but also for the teacher. During this week, the teacher would give sums to students and deliberately withhold certain information leaving them to figure it out. The students would have to first make use of previous understanding to find the missing variables and then proceed to solve the problems presented.

At another time, the students would not be given the formulae with which to solve the problem. Their first task would be to discover the appropriate formulae and then use the formulae to solve the problems. This pedagogy was used along with the pedagogy of conversation. As the students figured out the missing variables, they were sometimes allowed to hold conversations with their peers to work through the sums together.

## Results and Discussion

The results of the academic performance of the respondents in Mathematics are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Results of the academic performance of students in Mathematics

Variables (marks)	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
0-39	22(23.9)	11(12.0)
40-49	14(15.2)	11(12.0)
50-59	27(29.3)	20(21.7)

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60-69	15(16.3)	16(17.4)
70 and above	14(15.2)	34(37.0)
Mean	56.15%	64.94%
Sd	13.74	14.89

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From the table 1 presented, the results show that 22 students accounting for 23.9% of the respondents scored between 0-39 marks before the intervention. After the intervention, only 11 students accounting for 12% of the students scored the same 0-39 marks in Mathematics. This reveals that fewer students failed Mathematics after they were taught using the ACT pedagogy. Additionally, before the ACT intervention, 31.5% of the students passed Mathematics with a score of 60 and above. This confirms the problem which exists with learning Mathematics.

However, after teaching with the ACT active pedagogy, there was an increase in the percentage of students who passed Mathematics. After the intervention, 54.4% of the students passed Mathematics with a score of 60 and above. Even though this is still not the best, however, it is a great improvement in the percentage of students who passed Mathematics after the intervention. This means that more students passed Mathematics after the introduction of the Activated Classroom Teaching pedagogy.

Furthermore, the results shown in the table reveal that there was a significant increase in the percentage mean of the performance of the students after the intervention. There was an increase of 8.79% in the mean after the intervention which shows that there is a significant impact of the ACT model on the performance of the students.

## Conclusion

As seen in the research, students naturally have a fear of Mathematics. The reason for this is varied but it is majorly because of the way it has been taught. Many teachers have taught mathematics in a traditional, teacher-centered way, making the class boring and resulting in low performance among the students. However, this research examined the impact of the Activated Classroom Teaching (ACT) set of pedagogies on the performance of students in Mathematics. The results of this research revealed that when teachers teach using the ACT model, students performed better in Mathematics than without the ACT model. The study confirmed that when students are taught Mathematics using the ACT model, they will perform better than when taught without it.

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## Innovating Higher Education: The Rise of ChatGPT in Collaborative Learning - A Short Review

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**Abstract:** In recent years, the landscape of higher education has witnessed a transformative wave with the emergence of ChatGPT, an advanced artificial intelligence tool. This paper explores the profound impact of ChatGPT on collaborative learning in higher education institutions. ChatGPT's capabilities in facilitating dynamic and interactive learning experiences have revolutionized traditional pedagogical approaches. This study delves into the practical applications and potential benefits of integrating ChatGPT into collaborative learning environments. From enhancing student engagement and knowledge retention to promoting personalized learning, ChatGPT has rapidly become a game-changer for educators. However, alongside its promise, the paper also addresses the challenges and ethical considerations that come with this technological advancement. The rise of ChatGPT in higher education signifies a paradigm shift, promising to redefine the way educators and students interact, learn, and grow in the modern academic landscape. ChatGPT, an advanced artificial intelligence tool, has rapidly gained prominence in higher education, promising to revolutionize collaborative teaching and learning. This short review paper provides a succinct analysis of the impact and implications of ChatGPT in the higher education landscape. We explore its role in fostering interactive and personalized learning experiences, enhancing student engagement, and reshaping pedagogical approaches. However, it is not without challenges, and ethical considerations loom large. Through the lens of practical applications and case studies, we examine the benefits and potential pitfalls of integrating ChatGPT in collaborative teaching environments. This paper offers a glimpse into the transformative potential of ChatGPT in higher education, urging educators and institutions to navigate this technological wave thoughtfully and ethically.).

**Keywords:** Collaborative Learning, Higher Education, ChatGPT, literature Review

**Citation:** Boudia, C. & Bengueddach, A. (2024). Innovating Higher Education: The Rise of ChatGPT in Collaborative Learning - A Short Review. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1347-1370), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

As In the swiftly evolving landscape of higher education, the integration of cutting-edge technologies is imperative to meet the demands of a digitally connected and information-driven world. Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a revolutionary force, reshaping how educators and students engage in teaching and learning (Adiguzel et al., 2023). Among the various AI applications, ChatGPT, a potent language model, has attracted significant attention for its potential to transform collaborative teaching and learning experiences (Ahmad et al., 2023). The deployment of ChatGPT in higher education settings signifies a paradigm shift, promising to revolutionize traditional pedagogical approaches and foster dynamic, interactive learning environments (AlBadarin et al., 2023). This paper embarks on a journey to explore the multifaceted impact of ChatGPT in the higher education sector. We delve into its role in collaborative teaching and learning, shedding light on its transformative capabilities, and examining its profound implications for both educators and students. Our exploration begins with an analysis of the practical applications and benefits of ChatGPT in higher education. From enhancing student engagement and knowledge retention to promoting personalized learning experiences, ChatGPT offers a myriad of advantages that can reshape educational practices (Bueno, 2023). However, this transformative journey is not without challenges. We also address the ethical considerations and potential pitfalls associated with the integration of AI, urging a balanced and thoughtful approach to technology adoption. By presenting case studies and real-world examples of institutions and educators successfully harnessing ChatGPT in collaborative teaching, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of its practical implications. Moreover, we contemplate the future of collaborative learning with ChatGPT, envisioning an educational landscape where traditional boundaries are redefined, and innovative, tech-infused learning takes center stage. As we navigate this exploration, it becomes evident that ChatGPT's rise in higher education is not merely a technological advancement but a profound transformation that touches upon the core of pedagogy, redefining how educators and students interact, learn, and grow in the modern academic sphere. This paper serves as an introductory beacon to the compelling journey that follows, unraveling the impact, potential, and challenges of ChatGPT innovation in collaborative teaching and learning in higher education.

**Context and Motivation:** The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational paradigms has witnessed a transformative trajectory, with particular attention directed towards collaborative learning environments. Amidst this landscape, ChatGPT, an advanced language model developed by OpenAI, has emerged as a noteworthy technological innovation. The contextual backdrop revolves around the imperative to comprehensively understand and assess the implications of ChatGPT in collaborative learning settings. The motivation stems from the escalating role of AI technologies in shaping educational dynamics, coupled with the need to discern the nuanced impact of ChatGPT on collaborative learning methodologies.

**Objective of the Study:** This paper sets out with a meticulous objective to provide a concise yet comprehensive review of the ascension of ChatGPT in the realm of collaborative learning. The primary aim is to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of ChatGPT's influence on collaborative learning environments, examining its

strengths, limitations, and the evolving pedagogical landscape it engenders. With a focal lens on collaborative learning, the study aims to elucidate the nuanced interactions between ChatGPT and learners, educators, and the collaborative learning process itself.

**Contributions:** The contributions of this paper are multifold. Firstly, it synthesizes current insights, offering a succinct yet thorough overview of ChatGPT's integration into collaborative learning contexts. Secondly, it endeavors to delineate the specific roles and impacts of ChatGPT within the collaborative learning framework. Furthermore, the paper aspires to bridge gaps in understanding, shedding light on potential challenges, ethical considerations, and avenues for optimizing ChatGPT's contribution to collaborative learning. As an academic endeavor, it seeks to enrich the discourse surrounding AI in education, presenting implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers invested in the evolving landscape of collaborative learning augmented by AI technologies. Through this short review, the paper aims to contribute nuanced perspectives that stimulate further research, discourse, and informed decision-making in the intersection of AI and collaborative learning.

The structure of this paper unfolds as follows: In Section 2, we embark on a background examining collaborative teaching and learning in higher education in the traditional classroom and ChatGPT and its utilizations. Transitioning to Section 3, we meticulously unravel the literature review about the subject. Then, in the next section, we discuss the studies mentioned in the literature review section, and summarizing key findings, insights, and the transformative potential of ChatGPT in higher education. The article concludes by emphasizing a summary of importance ChatGPT and some future research directions of technology adoption within the educational sphere.

## **Background**

### **Collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning is an educational approach wherein individuals engage in a shared learning experience, actively participating in the joint construction of knowledge through mutual cooperation and collective effort. This pedagogical strategy emphasizes interaction, communication, and collaboration among learners, fostering a dynamic environment where participants contribute diverse perspectives, skills, and insights. Within the context of collaborative learning, individuals work together on tasks, projects, or activities, promoting the exchange of ideas, the negotiation of meaning, and the development of critical thinking skills. This method underscores the social nature of learning, acknowledging that knowledge acquisition is not solely an individual endeavor but a communal process facilitated by interdependence and reciprocal influence (Boudia et al., 2019).

Collaborative learning methodologies encompass various forms, including group discussions, peer teaching, joint problem-solving, and cooperative projects like programming (Krismadinata et al., 2023). The ultimate goal is to enhance the overall learning experience by capitalizing on the collective intelligence and diverse strengths of the participants, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the learning outcomes (Adiguzel et al., 2023).

Collaborative learning systems typically consist of various components that work together to facilitate and support collaborative learning experiences. The main components can include (Garcia & Jung, 2021):

1. **Learning Management System (LMS):** An LMS is a central platform where course materials, assignments, and assessments are organized. It may have features for discussion forums, chat rooms, and collaboration tools. In a collaborative learning system, the LMS serves as a hub for communication and content sharing.
2. **Collaboration Tools:** These tools enable students and instructors to communicate and collaborate in real-time or asynchronously. They can include discussion boards, chat rooms, video conferencing, wikis, and collaborative document editing tools.
3. **Content Management:** This component allows for the creation, storage, and sharing of learning materials. It might include a repository for documents, videos, and other resources that can be accessed by learners.
4. **Assessment and Evaluation Tools:** These tools help instructors assess students' progress and performance. They can include quizzes, surveys, and peer assessment features.
5. **Communication Tools:** Email, messaging, and notification systems help students and instructors stay connected and informed about course updates, deadlines, and discussions.
6. **Social Networking Integration:** Integration with social media platforms or dedicated learning-focused social networks can promote social learning and interaction among students.
7. **Learning Analytics:** These tools collect and analyze data on student engagement and performance. They provide insights to instructors and students, helping them identify areas for improvement.
8. **Access Control and Security:** Security features ensure that only authorized users have access to the collaborative learning system. Data encryption and user authentication are crucial components.
9. **User Profiles:** Users should be able to create profiles that include their information, interests, and academic progress. This helps in building a sense of community and facilitates interaction among learners.
10. **Mobile and Cross-Platform Compatibility:** As more learning occurs on mobile devices, it's essential that the system is accessible on various platforms and devices to accommodate the diverse needs of learners.
11. **Discussion and Forum Boards:** These are spaces for asynchronous discussion, where students can post questions, share insights, and engage in peer-to-peer learning.
12. **Video Conferencing:** Real-time video conferencing tools facilitate virtual face-to-face interactions among students and instructors, supporting live discussions, lectures, and group projects.
13. **Search and Navigation Features:** An intuitive and effective search system, along with easy navigation, ensures that users can find the content and tools they need quickly and efficiently.
14. **Community and Support:** This component can include access to help resources, FAQs, user guides, and technical support to assist users in making the most of the collaborative learning system.

These components work together to create an interactive and engaging learning environment that promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing, and effective communication among learners and instructors in various

educational settings. The specific features and tools may vary depending on the platform and its intended use, whether in K-12, higher education, or corporate training.

### *ChatGPT*

ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is an advanced language model based on the GPT-3.5 architecture (Al-Ashwal et al., 2023). It represents a state-of-the-art natural language processing system designed to understand and generate human-like text in a conversational context. Operating on a deep neural network with 175 billion parameters, ChatGPT leverages unsupervised learning techniques to pretrain on a vast corpus of diverse textual data, enabling it to capture intricate patterns and nuances in language. Structured as a transformer-based model, ChatGPT excels in contextual understanding, allowing it to generate coherent and contextually relevant responses in a wide array of conversational scenarios (Currie, 2023). The model is characterized by its capacity to comprehend and generate human-like text across multiple domains, showcasing a remarkable ability to engage in contextually appropriate and informative dialogue (Bai et al., 2023).

ChatGPT's academic significance lies in its contribution to the field of natural language processing, exemplifying the potential of large-scale language models in understanding and generating text in a conversational manner. Its deployment has implications for various applications, including but not limited to virtual assistance, language translation, and content generation, thereby showcasing the utility of advanced language models in real-world contexts (Ponte et al., 2023).

The key components and components types that contribute to the functionality of ChatGPT are (Anderson, 2023):

1. **Transformer Architecture:** ChatGPT is built upon a transformer-based architecture. The transformer is a deep learning model designed for natural language understanding and generation. It is composed of an encoder and a decoder, allowing it to process sequences of data effectively.
2. **Pretrained Language Model:** ChatGPT is pre-trained on vast amounts of text data. This pretraining helps the model to understand and generate human-like text. The pretrained model serves as a foundation for further fine-tuning and customization.
3. **Fine-Tuning:** After pretraining, ChatGPT can be fine-tuned for specific tasks or applications. Fine-tuning is a process that adapts the model's behavior to be more task-specific. For example, fine-tuning might be done to make ChatGPT more suitable for generating human-like responses in a chatbot application.
4. **Response Generation:** This component is responsible for generating text responses based on the input it receives. It involves taking the input text, processing it through the model, and producing a coherent and contextually relevant response.
5. **Natural Language Processing (NLP):** ChatGPT utilizes NLP techniques for tasks such as tokenization (breaking text into individual words or tokens), part-of-speech tagging, named entity recognition, and sentiment analysis. These NLP components help the model understand and generate human language.



6. Context Management: ChatGPT maintains a context window that stores the conversation history. This context management allows the model to refer back to previous messages in a conversation and respond coherently.
7. Parameter Tuning: The model has numerous hyperparameters that can be tuned to affect its behavior, such as the temperature parameter that controls the randomness of responses or the maximum length of responses.
8. Prompt Engineering: The choice of prompts or input queries plays a crucial role in the model's output. Designing effective prompts can lead to more relevant responses from ChatGPT.
9. Model Optimization: Techniques such as model compression, quantization, and pruning may be applied to optimize the size and efficiency of ChatGPT, making it more suitable for deployment in various applications.
10. Ethical and Safety Components: In response to concerns about the potential for inappropriate or harmful outputs, ChatGPT incorporates safety components designed to mitigate risks, filter out sensitive or harmful content, and ensure responsible use.

These are some of the fundamental components and aspects of ChatGPT. It's important to note that ChatGPT is a complex machine learning system, and its behavior is influenced by various parameters, data, and training procedures. OpenAI continually refines and enhances these components to improve the model's performance and safety.

## Literature Review

According ChatGPT has garnered significant attention in recent research across various domains. This literature review aims to provide an overview of distinct studies that investigate the role of ChatGPT in collaborative learning, focusing on its potential, challenges, and implications. The studies span diverse fields, including software architecture, writing classes, higher education, generative AI's impact on various industries, and educational utilization in pre-service teacher training.

Ahmad et al. (2023) investigates the potential and challenges of integrating ChatGPT as a Software Development Bot (DevBot) in collaborative software architecture. Their three-phase methodology involves developing an architecture story, enabling collaborative architecting, and conducting empirical validations. Preliminary findings indicate that ChatGPT can mimic an architect's role, generate artifacts, and participate in the architecting process. However, human oversight and decision support are crucial for successful collaboration.

Anderson (2023) explores the conceptual framing of ChatGPT in the context of writing classes, focusing on tool and collaborator metaphors. The study highlights limitations in existing metaphors, emphasizing the need for multiple perspectives. Ethical concerns and accountability issues raised contribute to discussions on responsible

AI use in educational settings, providing valuable considerations for educators and students.

Dai et al. (2023) examine the role, position, and implications of ChatGPT in higher education. Their conceptual approach links technological affordances with educational needs, emphasizing the student-driven nature of ChatGPT and its potential impact on teaching, learning, and assessment. Competencies required for AI interaction, challenges, and collaborative efforts are discussed, advocating for a collective approach to harness the educational potential of ChatGPT.

Fui-Hoon Nah et al. (2023) explore challenges and opportunities presented by generative AI, focusing on ChatGPT's impact on various fields. The multidisciplinary approach emphasizes human-centered AI collaboration, addressing ethical, technological, regulatory, and economic concerns. Findings underscore the importance of incorporating generative AI in collaborative learning environments, highlighting the significance of AI literacy in educational settings.

Jeong (2023) investigates the educational utilization of ChatGPT through collaborative learning sessions with pre-service teachers. Positive affective and technology acceptance outcomes indicate that collaborative learning with ChatGPT can be enjoyable and meaningful. The study emphasizes the need for guidelines and teacher guidance to harmonize ChatGPT's integration into educational settings.

Karakose et al. (2023) assess the potential of ChatGPT, specifically versions 3.5 and 4, in supporting scientific research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. The study showcases the chatbots' ability to provide accurate, clear, and concise information, with newer versions demonstrating enhanced critical reasoning. The findings suggest that ChatGPT could play a significant role in supporting collaborative research processes.

The study by Livberber and Ayvaz, (2023) delves into the impact of ChatGPT on the academic landscape. Conducted through qualitative interviews with ten academics experienced in ChatGPT, the research aims to gather insights into its integration into research and education. The study highlights positive perceptions, viewing ChatGPT as a valuable tool for literature review, language support, and idea generation. However, ethical concerns, particularly regarding plagiarism and misinformation, are raised. The findings also emphasize the limitations of ChatGPT, underscoring its role as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for human reasoning. Anticipated future challenges include concerns about plagiarism detection and potential declines in researchers' critical thinking skills.

Pavlik (2023) explores the capabilities and limitations of ChatGPT in journalism and media. The research involves collaboration between a human journalism professor and ChatGPT, focusing on the generation of text responses based on user prompts. While specific findings are not detailed, the essay likely discusses the quality of generated content, the effectiveness of AI-human collaboration, and considerations for integrating ChatGPT into journalism and media education. While collaborative learning is not explicitly addressed, the collaborative

content creation process implies implications for collaborative educational practices.

Pinochet et al. (2023) integrates PROMETHEE and SAPEVO-M1 methods to analyze collaborative work alternatives with ChatGPT in higher education. Utilizing a quantitative and cross-sectional approach with a focus group of 15 teachers from Brazilian universities, the study explores criteria for collaborative work and teachers' preferences in utilizing ChatGPT. The PROMETHEE-SAPEVO-M1 analysis reveals 'Support for Autonomous Learning' as the preferred alternative, highlighting the tool's potential to facilitate independent learning. The study contributes to understanding ChatGPT's role in higher education and emphasizes the importance of considering qualitative aspects, such as teachers' preferences and concerns, in decision-making for AI integration in education.

Ponte et al. (2023) explore the use of ChatGPT for providing personalized formative feedback in large-class collaborative learning. The study employs a computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) design framework and emphasizes the perceived quality of feedback, its influence on learning, and its impact on group dynamics. The findings highlight the potential of ChatGPT in enhancing collaborative learning experiences, while also acknowledging the need for human validation of feedback.

Su et al. (2023) focus on integrating ChatGPT into argumentative writing classrooms, addressing challenges in finding ideal peer students for practice and providing timely feedback. The study investigates ChatGPT's potential in assisting students with various writing tasks, emphasizing its dialogical, structural, and linguistic aspects. Ethical considerations are discussed, and future considerations emphasize digital literacy and responsible AI use in education.

Tan et al. (2023) provides a literature-based exploration of the potential roles of Generative Artificial Intelligence based on Large Language Models (GAI (LLMs)) in collaborative learning contexts. The study proposes strategies for the responsible and ethical integration of GAI (LLMs) in education, emphasizing roles such as learning partner, multi-way interactions, and contributions to collaborative learning. The findings offer practical insights for educators and stakeholders.

Vasconcelos & Santos (2023) investigate the potential of ChatGPT and Bing Chat in enhancing STEM education, focusing on reflective and critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, and concept comprehension. The study employs a constructionist theoretical framework and emphasizes effective pedagogical strategies employed by the AI systems. It concludes that GenAIbots offer promising avenues to revolutionize STEM education through a constructionist lens.

Zhu et al. (2023) examine the impact of ChatGPT on collaborative interdisciplinary learning among undergraduate students in a digital literacy course. The study considers effects on problem-solving, engagement, and perceptions, emphasizing the importance of disciplinary backgrounds and specific learning topics. The findings underscore the need for optimized ChatGPT use considering these factors.

(Opara et al., 2023) evaluate the prospects and challenges of using ChatGPT for teaching, learning, and research purposes. The study highlights ChatGPT's ability to provide rapid responses but also points out challenges such as the lack of citation and reference in generated replies. The article discusses the potential of ChatGPT to enhance personalized learning experiences and automate repetitive tasks in education.

This short literature review provides a holistic understanding of ChatGPT's role in collaborative learning across diverse educational contexts. The studies collectively contribute to the evolving discourse on the integration of AI in education, emphasizing the potential benefits, challenges, and ethical considerations associated with leveraging ChatGPT in collaborative learning environments. The findings underscore the importance of responsible AI use, digital literacy, and thoughtful instructional design to optimize the positive impact of ChatGPT on collaborative learning outcomes.

Table 1. Summary of research on ChatGPT for Collaborative Learning.

Research Objective	Methodology	Key Findings	Relevance to the topic
Ahmad et al. (2023) aims to explore the potential and challenges of integrating ChatGPT into collaborative software architecture, focusing on its role as a Software Development Bot (DevBot).	The research employs a three-phase methodology: developing the Architecture Story, enabling Collaborative Architecting, and conducting Empirical Validations. Preliminary results reveal ChatGPT's ability to mimic an architect's role, generating artifacts, recommending tactics, and participating in collaborative architecting.	Preliminary results indicate that ChatGPT can mimic an architect's role and support Architecture-Centric Software Engineering (ACSE). It can generate architectural artifacts, recommend tactics and patterns, and participate in the collaborative architecting process. However, human oversight and decision support are crucial for successful collaboration. The study identifies areas of potential and perils, including response variation, ethical considerations, and biases in outputs.	This study holds relevance to collaborative learning by highlighting the potential for AI, like ChatGPT, to enhance collaborative processes in software architecture, providing insights into challenges and ethical considerations.
Anderson (2023) aims to explore and analyze the conceptual framing of ChatGPT in the	The methodology involves analyzing scholarly and news discourse, examining ChatGPT prompts and	The study identifies the shortcomings of the tool metaphor, emphasizing ChatGPT's reliance on authors' writing without clear attribution.	The research is relevant to "CHATGPT AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING" by offering insights into

context of writing outputs, and reflecting The collaborator metaphor is metaphors framing classes, particularly on the author's writing critiqued for its failure to ChatGPT's role in focusing on tool and process. provide accountability, as writing classes, collaborator ChatGPT produces biased addressing limitations, metaphors. The output without identifying and contributing to research seeks to original sources. Metaphors like discussions on illustrate the medical and surgical are responsible AI use in limitations of these explored to understand educational settings. metaphors and ChatGPT's impact on human The findings provide emphasize the value writing and the academic considerations for of adopting multiple community. The study educators fostering metaphors for an highlights contradictions in tool students' digital literacy understanding of and collaborator metaphors, when integrating ChatGPT. advocating for the use of ChatGPT as a writing tool or collaborator in collaborative learning environments.

Fui-Hoon Nah, F., Zheng, R., Cai, J., Siau, K., & Chen, L. (2023). The research aims to explore the challenges and opportunities of generative AI, with a focus on ChatGPT and its impact on various fields. It seeks to understand the role of human-centered AI collaboration in addressing ethical, technological, regulatory, and economic concerns associated with generative AI.

The study employs a multidisciplinary approach, combining literature review, analysis of AI development stages, and examination of specific generative AI models like ChatGPT. The methodology emphasizes the importance of human-centered AI collaboration and its implications for the design and application of generative AI.

Generative AI, exemplified by models like ChatGPT, has the potential to revolutionize various industries. Challenges associated with generative AI include ethical considerations, transparency, governance, and the need for human-AI collaboration. Human-centered AI collaboration is crucial for addressing challenges and ensuring the responsible development and application of generative AI. Considerations of empathy, transparency, ethics, and education are vital in achieving successful human-AI collaboration. The research emphasizes the need for regulations, policies, and AI literacy to guide the ethical and

The findings underscore the importance of incorporating generative AI in collaborative learning environments. The study highlights the significance of AI literacy in educational settings to prepare students for effective collaboration with generative AI. Additionally, the research emphasizes the need for a human-centered approach to AI development to align with human values and needs in collaborative learning contexts.

effective use of generative AI.

<p>Jeong, J. E. (2023). The objective of this study is to investigate the educational utilization methods of generative AI, specifically ChatGPT, by conducting collaborative learning sessions with pre-service teachers. The focus is on evaluating the affective domain and applying the technology acceptance model to assess pre-service teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards using ChatGPT in an educational context.</p>	<p>The study involved 3 to 4 pre-service teachers from April 5 to May 10, 2023, with a total of 14 participants. Collaborative learning sessions using ChatGPT were conducted, and afterward, evaluations were carried out for the affective domain and technology acceptability. Opinions on ChatGPT's use, impressions of collaborative learning with ChatGPT, and thoughts on its educational applications were also collected.</p>	<p>Pre-service teachers displayed positive attitudes, motivation, and interest in collaborative learning using ChatGPT, scoring high in affective domain evaluation. In the technology acceptability assessment, participants showed favorable perceptions in factors such as usefulness, ease of use, and learning opportunities. While effective use of ChatGPT was noted in generating ideas with fast responses, concerns about answer reliability were raised, emphasizing the need for verification. Collaborative learning with ChatGPT was seen as enjoyable and meaningful, contributing to improvements in answers. The educational use of ChatGPT was recognized as a tool to enhance critical thinking across various subjects, with guidelines, teacher guidance, and feedback considered crucial for effective implementation. Participants highlighted the importance of adapting education to social changes and emphasized the significance of collaborative learning.</p>	<p>The findings underscore the potential of ChatGPT for educational purposes. The study suggests that guidelines for optimal use should be established, and the integration of ChatGPT into educational settings should be harmonized with teacher guidance. The positive affective and technology acceptance outcomes indicate that collaborative learning with ChatGPT can be enjoyable and meaningful, fostering improvements in both teaching and learning processes.</p>
<p>Karakose, T., Demirkol, M., Aslan, N., Köse, H., &amp; Yirci, R. (2023).</p>	<p>Data were generated through simultaneous interviews with ChatGPT-3.5 and 4,</p>	<p>Accuracy, Clarity, and Conciseness: Both ChatGPT-3.5 and 4 demonstrated a strong potential to provide accurate,</p>	<p>The study's findings emphasize the potential of ChatGPT in collaborative research</p>

The study aims to investigate the potential of ChatGPT, specifically versions 3.5 and 4, in supporting scientific research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. The primary objective is to assess their ability to collaboratively analyze and provide information on various aspects of the pandemic's impact on education, evaluating accuracy, clarity, conciseness, and critical reasoning in their responses.

focusing on four key categories related to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on education. Responses were evaluated comparatively using a trichotomous rating system, assessing accuracy, clarity, conciseness, and critical reasoning. Inter-rater agreements were measured using Cohen's kappa values. The methodology employed collaborative analysis between human and artificial intelligence to explore the chatbots' effectiveness in generating scientifically relevant information.

clear, and concise information across the evaluated categories related to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on education. Breadth of Information: ChatGPT-4 exhibited an advantage in providing more categorized and synthesized information, showcasing a broader understanding of the topics under consideration. Critical Reasoning: ChatGPT-4 outperformed ChatGPT-3.5 in demonstrating critical reasoning, indicating an enhanced ability to synthesize and analyze information.

processes, showcasing its ability to contribute accurate and critical insights to scientific inquiries. The collaborative analysis between human intelligence and AI, as demonstrated in this study, aligns with the broader theme of collaborative learning. The results suggest that ChatGPT, especially in its newer versions, could play a significant role in supporting scientific work by ethically integrating chatbots into different stages of research. This has implications for the collaborative learning landscape, where AI collaborates with human intelligence to enhance research endeavors.

Livberber, T., & Ayvaz, S. (2023). The research aims to explore the impact of ChatGPT, an AI and machine learning technology, on the academic world. The specific objectives include collecting the

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing a phenomenological research design. Ten academics with experience in ChatGPT were interviewed using a semi-structured

Academics perceive ChatGPT positively for its support in scientific research and education, finding it valuable for tasks like literature review and idea generation. However, ethical concerns arise, focusing on issues of plagiarism, misinformation, and the potential misuse of text

The study primarily focuses on the impact of ChatGPT on academia, with a particular emphasis on research and education. While collaborative learning is not explicitly addressed in the findings, the positive perception of



views of academics on ChatGPT technology, understanding how it is integrated into academic research and the education process, identifying its advantages and disadvantages, evaluating its adherence to academic ethics, and predicting its future impact on academia.	format. Thematic analyses were conducted using Maxqda qualitative data analysis software. The research questions focused on the integration of ChatGPT into academic research and education, its advantages and disadvantages, evaluation in terms of academic ethics, and its anticipated impact on the future of academia.	generated by ChatGPT. While the tool is acknowledged as helpful, academics stress its limitations, emphasizing the indispensability of human judgment. Future concerns include ongoing challenges in plagiarism detection, the need for consistent ethical regulations, and worries that heavy reliance on AI applications, such as ChatGPT, may lead to a decline in researchers' critical thinking skills.	ChatGPT as a tool for literature review and idea generation suggests potential applications in collaborative research endeavors. The ethical concerns raised, such as plagiarism and misinformation, also have implications for collaborative learning environments where integrity and accurate information dissemination are crucial. Further research may explore specific connections between ChatGPT and collaborative learning practices in academia.
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Pavlik, J. V. (2023). The research aims to explore the capabilities and limitations of ChatGPT, a generative AI platform, in the context of journalism and media. The focus is on understanding how ChatGPT, in collaboration with a human journalism professor, influences the generation of text responses based on	The methodology is not explicitly mentioned in the provided passage. However, it suggests that the essay is coauthored by a human journalism and media professor in collaboration with ChatGPT. The methodology likely involves using ChatGPT to generate text responses based on prompts and reflecting on the outcomes in the context of journalism	The passage doesn't detail specific key findings. However, it implies that the essay discusses both the capacity and limitations of ChatGPT. This may include insights into the quality of generated content, the effectiveness of collaboration between AI and human experts, and considerations for integrating generative AI into journalism and media education.	The relevance to collaborative learning is not explicitly addressed in the passage. However, the collaborative nature of the essay, involving both a human professor and ChatGPT, suggests a form of collaborative content creation. The essay's insights into the implications of generative AI for journalism and media education may indirectly relate to
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<p>user prompts.</p>	<p>and media education.</p>		<p>collaborative learning by considering how AI technologies can be integrated into educational practices.</p>
<p>Pinochet, L. H. C., Moreira, M. Â. L., Fávero, L. P., Santos, M. dos, &amp; Pardim, V. I. (2023). The aim of this article is to integrate two Multicriteria Decision Support (MDS) methods, PROMETHEE and SAPEVO-M1, to analyze collaborative work alternatives with ChatGPT in higher education. The research focuses on aggregating qualitative data through ordinal entries to evaluate ChatGPT's use in educational settings. The study specifically explores criteria for collaborative work and seeks to understand the preferences and priorities of teachers in utilizing ChatGPT.</p>	<p>The research is exploratory and descriptive, utilizing a quantitative and cross-sectional approach. A focus group of 15 teachers from Brazilian universities, who use ChatGPT in the classroom and influence technology decisions in their respective institutions, participated in remote meetings. The PROMETHEE-SAPEVO-M1 method, a hybrid model combining PROMETHEE and SAPEVO-M, was employed for decision analysis. This method incorporates qualitative inputs through ordinal entries for both alternatives and criteria. The study utilized qualitative scales to capture the decision-makers' preferences and perceptions regarding the evaluated variables.</p>	<p>The PROMETHEE-SAPEVO-M1 analysis revealed that the alternative with the best performance is 'Support for Autonomous Learning,' exhibiting the highest positive flow and the lowest negative flow. This indicates a strong preference for this alternative among the set. 'Virtual Assistant for Teachers,' 'Use of Gamification,' 'Generate Ideas,' and 'Emotional Support' followed in descending order of preference. 'Emotional Support' was identified as the least preferable alternative, attributed to concerns about the tool's limitations, including the lack of human interaction, reduced critical thinking, and empathy.</p>	<p>The study highlights ChatGPT's potential in higher education for collaborative work, particularly favoring its role in supporting autonomous learning. The analysis emphasizes the importance of qualitative considerations in decision-making when integrating AI tools like ChatGPT, with teachers' preferences and concerns playing a crucial role, especially in areas like emotional support functionalities. Overall, the findings advocate for a nuanced approach to AI tool integration in education, recognizing both their advantages and limitations. The study supports the idea that institutions should assess these tools critically, rather than outright prohibiting them, taking into</p>

			account their potential contributions and ethical considerations within the context of higher education.
Ponte, C. D., Dushyanthen, S., & Lyons, K. (2023). The research aims to explore the use of ChatGPT as a tool for providing personalized formative feedback in large-class collaborative learning, specifically focusing on its impact on learning and group dynamics. The objective is to assess how participants perceive the quality of feedback from ChatGPT, its influence on learning, and its implications for collaborative group interactions.	The study utilized a computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) design incorporating ChatGPT into a virtual workshop for health professionals. Participants engaged in a problem-based learning activity where ChatGPT provided personalized formative feedback. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting data through a Qualtrics survey that included Likert scales and open-ended questions. Standardized custom instructions and prompts were engineered for participants. The analysis included both quantitative measures and qualitative coding of open-ended responses.	Perceived Quality of Feedback: Participants generally found the ChatGPT feedback valuable, with a majority agreeing that it helped them learn about digital health evaluation. The feedback was seen as influential in improving evaluation plans. Influence on Learning: Participants highlighted that ChatGPT provided specific, actionable, immediate, and easy-to-understand feedback on their evaluation plans. However, some expressed the need for human validation of the feedback. Influence on Group Dynamics: While many participants noted enhanced group discussion due to ChatGPT, some found it to be a distraction, hindering discussions and acting as an authority within the group. Causal Attributions: Most participants attributed their group's ChatGPT rating to adaptive responses to feedback, indicating internal and controllable causes. Few participants expressed distrust in the rating.	The study's findings emphasize the potential of ChatGPT in providing personalized formative feedback and influencing collaborative learning in large-class settings. The research contributes to the understanding of how AI tools like ChatGPT can be integrated into collaborative learning environments. Recommendations for educators include engineering and testing standardized instructions, providing detailed guidance on tool interaction, and scaffolding optimal group interactions. The study highlights the need for further research to identify design principles for effective integration of generative AI in education and to explore factors influencing group

			dynamics in AI-supported collaborative learning.
Su, Y., Lin, Y., & Lai, C. (2023). The objective is to investigate the potential of ChatGPT in assisting students with tasks such as outline preparation, content revision, proofreading, and post-writing reflection, focusing on the dialogical, structural, and linguistic aspects of argumentation.	The methodology includes a review of relevant literature, exploration of the capabilities of ChatGPT, and a discussion on the integration of ChatGPT into argumentative writing pedagogy.	. The article envisions a dual role for ChatGPT as both a writing evaluator and a generative tool to aid complex reasoning in argumentative writing. Ethical concerns, particularly regarding authorship and plagiarism, are addressed, urging an expanded definition in the context of AI-based writing assistance tools. Looking to the future, the article underscores the need for digital literacy and training in the ethical use of ChatGPT, recommending guidance for effective questioning, utilizing ChatGPT as a thinking aid, and considering the broader implications of AI tools in argumentative writing instruction.	The research is relevant to collaborative learning as it explores the potential integration of ChatGPT into argumentative writing classrooms, considering its role in supporting students in various writing tasks. The study contributes to the understanding of how AI tools like ChatGPT can be leveraged in collaborative learning environments to enhance the writing process, address challenges, and promote effective dialogue in argumentative writing. The ethical considerations and future recommendations align with broader discussions on the responsible use of AI in education.
Tan, S. C., Chen, W., & Chua, B. L. (2023). To explore the potential roles of Generative Artificial Intelligence based on Large Language	The study adopts a literature-based approach, drawing on existing theories of collaborative learning, human-AI collaboration, and AI	Roles of GAI (LLMs) in Collaborative Learning: It assists in idea generation, summarization, and evaluation, serving as valuable collaborators in the learning process.	- Integration of GAI (LLMs) in collaborative learning settings promotes diverse ideas and perspectives. - GAI (LLMs) contribute to

Models (GAI (LLMs)), particularly focusing on models like Generative Pretrained Transformer (GPT), in collaborative learning contexts. Additionally, to propose strategies for the responsible and ethical integration of GAI (LLMs) in collaborative learning environments.

readiness. The research employs a conceptual framework that integrates principles from the Learning Sciences and Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning perspective into the development and design of GAI (LLMs) for effective collaboration.

Collaboration among students, teachers, and GAI (LLMs) enhances collaborative learning by promoting diverse perspectives and insights. Teachers leverage GAI (LLMs) for tasks such as summarizing student ideas, assessing concepts, and generating learning activities. Both teachers and students need to develop AI literacy to interact effectively with GAI (LLMs) and critically evaluate generated content. Addressing issues like interpretability, biases, and maintaining human agency in the collaboration process is crucial. AI Readiness: Stakeholders must enhance cognitive knowledge, skills, vision, and ethics related to GAI (LLMs) to ensure effective collaboration.

meaningful conversations, fostering insights from various viewpoints. - The study underscores the importance of humans retaining critical tasks in learning, with GAI (LLMs) contributing to efficiency, reliability, and learning from large datasets.

Vasconcelos, M. A. R., & Santos, R. P. dos. (2023). The study aims to investigate the potential of ChatGPT and Bing Chat, advanced conversational AIs, as "objects-to-think-with" in enhancing STEM education. It focuses on fostering reflective and critical

A single-case study methodology was employed to analyze extensive interaction logs between students and both AI systems in simulated STEM learning experiences. The qualitative research design allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. The study

The results highlight the ability of ChatGPT and Bing Chat to help learners develop reflective and critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, and concept comprehension. Positive reinforcement, Socratic-like dialogue, questioning, building on prior knowledge, and a student-centered learning approach were identified as effective pedagogical strategies employed by the AI systems. The study

The study underscores the potential of GenAIBots, like ChatGPT and Bing Chat, in creating inclusive, creative, and collaborative learning environments. These AI tools act as catalysts for exploration and innovation, actively engaging students in discussions, debates, and collaborative

thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, and concept comprehension using a constructionist theoretical framework. involved crafting prompts to elicit responses from the AIs and assessed their impact on student engagement and learning. also indicated variations in the performances of ChatGPT and Bing Chat, with ChatGPT outperforming in terms of response quality, context understanding, subject comprehension, and overall performance. projects. Their integration into STEM education aligns with a constructionist learning theory, emphasizing hands-on, experiential learning and cognitive tools. Despite these benefits, the study recognizes the need to address concerns such as AI information accuracy, reliability, and potential reduction in human interaction.

Zhu, G., Fan, X., Hou, C., Zhong, T., Seow, P., Shen-Hsing, A. C., Rajalingam, P., Yew, L. K., & Poh, T. L. (2023). The research aims to investigate the impact of ChatGPT on collaborative interdisciplinary learning among undergraduate students in a digital literacy course. It explores its effects on collaborative problem-solving, engagement, and perceptions, emphasizing the importance of considering A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving 130 undergraduate students (STEM and non-STEM) in a two-week digital literacy course. The students covered two learning topics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain. Weekly surveys and online reflections were utilized to collect data on collaborative interdisciplinary problem-solving, engagement, and student perceptions. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to derive insights. Significant differences were observed in collaborative interdisciplinary problem-solving, physical engagement, and cognitive engagement between the AI and Blockchain modules. The AI module, featuring debate, demonstrated higher engagement levels compared to the more factual Blockchain module. Non-STEM students exhibited increased physical and cognitive engagement without ChatGPT, while STEM students showed no significant differences. The study suggested that non-STEM students might need extra time to adapt to ChatGPT functions. Students expressed positive views on efficiency and addressing knowledge gaps. Concerns were raised about The findings underscore the need to optimize ChatGPT use by considering students' disciplinary backgrounds and specific learning topics. The study emphasizes the role of instructional design in balancing the advantages of ChatGPT, like efficiency, with the preservation of students' agency and critical thinking. The positive and negative themes identified contribute practical insights for educators aiming to integrate ChatGPT into collaborative interdisciplinary learning.

<p>disciplinary backgrounds and specific learning topics.</p>	<p>repetitive responses and a perceived lack of innovative ideas. Students emphasized the need to develop literacy skills to evaluate AI-generated content effectively.</p>		
<p>Opara, E., Mfon-Ette Theresa, A., &amp; Aduke, T. C. (2023). The research objective is to evaluate the prospects and challenges of using ChatGPT for teaching, learning, and research purposes.</p>	<p>The methodology involves reviewing literature on the educational implications of artificial intelligence and assessing the capabilities of ChatGPT.</p>	<p>The key findings indicate that ChatGPT is able to provide rapid and instantaneous responses to search queries and generate text that resembles conversation responses. However, the article also highlights some difficulties, such as the lack of citation and reference in the replies generated by ChatGPT.</p>	<p>the article discusses the potential of using ChatGPT to enhance personalized learning experiences and automate repetitive tasks in education.</p>
<p>Eunjung, J. (2023). Investigate educational utilization methods of ChatGPT in collaborative learning with pre-service teachers.</p>	<p>collaborative learning sessions using ChatGPT with 14 pre-service teachers from April 5 to May 10, 2023. Subsequently evaluated affective domain and technology acceptance.</p>	<p>Pre-service teachers show high affective domain scores and positive technology acceptance during collaborative learning with ChatGPT. Clear question selection is crucial for ChatGPT's effective use, with emphasis on the need for reliability verification despite its fast response capabilities. The study recommends necessary guidelines for ChatGPT use in education, underlining the importance of teacher guidance and feedback.</p>	<p>The study suggests that collaborative learning with ChatGPT contributes to the development of critical thinking skills and can be applied across various subjects, emphasizing its relevance in an educational context that promotes interaction and shared learning experiences.</p>
<p>Cooper, G. (2023). The research aims to explore ChatGPT's role in science education: ChatGPT's</p>	<p>A self-study methodology is employed to investigate ChatGPT's technology. The study poses</p>	<p>ChatGPT's responses often align with key themes in science education research. However, it lacks evidence to support its output, potentially positioning</p>	<p>ChatGPT can facilitate collaborative learning by assisting educators in designing engaging science units, rubrics,</p>



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responses to science education questions, Educators' utilization of ChatGPT in science pedagogy, and Reflections on ChatGPT's use as a research tool. The objective is to initiate a broader conversation with generative AI in science education.	questions related to science education to ChatGPT and analyzes its responses. Additionally, the researcher utilizes ChatGPT as a research tool for editing and enhancing the research narrative.	itself as an ultimate epistemic authority. AI's environmental impact, content moderation issues, and the risk of copyright infringement are highlighted. Educators should model responsible AI use, prioritize critical thinking, and clarify expectations. Educators need to critically evaluate AI-generated resources and adapt them to specific teaching contexts. ChatGPT is used for editing and experimenting with research narrative clarity.	and quizzes. However, the importance of critical evaluation and adaptation to specific contexts is emphasized. The ethical considerations raised in the study are crucial for guiding responsible AI use in collaborative educational settings.
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## Results and Discussion

ChatGPT's capacity to foster interactive learning experiences is a key pedagogical implication. It transforms the traditional classroom dynamic, where knowledge flows primarily from educator to student, into an interactive and two-way exchange. Students are encouraged to ask questions, seek clarifications, and engage actively with the learning material. This interactive learning environment promotes a more student-centered approach, where the individual needs and preferences of students are taken into account. Educators can adapt their teaching methods to suit the specific requirements of each student, promoting a more effective and personalized educational experience. The integration of ChatGPT in higher education leads to a redefined role for educators. They transition from being the sole providers of knowledge to becoming facilitators, mentors, and guides. Educators are no longer the sole sources of information; they collaborate with ChatGPT to create a holistic learning experience. This shift in educator roles places greater emphasis on guiding students, fostering critical thinking, and helping them navigate the vast sea of information available. Educators are instrumental in teaching students how to use ChatGPT effectively, critically evaluate information, and apply their knowledge.

ChatGPT's adaptability to diverse learning styles is a significant pedagogical implication. It caters to students with varying learning preferences, whether they are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners. This adaptability ensures that each student can receive information and guidance in a format that resonates with their individual style. The technology's ability to offer explanations, examples, and resources tailored to each student's learning style maximizes the effectiveness of education. An overarching pedagogical implication is the promotion of inclusivity and accessibility. ChatGPT has the potential to break down barriers and provide equitable educational opportunities to all students, including those with disabilities or diverse learning needs. This

technology ensures that educational resources are available 24/7, making learning more flexible and accessible. As AI technologies like ChatGPT continue to advance, we anticipate an increasing significance of AI in education. ChatGPT is just one example of AI tools that are enhancing the educational experience. In the future, these AI tools may become ubiquitous, seamlessly integrated into various aspects of education. We foresee ChatGPT playing an augmented role in educator support. While educators remain at the forefront of teaching, ChatGPT could serve as a powerful companion, providing real-time assistance and resources to aid educators in meeting the diverse needs of their students. This collaboration between human educators and AI tools has the potential to create a more effective and personalized learning environment.

The future of collaborative learning with ChatGPT may bring about a revolution in personalized learning at scale. AI-driven algorithms can analyze student data and adapt content in real-time to meet individual needs. This level of customization could greatly improve learning outcomes and student satisfaction. ChatGPT's 24/7 accessibility could potentially break down geographical and time-related barriers. Students from around the world may gain access to quality educational resources and support whenever they need it. This expanded access has the potential to democratize education on a global scale. We must also acknowledge that the future of collaborative learning with ChatGPT will not be without challenges. Technological advancements will continue to bring new possibilities, but they will also raise questions about ethics, privacy, and the role of educators. As AI tools like ChatGPT become more sophisticated, discussions surrounding responsibility, accountability, and the potential societal impact will become increasingly critical.

The release of ChatGPT has ignited substantial discussions and research on its potential impact in the realm of collaborative learning. The studies collectively shed light on the varied impacts of ChatGPT in collaborative learning environments. These diverse studies underscore ChatGPT's potential as a collaborative tool, influencing different facets of education, from architectural development in software design to writing classes, STEM education, and scientific research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ethical concerns, teacher competencies, and the need for guidelines consistently emerge as pivotal considerations. Building upon these findings, future research directions should prioritize several key areas. Similar to Ahmad et al. (2023), long-term studies are imperative to assess the sustained impact of ChatGPT on collaborative learning outcomes over extended periods. Inspired by Anderson's (2023) proposal, research into learning analytics should be explored in conjunction with AI chatbots to understand and inform personalized instruction within collaborative learning environments. Furthermore, investigations into student motivation and perceptions, aligning with Jeong (2023), are essential for comprehending the nuanced dynamics of student interaction with AI in collaborative settings.

The ethical considerations raised by several studies warrant in-depth analysis, particularly focusing on biases in AI-generated content and issues related to plagiarism and misinformation within collaborative learning contexts. Studies such as those by Dai et al. (2023), Nah et al. (2023), and Fávero et al. (2023) indicate the necessity for comprehensive training and support for educators to effectively integrate AI chatbots into their collaborative teaching practices. Addressing the accessibility of AI chatbots, as suggested by Su et al. (2023) and Vasconcelos & Santos (2023), is crucial to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students within collaborative

learning settings. Comparative studies, similar to the approach proposed by Tan et al. (2023), could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different AI chatbot models within collaborative learning environments. Cross-disciplinary applications, as highlighted by Zhu et al. (2023), need further exploration to tailor AI chatbots to specific subjects and educational levels within collaborative learning settings. Moreover, the study by Ponte et al. (2023) underscores the importance of human validation of AI-generated feedback within collaborative learning, an aspect that should be further investigated to ensure the quality and reliability of educational interactions facilitated by ChatGPT. While the existing studies paint a promising picture of ChatGPT's potential in collaborative learning, future research should delve deeper into these identified directions to harness the benefits effectively and address the challenges comprehensively. This evolving landscape requires a concerted effort from educators, researchers, and developers to shape the responsible and effective integration of AI technologies in collaborative educational settings.

## Conclusion

This short literature review explored the utilization of ChatGPT in a collaborative learning context. The current study suggests that integrating ChatGPT into collaborative learning holds promise for fostering student engagement, motivation, and self-directed learning by providing immediate feedback and assistance. The significance of this study lies in its examination of the potential benefits and challenges associated with incorporating AI chatbots into collaborative learning. By offering insights into how AI chatbots, particularly ChatGPT, can enhance student learning experiences, this study provides valuable guidance for educators, policymakers, and instructional designers aiming to effectively leverage technology in collaborative educational settings. Furthermore, ChatGPT's expansive knowledge base enables it to draw upon a wide range of educational resources and adapt to diverse learning needs. ChatGPT has the capacity to provide personalized and contextually relevant responses to students' inquiries, offering support similar to that of an AI chatbot. Its ability to understand and generate human-like text makes it a valuable tool for enhancing student engagement, promoting critical thinking, and providing on-demand assistance in collaborative learning environments.

Several future research directions should be considered to enhance the integration of ChatGPT in collaborative learning. The primary objective of these directions is to maximize the benefits derived by learners and educators from this integration. Current studies indicate that the learning process can be improved in various ways, including achieving learning outcomes, enhancing student engagement, improving instructor performance, and delivering personalized learning experiences for students across the globe within collaborative learning environments.

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## Teaching Inside the Closet: Experiences of LGBTIQ+ Teachers Regarding Their Professional Practice in Regular Basic Education in Peru

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**Abstract:** In recent decades, there has been an increase in the presence of the LGBTIQ+ community in several professional and social spheres in Peru; however, their involvement in the educational sector remains relatively scarce. Therefore, the aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the reality experienced by a group of LGBTIQ+ teachers in the Peruvian Regular Basic Education sector. The methodology employed was descriptive and involved interviews with 15 LGBTIQ+ teachers working in the regular basic education sector in Peru. The findings indicate a perception among LGBTIQ+ teachers that they often feel constrained to conceal their identity in workplaces, despite the absence of overt discrimination. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the disclosure of their identity in educational contexts, with the potential for negative repercussions. The findings suggest that the transparency of LGBTIQ+ identities is perceived as selective and sensitive when interacting with students' families, reflecting concerns about potential stigmatization or prejudices. In conclusion, this study underscores the necessity for critical perspectives regarding the participation of the LGBTIQ+ community in Peruvian Basic Education, emphasizing the necessity for changes that would facilitate acceptance and ensure active participation of LGBTIQ+ teachers in the educational setting.

**Keywords:** LGBTIQ+ teachers, inclusion, diversity, Regular Basic Education, Peru.

**Citation:** Cáceres, L., Mubarak, S., Ruiz-Ruiz, M.F., & Sallandt, U. (2024). Teaching inside the closet: Experiences of LGBTIQ+ Teachers Regarding Their Professional Practice in Regular Basic Education in Peru. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1371-1390), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.



## Introduction

Education is a foundational element in the construction of an inclusive society that respects diversity (Chávez et al., 2018). In this context, the issues of diversity and the role of educators in the education system have become matters of global relevance and interest (Ramírez et al., 2020). In Peru, as in many other parts of the world, there is an intention to meet the challenge of full citizenship. This is sought to be achieved through the formation of full students for integral coexistence within an equitable, egalitarian, and inclusive society, where all expressions of diversity are respected and valued (*Consejo Nacional de Educación*, 2020). Nevertheless, the successful implementation of training programs on sexual diversity in schools is contingent upon the perception and attitude of teachers towards this issue, which is not a primary consideration in most contexts (Rojas & Astudillo, 2020).

Despite legislative and social progress regarding the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community, teachers in Peru still face significant challenges in integrating sexual diversity into the school curriculum. In this sense, they play a crucial role in the process, as they are responsible for transmitting values oriented towards respect for diversity to future generations in a transversal manner (Chávez et al., 2018). In light of this, the inclusion of such training on sexual diversity in Regular Basic Education (RBE) is an essential aspect to promote a more egalitarian, respectful, and non-discriminatory society (Cardona Zuluaga & Ramírez Aristizábal, 2020). Despite the progress made in the field of LGBTIQ+ rights, there are still ingrained prejudices and stereotypes that can affect the quality of education and students' experiences in school (Kleinplatz & Diamond, 2014). Consequently, teachers have a key role to play in changing such perceptions and attitudes, as agents of change in the process of building a culture of respect for sexual diversity.

The promotion of sexual diversity in RBE is a global issue that is becoming increasingly important in the educational agenda (Galaz Valderrama et al., 2016). Such promotion seeks to foster respect for human rights and gender equality in the educational system, promoting a more inclusive and tolerant society (Dennis, 2017). Consequently, this research aimed to explore the experiences and challenges of a group of LGBTIQ+ teachers based on the execution of their role within RBS, as well as to identify the opportunities presented to them in their pedagogical work.

### LGBTIQ+ Teacher Identity

The concept of LGBTIQ+ teacher identity represents an essential theoretical construct in contemporary educational research. This research focuses on the intersection of identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation (Souza et al., 2016), and its impact on the work and responsibilities of teachers in the educational environment (Aguirre et al., 2021). Similarly, this concept acknowledges that a teacher's LGBTIQ+ identity significantly impacts their experiences, both professionally and personally, within the educational system in which they perform their work (Gujarro et al., 2021).



LGBTIQ+ teachers confront distinctive and intricate challenges in their professional practice. Discrimination, stigma, and invisibility can impede their full and authentic participation in the school community (Cantos et al., 2023). Likewise, LGBTIQ+ teaching and identity entail a process of continuous self-discovery and self-reflection, wherein teachers must navigate between disclosing their identity and creating safe and respectful learning environments for themselves and their students (Dennis, 2017). This interaction between identity and teaching practice can influence inclusive teaching and the promotion of sexual diversity in the classroom, which in turn has an impact on the formation of students and the construction of a more tolerant and respectful society towards diversity (Chávez et al., 2018).

In the context of research on teacher LGBTIQ+ identity and its influence on education, it is necessary to consider the Peruvian social organization *Con mis hijos no te metas* (Do not mess with my children). This organization has generated a complex debate related to the educational context of the country. The movement has garnered attention for its stance against the implementation of gender education in schools, which has prompted debates and dilemmas surrounding sexual and gender diversity in the Peruvian educational system.

While there are no recent statistics available on the perception of this movement in Peruvian society, the existence of this movement and the controversies that have been generated are crucial to understanding the context in which LGBTIQ+ teachers engage in their educational work. Similarly, Meneses Villota (2019) posits that resistance to the inclusion of issues related to sexual diversity in education can influence the educational environment of these teachers and their abilities to create competent, safe, and respectful spaces, both for them and for their students. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the context and the impact it generates in the intersection of LGBTIQ+ teaching identity in educational practice (Meneses Villota, 2019).

### *Background*

Despite the advancement of legal protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals, discriminatory and violent actions continue to be prevalent in the 21st century. This highlights the necessity of incorporating diverse topics related to gender identity and LGBTIQ+ diversity into educational curricula to foster acceptance, understanding, and respect for this community. In light of these considerations, Abril and Palacios-Hidalgo (2022) emphasize the necessity of addressing and raising these issues in teacher training, as they indicate a lack of training and awareness in this particular area. Furthermore, they also highlight the necessity and significance of investigating the attitudes and perceptions of educators regarding the inclusion of the LGBTIQ+ community in education and the potential of their training to facilitate the creation of more inclusive and respectful environments for all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Conversely, Aguirre et al. (2021) concur with the significance of the influence of LGBTIQ+ teachers' experiences and prospective teachers' perceptions of gender diversity and sexuality. Similarly, the authors' research involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from 101 education students. The findings revealed that life stories are an effective and assertive tool for conducting awareness-raising among

prospective teachers about the experience of LGBTIQ+ people and the difficulties faced by LGBTIQ+ teachers in schools. This underscores the significance of incorporating gender, sexual, and family diversity training into the curricula of higher education institutions in a gradual and systematic manner.

However, Fernández et al. (2022) indicate that the primary objective of the study they conducted in Castilla y León (Spain) was to investigate how teachers approach sex education and sexual diversity in their educational practices. This was done with the intention of promoting the inclusion of LGTBIQ+ students and managing the differences between students in the educational centers of the community. This research employs an interpretive approach and a qualitative methodology in the field of education, with a focus on the teaching skills and the reality of the classroom. A group of 17 active teachers in the region were interviewed, and the data analysis revealed a lack of training in terminology and methodological strategies to address sexual diversity in the classroom. This resulted in the absence of educational practices related to this topic. These findings underscore the pressing necessity to provide training to teachers on matters pertaining to coeducation and sexual diversity in educational institutions. Furthermore, the implementation of protocols, guidelines, programs, and the visibility of models to be followed in educational projects to promote the full inclusion of students and prevent discrimination is also recommended.

On the other hand, Huertas and Palacios-Hidalgo (2023) underscore that, thus far, research on the manner in which gender identity and sexual orientation are addressed in education systems worldwide has been constrained. Most studies in this field have focused on the analysis of stereotypes and the invisibility of LGBTIQ+ individuals in textbooks, as well as on the combating of discrimination that persists. Consequently, there has been a paucity of research conducted on the attitudes of prospective teachers. This quantitative study examines the perceptions of prospective Spanish teachers regarding the necessity of integrating issues related to the LGBTIQ+ community into their teaching performance.

The results indicate that participants ( $n = 195$ ) hold positive attitudes towards the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ issues in their future professional careers. However, significant differences were observed according to gender and affective-sexual orientation, but not by educational stage. Similarly, the respondents indicated that teacher training is crucial, as the research indicates that even when future teachers hold positive views about the LGBTIQ+ community, a lack of awareness or experience with these issues can impede their teaching practice. The results underscore the necessity of sustaining efforts to promote reflection on LGBTIQ+ issues among educators and researchers.

Similarly, research by Aguirre et al. (2021) examines the perceptions of affective-sexual diversity among Spanish high school teachers. The study specifically addresses homophobia and teacher intervention and training through a survey of 119 teachers. In a similar vein, a questionnaire was administered to investigate related topics based on other studies. The study concludes that high schools and their communities remain hostile environments for LGBTIQ+ students. Consequently, integrating training into teaching practice and reconsidering pedagogy from an inclusive perspective is of paramount importance in fostering an inclusive

educational culture.

Conversely, Fuentes et al. (2022) propose and utilize the concept of "transgenerosity," which was initially proposed by Rodriguez (2012). This study addresses the complexities of queer and trans pedagogies in educational settings. This study employs the concept of transgenerosity to examine the potential of queer and trans affirmative practices to challenge heteronormativity, foster gender diversity, and empower trans students in educational settings and physical education.

Furthermore, Piedra (2016) presents findings based on the analysis of the perceptions of 170 physical education teachers in coeducational schools in Spain regarding homophobia and heterosexism in the educational setting. Despite the documented improvements in the inclusion of sexual diversity in sport, this study has identified the continued prevalence of heterosexist or homophobic behaviors in physical education (PE) lessons, along with a lack of awareness among teachers about these patterns. Furthermore, the study indicates that students utilize language with homosexual themes as a means of discriminatory behavior. This study contributes to the understanding of the current dynamics in the field of physical education and its relationship with sexual diversity in society.

A review of the literature reveals a dearth of empirical research on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ teachers, particularly in the context of Regular Basic Education. Most of the studies identified were conducted in Spain and, to a lesser extent, in Latin American countries. These works have documented that LGBTIQ+ teachers frequently identify limitations and difficulties in their professional practice due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, including discrimination, stigmatization, and non-inclusive work environments (Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2022; Aguirre et al., In 2021, Cantos et al. (2023), Fernández et al. (2022), Fuentes et al. (2022), Guijarro et al. (2021), Huertas & Palacios-Hidalgo (2023), and Rojas & Astudillo (2020) published studies on this topic. Similarly, a notable effort has been observed in some Latin American countries to address these issues and promote a more inclusive and respectful education of sexual diversity (*Consejo Nacional de Educación*, 2020). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of empirical evidence regarding the experiences of LGBTIQ+ teachers in Latin American contexts.

## Method

The current research was conducted using a qualitative approach within the phenomenological paradigm. The methodological approach proposed by Sofaer (1999) is justified by its suitability for the descriptive research question. The aim of this research project was to gain a deeper insight into the subjective experiences of teachers who identify as members of the LGBTIQ+ community within the context of Peruvian Regular Basic Education. The phenomenological paradigm was selected to capture and analyze the personal experiences and the construction of meaning of the participants in relation to their identity and professional practice (Cantos et al., 2023).

## Participants

The research participant group consisted of a cohort of teachers who self-identify as members of the LGBTIQ+ community and who are employed in the Peruvian Regular Basic Education System. The sample was selected using a non-probabilistic purposive selection process, which aimed to address the variability of experiences and opinions present within the group of interest. The selection process yielded a total of 15 teachers who met the aforementioned criteria and were invited to participate. Table 1 presents the data obtained on the general profile of the participants.

Table 1. General profile of participants (Lima, Peru)

Participant	Age	Highest academic degree achieved	Level and grade at which he/she teaches	LGBTIQ+ Identity
Participant No. 1	33	Bachelor's Degree	Primary, 3rd	Bisexual woman
Participant No. 2	27	Bachelor's Degree	Primary, 4th	Bisexual woman
Participant No. 3	27	Bachelor's Degree	Kinder	Bisexual woman
Participant No. 4	39	Master's Degree	Secondary, 4th and 5th grades	Homosexual man
Participant No. 5	40	Master's Degree	Primary, 5th	Homosexual woman
Participant No. 6	28	Master's Degree	Primary, 5th	Bisexual woman
Participant No. 7	24	Bachelor's Degree	Secondary, 1st, 3rd and 4th grades	Bisexual woman
Participant No. 8	31	Bachelor's Degree	Secondary, 3rd	Homosexual man
Participant No. 9	48	Bachelor's Degree	Secondary, 1st through 5th grades	Gay cisgender
Participant No. 10	49	Bachelor's Degree	Secondary, 5th	Homosexual man
Participant No. 11	29	Bachelor's Degree	Primary, 3rd	Bisexual woman
Participant No. 12	31	Master's Degree	Primary, 5th	Homosexual woman
Participant No. 13	34	Bachelor's Degree	Primary, 1st	Homosexual woman

Participant No. 14	37	Master's Degree	Primary, 3rd to Secondary, 3rd	Pansexual woman
Participant No. 15	29	Bachelor's Degree	Secondary, 1st and 2nd	Homosexual man

Source: Own elaboration

### Instrument

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perceptions of LGBTIQ+ teachers, a semi-structured interview was deemed the most appropriate research technique. The technique and its associated tools were selected with the intention of eliciting comprehensive responses through the utilization of structured and open-ended questions (Sofaer, 1999). The decision to employ this methodology was predicated on the necessity to comprehend the experiences of the participants in their totality. This entailed adjusting the questions as the dialogue progressed, while maintaining a focus on the key themes.

Similarly, the semi-structured interviews facilitated the maintenance of equivalence between the flexibility necessary to comprehend the diversity of voices and experiences and the direction provided by predefined questions. This approach enabled the achievement of an understanding, both contextual and detailed, of the phenomena, in alignment with the fundamental principles of qualitative methodology (Sofaer, 1999). Similarly, to the aforementioned semi-structured interviews, the inherent adaptability of this methodology permitted the questions to be modified according to the needs of the participants. Consequently, it was possible to delve more deeply into emerging areas of interest, which was particularly beneficial in addressing and examining the perceptions and experiences of the teachers.

The interviews were conducted in person and virtually at the discretion of the participants, according to their convenience and availability. Similarly, the interviews were recorded through audio recordings after obtaining the informed consent of the participants. Subsequently, these recordings were subjected to a systematic analysis in accordance with the principles of qualitative methodology. The objective was to identify and describe the experiences and opinions expressed by the participants, as well as the underlying structures present in their conversations and narratives (Lopezosa, 2020). This process permitted the subsequent comprehensive and meticulous examination of the experiences of LGBTIQ+ teachers within the context under investigation. Table 2 below presents the semi-structured interview guide utilized in the research.

Table 2. Semi-structured Interview Guide

Dimension	Objectives	Guiding questions
<b>General characteristics of teachers</b>	To know aspects and general data about the teachers interviewed such as age,	What is your age? How long have you been teaching? What is your highest academic degree achieved? At what level and grade level do you teach? If so, how

	LGBTIQ+ identity, academic level, period of time teaching, grade and level in which they teach and type of educational institution in which they work.	do you identify yourself within the LGBTIQ+ community?
<b>Context and work climate of teachers with their superiors and colleagues.</b>	To understand the characteristics and details related to the work context of the teachers interviewed, from a subordinate/employee-employer and/or employee-employee perspective, seen from their experiences as part of the LGBTIQ+ community.	Do you consider that the work context where you work allows you to fully express your identity? How so? To what extent does the educational institution where you work impact your sense of belonging and recognition within the work context? Why? Have you ever been discriminated against at any level because of your identity as part of the LGBTIQ+ community by your employer or co-workers? If so, tell us about any experience (your own or others) of discrimination at any level by your employer or co-workers for being part of the LGBTIQ+ community.
<b>Classroom climate and relationship with the students.</b>	To discover if there are any limitations for the teachers interviewed in expressing their identity when carrying out their work in the classroom.	Do you feel that your classroom is a safe space to express yourself freely? Why? Do you consider that in your work as a teacher you have to hide a part of yourself? In what ways do you think the bond you have with your students may be affected by expressing your identity as part of the LGBTIQ+ community?
<b>Context and relationship with students' families</b>	To find out if the teachers interviewed consider that there are limitations to expressing their identity as part of the LGBTIQ+ community when interacting with their students' families.	What role does transparency play with respect to your identity when interacting with your students' families? In what ways do you think the treatment you receive as a teacher from your students' families may be affected by your identity as part of the LGBTIQ+ community? Have you ever been negatively affected by your LGBTIQ+ identity when dealing with the families of your students?
<b>Conditions within the</b>	To know the perspectives of the teachers interviewed on the	Do you consider that an LGBTIQ+ teacher is or can be accepted in an average context within Peruvian

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<b>Peruvian RBS for LGBTIQ+ teachers</b>	current conditions within the Peruvian Regular Basic Education towards the inclusion and acceptance of the LGBTIQ+ community.	Regular Basic Education? What is your opinion on the active participation of LGBTIQ+ teachers in the design and implementation of Peruvian RBS? What is your position on including an ESI curriculum within the National Basic Education Curriculum?
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### *Validation*

In order to ensure the efficacy of the semi-structured interviews, a pilot test was conducted with a randomly selected subset of three participants. The primary objective of this pilot test was to ascertain the suitability of the research instrument. This entailed ensuring that the questions were appropriate and that the number of questions was accurate to collect relevant data. Following the pilot testing phase, it was established that the questions were appropriate and provided a robust framework for data collection. Consequently, the same instrument was employed with the entire group of study participants, thus ensuring the completeness and validity of the data collected.

The results were validated through a multi-stage process to ensure the robustness and reliability of the research findings. As a preliminary step, a peer review was conducted, during which the perspectives of experts in the field of social studies with specialization in areas such as psychology and pedagogy were sought. Despite lacking authorization from most experts for the dissemination of personal data, the involvement of psychologist Jienin Eissa in the validation process is worthy of note, as she made her personal information available. Similarly, the process of critical review by professionals with experience in the topics under investigation enabled the evaluation of the coherence and relevance of the interpretations made. In this context, the comments and suggestions provided by these experts were incorporated into the refinement of the interpretations and the validation of the results.

Finally, in order to enhance the validation process and to guarantee the consistency of the conclusions, a confirmation session was conducted with the study participants themselves. During this session, the principal findings of the research were presented, and the participants were afforded the opportunity to express their opinions and clarify any aspects that may have prompted questions. This dialogue between researchers and participants contributed to a more complete understanding of the experiences and perspectives of LGBTIQ+ teachers in the Peruvian educational context. The multi-stage validation process ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the results and enhanced the reliability of the research findings.

### *Ethical principles*

The present research was based on the general ethical principles that govern scientific inquiry, with a particular



focus on guaranteeing the integral protection of the privacy and confidentiality of the participants involved. Consequently, a meticulous research ethics protocol was consistently adhered to throughout the entire process. In accordance with the aforementioned ethical standards, each participant was provided with explicit and detailed informed consent prior to their involvement in the study. In this context, the consent phase ensured that LGBTIQ+ teachers received all the information necessary to fully comprehend the objectives, procedures, and potential consequences of the research. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of their participation was underscored, and they were assured the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any adverse consequences or undue pressure.

Moreover, meticulous precautions were taken to guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. In order to safeguard the identity of LGBTIQ+ teachers, pseudonyms were assigned. Furthermore, any data that could lead to the identification of participants was kept strictly confidential. It is imperative that the ethical principles of research be respected in this study, and we sought thus to contribute to the advancement of academic knowledge and to the promotion of diversity and inclusion in the Peruvian educational context in a manner that would honor the dignity and autonomy of the participants.

## Results

The insights gleaned from the respondents indicate that there is still a nascent awareness of LGBTIQ+ teachers in the context of Peruvian Regular Basic Education. Most respondents indicated that the level of acceptance they experienced varied, ranging from significant support to challenges derived from discrimination or a lack of understanding. This perception is consistent with the necessity to foster an inclusive environment in all aspects of work and education. Notwithstanding this, only approximately 30% of those surveyed indicate progress and an increase in recognition and support for the community within the Peruvian educational context. Similarly, the persistence of challenges and the urgency of strengthening institutional policies and resources to ensure equitable and respectful treatment of LGBTIQ+ teachers are acknowledged. Considering this reality, the experiences and opinions gathered from these professionals can be classified into several key categories, thereby illuminating the complex panorama they face in their professional practice.

The subsequent section presents the findings in the aforementioned categories. These include context and work climate with superiors and colleagues, classroom climate and relationship with students, context and relationship with students' families, conditions within the Peruvian Regular Basic Education for LGBTIQ+ teachers, and finally, an emerging category dedicated to the findings presented in the results confirmation session.

### Context and work environment with superiors and colleagues

The perception of the work climate and context in Regular Basic Education for LGBTIQ+ teachers is contingent upon age and gender factors. This is evidenced by the existence of a direct contrast in the experiences of these

teachers with respect to situations of discrimination at any level. Regarding the acceptance of LGBTIQ+ individuals in the workplace, female teachers between the ages of 20 and 40 reported a perception of a space free of discrimination based on their identity as part of the LGBTIQ+ community. One participant notes:

No, I wouldn't say that I have suffered a situation of discrimination. But I think it is because nobody knows about my identity because I am in a heterosexual marriage. (Participant No. 6, 28 years old, bisexual woman).

In the case of male teachers and those over the age of 40, it is stated that:

Clearly, not all teachers and staff are 100% accepting or willing to acknowledge me. I might find some looks of mistrust or denial from colleagues. At another institution, I received the exact expression to please do not share data about my family or relationship. The school knew I was gay and that I had a partner, but the explicit suggestion came out not to tell my students about my family. It made a lot of noise to me, "don't talk about yourself". (Participant No. 9, 48 years old, cisgender gay).

Nevertheless, the act of concealing this aspect of their identity can be perceived as a pre-determined, yet involuntary, defensive mechanism. In this context, LGBTIQ+ teachers in Peruvian Regular Basic Education do not perceive that the work context allows them to express their identity in its entirety. It is clear that the workplace does not provide an environment where educators are encouraged to reveal their identities freely or to conceal their selves. In this regard, some of the interviewees stated that:

To be precise, the answer is a resounding "no." My superiors are unaware of my sexual orientation. I occupy a position of coordination, with superiors and subordinates. None of these individuals are aware of my sexual orientation. (Participant No. 4, 39 years old, homosexual man).

No, it is difficult. I arrive and introduce myself, but to say openly that I am a lesbian is very difficult. You can always be rejected, either by your colleagues or superiors. You prefer to be quiet and even hide your private life (...). (Participant No. 13, 34 years old, homosexual woman).

In contrast, despite the sentiments expressed about the sense of belonging and discrimination, most participants indicated that their educational institution has a positive impact on their sense of belonging and recognition, regardless of characteristics such as age, LGBTIQ+ identity, academic degree, and level at which they teach. One interviewee stated:

I have had the opportunity to enjoy benefits that legally do not correspond to me. For instance, I have not received full maternity leave, and the benefits I have been able to receive have been provided in a manner that is not feasible for me. In situations such as leave or childcare, the institution in question validates the status of the mother. (Participant No. 5, 40 years old, homosexual woman).

It is crucial to note that I have not always been transparent about my sexual orientation. However, one of the factors that influenced my decision to be open was the alignment between my expectations of my students and the support I provide them. I believe that honesty is an essential aspect of any relationship, and I strive to be honest with my students.

Furthermore, I have found that this profession allows me to be myself, and I have been fortunate to work alongside many supportive colleagues, including many LGBT teachers. This has created a positive and inclusive environment. (Participant No. 9, 48 years old, cisgender gay).

*Classroom climate and relationship with the students.*

According to the perceptions of the interviewees indicate that the complex reality and relationship between the classroom environment and the LGBTIQ+ identity of teachers is evident. In most cases, it is commonly perceived that the classroom is a secure environment where individuals are able to express themselves freely. This perception is primarily influenced by several factors, including:

(...) the values of acceptance, safety, compassion, and empathy are essential for creating safe learning environments for all students. (Participant No. 6, 28 years old, bisexual woman).

Nevertheless, this perception is mitigated by constraints and reservations that some participants express, particularly in relation to parental perspectives and the ambiguity surrounding the acceptance of diversity. As one participant asserts:

I don't consider it safe. I work with first grade and the children talk at home (...) it implies that we run a big risk. We live in a very conservative society. (Participant No. 13, 34 years old, homosexual woman).

Similarly, it is evident that most teachers believe that they must conceal a portion of their identity when performing their duties in the classroom. They also believe that the bond with their students may be damaged if they do not provide them with the opportunity to gain an understanding of their identity as part of the LGBTIQ+ community.

I think that especially in elementary school, when students do not have an autonomous mentality, they may feel threatened or afraid because of who I am. I can't be openly gay in my work center, I know with whom I can; but if I were 100% open, I wouldn't last a month in my job because of rejection from parents, students, teachers. (Participant No. 4, 39 years old, homosexual man).

In the same way, a more favorable perception emerges in the case of secondary school teachers, with their students exhibiting a more accepting attitude. In this context, they posit that:

I also think it is a generational issue, I think kids already come with an idea of a diverse world for everyone. I think the first few times (that I shared that I was gay with my students) a lot of questions came up and maybe there could have been, from some of the students, some suspicion or surprise; but generally, I have received questions to answer and reassurance. (Participant No .9, 48 years old, cisgender gay).

Despite the existence of individual cases in which teachers do not perceive that their identity may negatively impact their performance in the classroom, most interviewees concur that family attitudes influence students' perceptions of sexual diversity in educational settings. This, in turn, affects teachers' decisions about disclosing their identity to their students.

#### *Context and relationship with students' families*

The respondents indicated that they have not been adversely affected by their students' families due to their LGBTIQ+ identity. However, they asserted that there is a pervasive need to maintain discretion regarding this aspect of their identity, which precludes them from interacting openly and transparently. A shared perception exists regarding the treatment of families. However, it is evident that instances of discrimination and direct actions towards teachers have not occurred thus far. This is likely due to the fact that teachers tend to maintain a low profile and hide their personal beliefs at the time of performing their work.

(...) I have not been affected. But for always hiding who I really am (Participant No. 5, 40 years old, homosexual woman).

In this context, most interviewees elect not to explicitly disclose their LGBTIQ+ identity, focusing instead on professional treatment that restricts the disclosure of personal information. This caution is derived from pervasive concerns about the potential for adverse consequences on both their professional and personal image should their identity become known.

Having had unpleasant experiences with the families through the boys, I think that the treatment may be strongly affected. I am afraid of the rejection I might feel if the parents find out that I am with a woman, thinking that I am not the same professional I have been, or that they might be afraid with the girls, or think that being part of the community makes me a pedophile, or something similar. I wouldn't dare comment on that. I know the school is going to be on my side, but with families that would change. It is not information that I can share calmly (Participant No. 2, 27 years old, bisexual woman).

Despite concerns about the potential negative consequences of disclosing their identity to families, teachers indicate that transparency is a subjective concept that varies depending on the context and the individuals involved. In this context, one of the interviewees asserts:

(...) es un tema en el que no he sido muy abierta con las familias (refiriéndose a la transparencia), solo lo justo y necesario. Me he enfocado en que sepan lo básico sobre mí, pero no tantas cosas personales (Participante No. 3, 27 años, mujer bisexual).

I guess I let them believe what they want to believe. I would never put the topic on the table. I focus on the children and their learning. I don't share much about my life, they need to know that I am the teacher and not my sexuality (Participant No. 6, 28 years old, bisexual female).

The interviewees indicated that the treatment received and the relationship with the students' families are maintained in an appropriate manner within the parameters of their respective institutions. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify paradigms, opinions, and stereotypes in everyday life outside of situations of direct contact with teachers.

There are definitely a lot of families against it. For example, in June, we put up a rainbow with some students. It didn't even last two days, because the parents considered that they were homosexualizing the children in the classroom. This relationship with families is crucial, because their opinions as customers is super important, and many of these families don't want homosexual teachers. There would be real and strong repercussions (Participant No. 4, 39 years old, homosexual man).

#### *Conditions within the Peruvian Regular Basic Education for LGBTIQ+ Teachers*

There is a consensus that LGBTIQ+ teachers should play an active role in the design and implementation of Peruvian Regular Basic Education:

The presence of LGBTIQ+ teachers in leadership and decision-making roles can bring valuable perspectives and unique experiences to the educational process. In addition, this can help create a more inclusive school environment, where all students feel represented and respected, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity (Participant No. 10, 49 years old, gay man).

It is my belief that all individuals should have equal access to this resource, and that the greater the number of perspectives present in education, the more open and visible diversity will be. (Participant No. 14, 37 years old, pansexual woman).

Nevertheless, in addition to these ideas and opinions, there are also thoughts and reflections that are constrained by the limitations of the community itself:

It is my opinion that a teacher who is openly part of the LGBTQ+ population could not be considered, feel comfortable or be included in decision-making processes at the national level. (Participant No. 1, 33 years old, bisexual woman).

(...)I know that the general public will perceive these teachers in a negative light. The participation of these teachers is key to be able to teach diversity and I think it is important for the Ministry of Education to create materials and protocols to be able to handle situations to receive diversity cases, to avoid negatively affecting the integrity of the students (Participant No. 2, 27 years old, bisexual woman).

I believe that we are currently at a considerable distance from our goal, but I also believe that if we do not begin to work towards it, it's not going to happen magically either. It's a challenge, but it's also a big responsibility. The conversation is going to start when someone starts (Participant No. 9, 48 years old, cisgender gay)

Furthermore, most of LGBTIQ+ teachers surveyed expressed a consensus regarding the inclusion of a comprehensive sexuality education (ESI) in the national curriculum for Regular Basic Education. Some of the respondents made the following observations:

It is evident that comprehensive sex education is a necessity. It is a mistake to withhold this information from students and the general public (Participant No. 6, 28 years old, bisexual woman).

There should be an ESI program in every school in Peru. There would not be so many cases of everything we see. It would be beneficial to have specialists who are knowledgeable about the process of modeling this phenomenon. (Participant No. 7, 24 years old, bisexual woman).

I think the incorporation of an ESI curriculum is a highly beneficial addition. It would provide students with crucial information to make informed decisions and would promote sexual and emotional health (Participant No. 15, 29 years old, homosexual man).

Additionally, there is a perception among LGBTIQ+ teachers that many problems and conflicts could be resolved through the incorporation of an ESI curriculum. Some have indicated that:

Whatever we cannot teach, the children will find it distorted on the Internet. It is better that a teacher teaches it with true and accurate information (Participant No. 3, 27 years old, bisexual woman).

It is fundamental to educate in ESI, not towards heteronormativity, but in an integral way, that there are different sexualities (Participant No. 4, 39 years old, homosexual man).

When a person lives in fullness, is happy and healthy and can develop to the fullest their capabilities and potential, in the community, family, workplace. This will allow us to have happy people (Participant No. 5, 40 years old, homosexual woman).

Additional, more reflective opinions are presented, which exemplify the consequences, solutions, and the impact that this curriculum could have at an integral level in our society. One of the interviewees asserts that:

The scope of ESI extends beyond LGBTIQ+ issues. There are numerous significant matters that require attention in the field of education in our country. Negative attitudes towards ESI, both within families and across the wider population, present a significant obstacle to progress. Until these attitudes change, it will be difficult to implement meaningful change. Furthermore, the absence of this information directly affects individuals who lack the security to make certain decisions. Instead of providing assistance, we are inadvertently impeding the exercise of free will in a sensitive matter. It is imperative that a reliable source of information be made available to the public, which they can then apply to their own lives (Participant No. 2, 27 years old, bisexual woman).

*Other ideas (confirmation session)*

The confirmation session yielded results that validated the findings of the exploration and research process conducted with the 15 participants. The feedback provided by the participants themselves regarding the findings yielded valuable insights that enhanced the study's personal and authentic portrayal of the participants.

You have managed to gather similar experiences in different places, and as different teachers coming from different contexts, we understand the importance of our presence in the representation. I find the research you have conducted to be both intriguing and significant. I hope that future studies will continue to emerge in order to illustrate the necessity for visibility and a voice (Participant No. 9, 48 years old, cisgender gay).

Moreover, the intervention prompted the participants to express their perspectives in a candid and emotionally charged manner. The experiences of the interviewees allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ teachers on a daily basis:

We are camouflaged workers, we live hiding. We need research like this so we don't have to hide (Participant No. 13, 34 years old, homosexual woman).

The data is super important to show that we exist, that we are here and that we have always been here. Even that, as teachers, we were once the LGBT students who were in class and that we also had to hide. And that, sometimes, is one of the reasons that pushes us to come out and show our faces because we were once that student who had no one to represent him in class; now there can be teachers and there are teachers who can do that (Participant No. 9, 48 years old, cisgender gay).



## Discussion

The decision to employ semi-structured interviews as a research instrument permitted a comprehensive examination of the experiences of the cohort of LGBTIQ+ teachers, thereby furnishing a comprehensive contextual framework for the interpretation of their perspectives. This approach, which is firmly rooted in the principles of qualitative methodology, enabled us to address complex issues related to inclusion and diversity in the educational setting. This approach enabled us to corroborate some of the findings previously identified in the literature on the subject, while also suggesting additional reflections that emerged in the context of the research.

The teachers interviewed concur with the findings of Abril and Palacios-Hidalgo (2022) and Fernández et al. (2022), namely that there is a dearth of awareness, education, and training, both basic and ongoing, on matters pertaining to diversity and LGBTIQ+ inclusion in an all-encompassing manner within the various educational communities. In addition, the interviewees and the literature indicate the absence of information and visibility of the LGBTIQ+ community and its members, including students, teachers, and participants within the educational ecosystem. In a similar vein, the interviewees emphasize the significance of incorporating the experiences and perspectives of LGBTIQ+ teachers on matters pertaining to gender diversity and sexuality, in alignment with the findings of Aguirre et al. (2021). Consequently, as the participants have indicated, there is a dearth of awareness and training in educational communities about LGBTIQ+ diversity, which is reflected in the absence of information and visibility. This lack of integration is at odds with the imperative to promote a more inclusive education. In accordance with this, Aguirre et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of incorporating the perspectives of LGBTIQ+ educators in order to comprehensively address sexual diversity within the educational setting.

The findings indicate a lack of integration of a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (ESI) proposal in the National Basic Education Curriculum. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Fernández et al. (2022), who identified a significant gap in the training and educational practices of teachers in Castilla y León (Spain) in relation to sexual diversity. Furthermore, the interviewees emphasize the lack of education in this area, thereby reinforcing the necessity to implement comprehensive and targeted training programmes to address this deficit and foster a more inclusive education at the national level. In accordance with this point, Palacios-Hidalgo (2023) underscores the necessity of such programs, noting the dearth of research on the incorporation of LGBTIQ+ issues in teacher education on a global scale. Furthermore, Aguirre et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of integrating the perspectives of LGBTIQ+ teachers in order to comprehensively address sexual diversity in the educational setting. This evidence provides compelling rationale for the implementation of tangible measures to enhance training and facilitate inclusion in educational settings.

The contributions and reflections of LGBTIQ+ teachers tend to converge on a common theme: the absence of resources and consideration towards them, which limits the visibility of the community within the Peruvian educational sector. The absence of reflection on the existence of a barrier to recognition and visibility caused by

a system of heteronormativity is evident. Consequently, the interviewees tend to focus their experiences as LGBTIQ+ teachers from the perspective of consequences and repercussions, rather than from a perspective of causality analysis.

It is crucial to examine the experiences of this "camouflaged community" within the Peruvian educational context in order to develop resources, solutions, and viable pathways for the inclusion of sexual diversity in education. Only through such an approach can some of the stereotypes and limitations that this minority faces on a daily basis, as individuals and as workers, be addressed. The experiences and perspectives of LGBTIQ+ educators provide insight into the multifaceted nature of educational inclusion and its significance in the current Peruvian context.

## Conclusion

The objective of this study was to describe the experiences of LGBTIQ+ teachers in the Peruvian Regular Basic Education context. The qualitative approach enabled an examination of their perspectives, illuminating crucial aspects of diversity and inclusion in education. Consequently, the study yielded clear results and evidence that express the different realities, experiences, and concerns of this "camouflaged community," which allows for a deeper understanding of the perspective of these teachers when exercising their role both inside and outside the classroom. Similarly, it became evident that there was a lack of awareness and training among educational communities regarding pertinent topics related to inclusion and diversity. This directly impacted the various inclusive educational ecosystems and consequently affected their pedagogical practice.

A recurring finding in the research is the crucial need for teacher training on matters pertaining to sexual diversity. Similarly, LGBTIQ+ teachers report a lack of awareness and training in educational communities, which negatively impacts their ability to create inclusive environments. This underscores the critical importance of comprehensive and targeted training programs to address this gap and promote more inclusive education. Additionally, the experiences of LGBTIQ+ teachers demonstrate a duality, whereby some feel unable to fully express their identity in the work environment. This highlights the significant influence of institutional representation. Conversely, positive institutional acceptance and support can influence teachers' perceptions of their work environment and their ability to openly express their identity. This underscores the necessity for organizational policies and attitudes that foster inclusion.

Furthermore, the absence of awareness and specific training on comprehensive sexuality education issues has a detrimental impact on the teaching practice in promoting the inclusion of LGTBIQ+ students. This finding underscores the inadequacy of current training in effectively addressing sexual diversity in the classroom and the necessity for a more comprehensive and conscious approach to the diversity that characterizes educational communities. Consequently, it is imperative that all stakeholders in the educational sector maintain an open perspective regarding the implementation of a comprehensive approach to the preparation of educational

personnel, with the aim of fostering inclusive educational practices.

In the context of future research, it is recommended that the search for information be focused on the effectiveness of different specific training programs for teachers in educational settings in different regions. This would address the different realities and needs of each context. In addition, it is recommended that the impact of institutional policies on the perception and work experience of LGBTIQ+ teachers be investigated. Similarly, opportunities should be explored where the importance of analyzing how they can be shaped to promote a more inclusive and respectful work environment could be highlighted. In addition, it is recommended that the implementation and effectiveness of inclusive pedagogical practices in educational spaces with gender and sexuality diversity be analyzed in detail. This analysis should examine how these practices affect the educational dynamics and contribute to the creation of more egalitarian and welcoming learning environments. The objective is to advance the understanding of the importance of diversity in the educational environment.

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# The Impact of The Use of Artificial Intelligence-Based Gamification on The Development of The Motivation of Students of The Basic Stage Towards Education

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to investigate the impact of the use of artificial intelligence-based gamification on the development of motivation among students of the basic stage towards learning science. To achieve this goal, the study used the semi-experimental approach, and the researcher used the motivation scale after verifying its validity and stability on a sample of (54) students randomly distributed to two groups, an experimental group of (27) students who studied the proposed unit of the science course with artificial intelligence-based gamification and a control group that studied in the usual gamification method consisting of (27) students. The study found that there were no statistically significant differences in the overall performance on the motivation scale between the two groups. The study recommended several recommendations, the most important of which is: benefiting from artificial intelligence-based gamification in developing motivation towards learning and improving achievement. Gamification based on artificial intelligence also embodies information for the learner and preserves the aftermath of learning.

**Keywords:** gamification, artificial intelligence, motivation, science.

**Citation:** Bani Ahmad, F. (2024). The Impact of The Use of Artificial Intelligence-Based Gamification on The Development Of The Motivation of Students of The Basic Stage Towards Education. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1391-1401), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Modern technologies based on artificial intelligence have contributed to diversity in teaching and learning methods and strategies, especially gamified learning, which has provided an interactive learning environment for the learner, so that the learner can self-learn and flexible and acquire different and diverse knowledge and skills. With the digital acceleration in education, artificial intelligence has emerged, which focuses on multiple education, which achieves entertainment with the desired educational goals. Hence, the desire to learn increases, motivates them, and increases the suspense in understanding and learning abstract scientific materials, which constitute an obstacle for learners, and the low level of their school achievement. by relying on those toys that have become accessible to children.

The reliance on modern digital technologies based on artificial intelligence, including packaging, is increasing to improve the cognitive, analytical, mathematical and communication skills of learners, especially the skills of creativity and the ability to take the initiative. The study (Shin & Shin, 2020) confirmed that science courses are one of the most primary courses that can employ artificial intelligence applications in the educational process, especially as they include abstract and somewhat complex scientific concepts.

Gamification strategy based on artificial intelligence helps to develop many positive traits, behaviors, and personal skills such as perseverance, creativity, and flexibility among learners, as well as the development of thinking that needs to be developed and developed considering digital transformation (Bridgeland, 2006). The study of (Kim, Rothrock, & Freivalds, 2016; Yildirim, 2017) that gamification improves students' skills by providing a spirit of competition and challenges among learners, encouraging them to challenge, and guiding them towards creativity and innovation. To succeed in work, there must be a desire for this, which is called motivation. Gamification can increase the learner's motivation towards learning, which facilitates creativity and innovation. Achieving this depends on the mechanism by which gamification is used, while determining its usefulness and discovering its applications (Aşıksoy, 2017).

From this point of view, the researcher was born with the idea of working to develop creativity among learners, especially in learning science, which is characterized as an abstract subject with its scientific concepts and far from the learner's imagination and requires higher skills of thinking. The need was for a way for the learner to feel eager to learn and to achieve enjoyable learning so that the scientific content becomes flexible, entertaining and linked to daily life that develops the learner's thinking, especially the mastery of children today, the art of dealing with digital games and continuously, so the pursuit of investing these techniques and their ability in learning and education and revealing the talents and creativity of learners, so the main idea of the research was identified in measuring the impact of the use of artificial intelligence-based gamification (Gamification) in developing creative thinking skills among students of the third grade in science.

### **The problem of the study**

The great challenge for teachers and parents lies in enhancing the eagerness of their children to learn science, because it is a scientific subject characterized by abstract concepts and scientific experiments that are difficult to achieve, for reasons of security and safety as well as for material reasons. Digital transformation has had many effects in achieving this. The researcher found by referring to the achievement scores of learners in the first primary stages to the low scores of students in science in particular, as it is a scientific subject characterized by abstract scientific concepts, numbers and scientific and astronomical phenomena that are difficult for children to imagine, which led the researcher to strive to develop an education strategy that achieves their enjoyment in education at reasonable prices, easy to trade, flexible and can be dealt with and learned through at home and at school through mobile applications, due to the availability of smart devices with their parents.

Referring to the recommendations of many studies that stressed the need to activate digital learning using smart



games, including the study of (Kim, Rothrock, & Freivalds, 2016, Yildirim, 2017, Aşıksoy, 2017) and the Third Regional Conference for Excellence in Education (Al-Ghamdi, 2019). The study (Qawaqneh, 2023) also recommended using virtual laboratories based on artificial intelligence and all its applications in the learning process.

### *The purpose of the study*

The current study aims to reveal the impact of the use of artificial intelligence-based gamification in developing the motivation of students of the basic stage towards education, by answering the following question:

- What is the impact of using artificial intelligence-based gamification in developing the motivation of sixth graders towards learning science?

### *Hypothesis of the Study*

Considering its objective, the study seeks to test the following null hypothesis:

- There is no statistically significant difference at the level of significance ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the average scores of the students of the experimental group (artificial intelligence-based gamification) and the average scores of the students of the control group (habitual gamification) in the test of the scale of motivation towards learning science due to the method of teaching.

### *Importance of the Study*

Theoretical importance: The study may add a new type of study related to AI-based gamification, which helps it improve education outcomes and overcome many different problems and challenges. The practical importance lies: the results of the study may provide decision-makers with the ability to strive towards the development of the educational process. Improve it with all its elements and dimensions to serve the learning process and provide parents with the results of their children to follow them and improve them.

### *The limits of the study*

Objective Limit: A learning module has been selected from the proposed course titled Animal Classification.

Human Limit: Students of the sixth grade.

Spatial Limit: Al-Nasser Modern School in Amman Governorate.

Time limit: The first semester of the academic year (2023/2024).

### *Literature review*

Research on gamification and learning applications is related to other research areas, namely technology, games, and learning. When these components interact with each other, more sub-elements appear; digital games, serious



games, and education-enhancing technology. The center of these elements is gamification, and Figure (1) illustrates this relationship. (Prensky, 2001).



Figure No. 1. The areas related to the concept of gamification.

Digital games include video games, computers, mobile games, and many others. Digital games have become part of modern culture, where all children play a certain game, and they continue to do so until they reach adulthood, and this is confirmed by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), which created facts about the gaming industry, as it indicated that digital games include a large audience of people, and at different ages, and thus the use of game elements in the application of education will have a significant positive impact (Oblinger, 2016).

(Carmichael)2016 mentioned the importance of gamification because it has a great role in achieving the required educational goals, including that gamification maintains teamwork among students, and that it helps students commit to discipline, and that it gives more freedom, leads to high results, and makes materials more enjoyable away from boredom.

Educators emphasize the need to employ modern technological learning tools in the educational process, especially in teaching scientific courses that include abstract scientific concepts and scientific phenomena that are difficult to imagine among students, in addition to the fact that there are chemical equations that cannot be implemented on the ground because of their seriousness and high cost (Rabie,2018). (Landers et al.2015) confirmed that, in addition to integrating gamification in the classroom, students are more ambitious and motivated to learn effectively, which leads them to study more seriously (Bicen & Kocakoyum, 2018).

Among the modern strategies that develop motivation and improve achievement among learners is the gamification strategy, which reduces stress and excitement among students and achieves simulation of scientific phenomena. As for the study (Forst al el, 2015), which aimed to know the effectiveness of the learning management system in gamification on the motivation of university students in learning the software design course, the sample was applied to a sample of (37) students and the researcher used the semi-experimental

approach, and it was found that the size of the impact on their motivation was less than average.

From Arab and foreign studies related to the subject, Al-Hafnawi's study (2017) to determine the impact of the use of electronic activities based on the principle of gamification (Gamification) in the light of standards for the development of mathematical concepts among deaf students with learning difficulties in Mansoura in Egypt. The researcher used the semi-experimental approach, as he selected a sample of (30) students in Al-Amal Elementary School, and they were distributed into two groups, experimental with (15) students, and the female officer with (15) students, and the application of an electronic game related to the school curriculum, in addition to an achievement test in mathematics, and a measure of diagnostic estimation of learning difficulties. One of the most prominent results of the study was that the members of the experimental group who applied the principle of gamification showed high levels in the mathematics test, and the impact was positive for the use of electronic activities based on the principle of gamification in the development of mathematical concepts among deaf students.

The study (Mazyunah & Ahmad) 2022 aimed to measure the impact of the use of the gamification strategy on academic achievement and motivation in the computer course. The semi-experimental approach was used on a sample of school students in the first secondary grade. After applying the study tools, the results showed that there were no differences between the two groups in the motivation scale, and the size of the impact was small.

In light of the above, the status of the current study among previous studies comes in that it adopted the principle of gamification in the development of creative thinking for students in the field of science, as it focuses on the importance of gamification in developing students' skills and increasing their motivation, as it is unique – to the knowledge of the researcher - to study the impact of the use of artificial intelligence-based gamification in the development of motivation among students of the sixth grade in science. The researcher will benefit by reviewing previous studies in building theoretical literature, choosing the study sample, determining the study methodology and statistical treatments, and discussing the results reached by the researcher.

## **Methodology**

Based on the nature of the study and the information required to answer its question and achieve its goal, the researcher used the quasi-experimental approach to suit this type of studies.

## **Study Design**

The researcher used the quasi-experimental design (Quasi Experimental Design) because of the inability to achieve random selection and random assignment of students, so the study design can be summarized as follows:

Table 1. Study Design

<b>O<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>X</b>	<b>O<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>G.1</b>
<b>O<sub>2</sub></b>	–	O <sub>1</sub>	G.2

Whereas:

<b>O<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Pre-measurement on the scale of motivation towards learning science</b>
X:	Processing (gamification-based application)
O <sub>2</sub>	Dimensional measurement on the scale of motivation towards learning science
–	No processing (control group)
G.1	Experimental Group I
G.2	The second control group

*Study population:*

The study population consists of all sixth-grade students in private schools in the capital Amman.

*Study sample.*

sample was selected in the intentional way from the students of the sixth grade of Al-Nasser Modern School from the Directorate of Special Education/ Amman, and the groups were randomly distributed to two study groups: the first experimental group (27) students were taught using the strategy of artificial intelligence-based gamification. The second control group (27) male and female students were taught using the usual gamification method.

*Study instrument.*

The Motivation Scale was developed to measure the motivation of students towards learning science before and after starting teaching using gamification. It was applied to a sample of (7) students by extracting the stability coefficient of the tool using the method of calculating the Cronbach' Alpha coefficient. The stability coefficient reached (0.93), which is a high stability coefficient. The rate of application of the tool was (20) minutes approximately.

*Class Dojo App*

Class Dojo is a free electronic application, as it is used to promote desirable behaviors for students, through a set of symbols and reinforcement points granted to the student based on several behavioral criteria determined by the teacher, with the possibility of representing these points with graphs and reports sent to the student and his /her parent directly. The program, which can be run from a computer or mobile device, facilitates maintaining motivation and attention by providing students with immediate feedback (positive or negative) in the classroom, This application is based on the existence of an account for each student, containing a username and password,

and through this account students and parents can access the student behavior record, (Garcia, Hoang & Brown, 2015).

### *Statistical Treatment*

To calculate the stability of the tool, the Cronbach' Alpha coefficient was adopted and the answer to the main study question was provided; the arithmetic media, standard deviations, the size of the trace and the ETA square were used.

#### *\* Pre-application of the study tools:*

A pre-application of the motivation scale was conducted on the study students in the experimental and control groups to verify their equivalence in the variable of motivation before carrying out the experiment, using the independent samples (T) test, and after analyzing them statistically, the results were as follows.

Table No. 2. Results of the Pre-Science Motivation Scale

DIMENSION	Group	Sample	M	S.D	T v	N	Sig
<b>Overall</b>	Control group	27	100.44	14.23	0.52	52	0.80
	Experimental	27	100.89	8.40			
<b>Motivation Scale</b>							

It is noted from the table (2) that the value (T) of the motivation scale is (0.14), which is not statistically significant for the total motivation scale, and this indicates the equivalence of the two groups in the motivation variable before the implementation of the experiment.

## **Study Results and Discussion**

The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of gamification elements on students' academic achievement and motivation. The study was applied to 85 10th grade students for 6 weeks during their regular English classes which included 2 lessons a week. Before the study, a pre-test was implemented at the beginning, and a post-test was implemented at the end for both experimental (N=27) and control (N=27) groups. During the learning process, gamification elements were applied for the experimental group while the control group continued with non-gamified elements. Both groups also followed the same course book with no exceptions for 6- week learning period.

The results of this study are compatible with some other results of studies in the field. Birch (2013) used points in a study to analyze the effects of gamification on students' performance, which resulted in increasing

performance. Similarly, in this study, a point system was implemented into learning. To analyze this effect more closely, interviewed students were asked if they thought gamification had any effect on their academic achievement. Although some of them explained their ideas on its weaknesses, all the students came to agree that gamification helped them increase their performance. However, overall performance can also decline due to competition (Orosz, Farkas, & Roland-Lévy, 2013) as well as that it can develop students' competitive spirits leading to an increased performance (Lui, 2014). That's why, students were asked what they felt about collecting points. One of the students who achieved the least score among others also stated that even though it was also competitive at times, and thus distracting, collecting points increased his performance. Some studies also indicate that providing points or rewards may result in a decline in achievement (Lepper, Corpus & Iyengar, 2005), however, results of this study indicate that participants in experimental group scored significantly higher compared to their previous results before game elements were presented.

Table 3. The values of the arithmetic circles, the standard deviations, and the size of the impact of the scale of motivation towards learning

DIMENSION	Group	Sample size	M	SD	Tv	N	Sig	ETA square	Effect size
Overall Motivation Scale	Control group	27	99.16	11.66	0.70	52	0.49	0.01	Small
	Experimental	27	101.26	10.01					

It is noted from the previous table that the value of (T) for the total motivation scale is equal to (0.70), and the level of significance is equal to (0.49), which is not statistically significant; it is greater than the level of significance (0.05), which indicates that there are no statistically significant apparent differences between the level of the average of the experimental and control groups in the scale of motivation towards learning science, and it is also clear that the value of the ETA square of the motivation scale is (0.01), which means that there is a small volume of teaching in the strategy of artificial intelligence-based gamification and the usual packaging strategy, in the science course for sixth grade students. This result is consistent with the results of the study of (Forest et al. While it celebrates with the study of (Hamus & Fox, 2015), which showed the superiority of the control group over the experimental group in the measure of motivation towards learning for the communications course at the university, and also disagreed with the results of the study of (Wichadee Fortaris et al., 2015) (Mi et al., 2018), which pointed to the effectiveness of gamification in developing motivation towards learning and for the benefit of the experimental group, and the reason for the difference in this result may be the method of designing the gamification strategy, as well as the difference in the study samples, as what characterized the current study is that it dealt with a sample of schools, while the vast majority of previous studies dealt with samples from the university community, and this difference may have an impact on the result, and to reveal the absence of statistically significant differences between students who learned the gamification strategy based on artificial intelligence and students who studied the usual gamification strategy, is the availability of smart devices and the ease of handling and circulation among students, which encourages them to access and external reading through websites and YouTube channels in learning and discovering information

with ease, and these devices have become easy to circulate and the availability of the Internet, as this means that education in the digital age and the era of digital transformation has become open to all, and easy for everyone to access information and data with ease.

The researcher also attributes the lack of substantial differences in the level of motivation between the study groups to the fact that the level of motivation before its application was high, which indicates the diversity of learning styles and strategies in public education institutions, where the results of the pre-application of the motivation scale in Table No. 3 reached 74% and the experimental group approximately 74% of the total score, which is a relatively high rate, which may be the reason for the lack of clear differences. You may also find that the level of motivation among students who have high achievement and others with low achievement learn through electronic games and gamification, and that the reason for the low total achievement may be for other reasons, including evaluation strategies, or different learning environments.

The study, if it continues for a longer period, may be, because motivation and conscience need a longer period than other variables, and this is confirmed by the study of (Van Roy & Zaman, 2018), which lasted 15 days, as motivation was initially low and then suddenly turned upward at the end of the semester. It is also clear to the researcher that the relationship between gamification, whether based on artificial intelligence or habitual and motivation, can only be evaluated well using a long-term study to embody long-term effects, as (Dahlstrom, 2017) indicates that motivation is a psychological condition that is difficult for the researcher to reliably deduce from the performance score, as there is little evidence to support and support how it affects motivation.

### **Recommendations of the Study**

- Encouraging teachers in general and science teachers in particular to activate the strategy of gamification because it can raise the level of motivation if used for long periods.
- Paying attention to computer laboratories and providing technical requirements and technical support in schools to implement the gamification strategy.
- Qualifying teachers to use gamification software to serve the education process.

### **Suggestions**

- Conducting further studies that reveal the relationship between gamification and motivation towards learning other courses and other educational stages.
- Conducting studies on gamification in improving emotional and skill learning outcomes.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author is grateful to the Open Arab University, Amman, Jordan for the financial support granted to cover.

the publication fee of this research article.

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## Securing Big Data with HADOOP in Enterprise Information System

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**Abstract:** The rate of data generation over the internet has exploded over the last two decades. The data thus generated is classified as Big Data which is a current technology and is also going to rule the world in the future. Big data enables any organization to create, collect, retrieve, manage, analyze, and make decisions that are remarkable in volume, velocity, and variety. Big data came into view when traditional relational database systems were unable to handle unstructured data (weblogs, videos, photos, social updates, and human behavior) generated by the organization, social media, or any other data generation source today.. Data is expanding in size day by day, and Hadoop is utilized to process such a huge amount of data. Big data poses many security challenges because of its various properties, such as volume, velocity, and variety. The security of Big Data is one of the main concerns. This paper aims to present the integration of Big data and the techniques available using Hadoop. Data are collected and saved at unparalleled rates. Big Data Integration is the process of transferring data to the destination format from the source format. The purpose of this research work is to look into key aspects of Big data, which include the three V's of big data. The aim of this paper is to examine key aspects of Big Data, including the Big Data Three Vs. Highlighting the main issue concerning the security of Big data. This paper will deal with various security issues associated with Big data in context with the Hadoop environment and the various solution techniques and technologies involved in securing big data with Hadoop.

**Keywords:** BigData, Hadoop, Enterprise Information Security, Data Driven Applications, Data Integrity

**Citation:** Palit, S. & Sinha Roy, C. (2024). Securing Bigdata with HADOOP in Enterprise Information Systems. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1402-1416), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Big data is a current technology and also going to rule a world in the future. It is the Buzzword hiding both technical and marketing data inside it. Big data enable any organization to data creation, collection, retrieval, manage, analyze and make decisions that are remarkable concerning volume, velocity, and variety. To process the large volume of data from different sources, Hadoop is used for expeditious processing.

Hadoop is a core platform for structuring Big data and is an apache based open source software framework,

comprised at its core of the Hadoop file system and map reduce and is very well designed to handle vast volumes of data across a large number of nodes. But from the security point of view, the efflux of Big data and the need for this information throughout an organization escalates opportunity for hackers and another cybercriminal activity. So, the aim is to implement some enhanced data security mechanism for making privacy of user’s data more secure.

The collection of large datasets not processable using traditional computing techniques is called “Big Data”. Big Data is the word used to oversee mammoth volumes of various structures of data (structure and unstructured data) that are too huge that it is strenuous to utilize that data to Process, using traditional databases and software technologies. The era of Big Data has bought with it a plethora of opportunities for the advancement of science, improvement of health care, promotion of economic growth, enhancement of education system and more ways of social interaction and entertainment[5]. Big data empower any organization to data creation, collection, retrieval, manage, analyze and making decision that are remarkable in volume, velocity and variety.

In Big Data 3 V’s are:

**Volume:** Many factors contribute to increasing the Volume of transactional data storage, live streaming and sensor data, etc.,

**Variety:** Today, data is stored in all types of formats, including traditional databases, text documents, emails, video, audio, transactions, etc.,

**Velocity:** This means how expeditious the data is being engendered and how fast the data needs to be processed to meet the requisites.

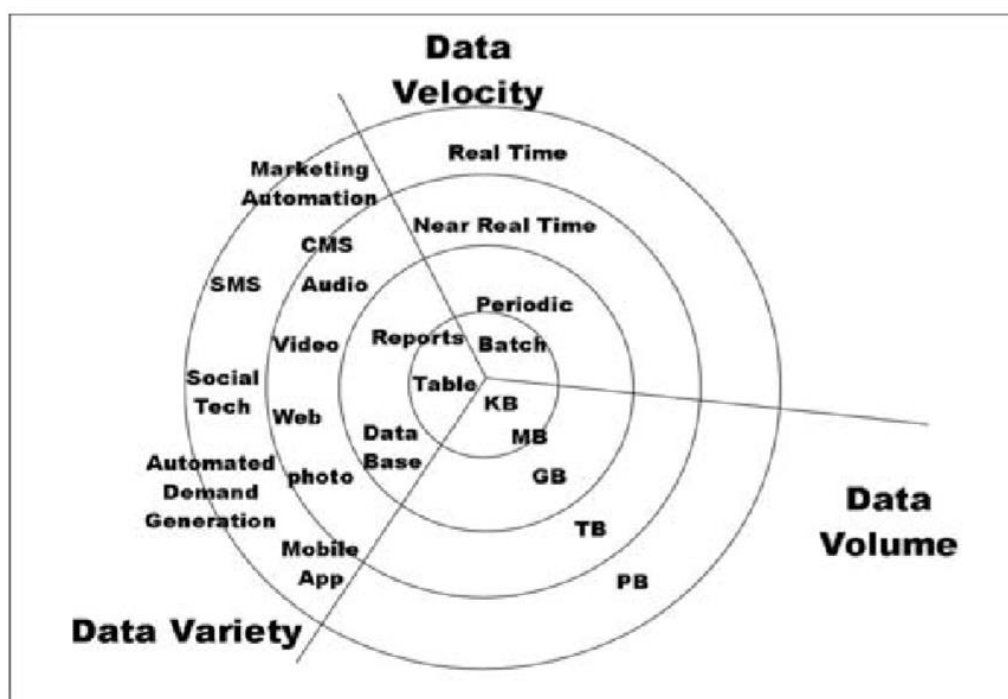


Figure 1. three V’s of big Data

Table 1. Difference between Traditional data and Big Data

SI. No.	Traditional Data	Big data
1	Here the data is “Structured” data	Here the data is “Unstructured or Semi structured” data
2	The size of the data is very small	The size is more than the traditional data size
3	Here the data is centralized	Here the data are distributed
4	It is easy to work or manipulate	It is difficult to handle the data
5	Normal system configuration is sufficient to process	High system configuration is required to process the data
6	A traditional database tools is enough	Special kind of tools are required
7	Normal functions are enough to manipulate the data	Requires special kind of functions to manipulate the data

Hadoop is a free programming framework based on Java that helps to process large data sets in a distributed computer environment. The cluster Hadoop uses a Master / Slave structure. Using Hadoop, large data sets can be processed across a server cluster and applications with thousands of nodes involving thousands of terabytes can be run on systems.

Hadoop's distributed file system helps with fast data transfer rates and allows the system to continue its normal operation even in the case of certain node failures. This approach reduces the risk of a complete system failure, even if a large number of node failures occur. Hadoop empowers for a scalable, cost - effective, fault-tolerant, and flexible computer solution. Hadoop Framework is used by popular companies such as Google, Yahoo, Amazon and IBM to support large amounts of data in their applications. HDFS is a file system that spreads across all nodes in a Hadoop data storage cluster. It connects file systems to local nodes to form a single large file system. HDFS improves data reliability by replicating through multiple sources to overcome node failures.

## Problem Definition and Objective

### Definition

Big data poses many security challenges because of its various properties such as volume, velocity and variety. Big data security is a major concern. Because big data is a new technology on the market, it is necessary to highlight various security challenges and problems related to the introduction and use of this technology. But from the security point of view, The efflux of Big Data and the desideratum to move this information throughout an organization have created a massive incipient target for hackers and other cybercriminal activities. So, the aim is to implement some enhanced data security mechanism for making privacy of user’s data more secure. The more data is stored, the more imperative it is to ensure its security. A destitute of data security can cause significant financial losses and reputational damage for a company.

### *Challenges in managing Big data*

#### *Heterogeneous data source*

The data needed for analytical and computational purposes is unequivocally heterogeneous and have a typical problem of integration.

#### *Privacy*

The data privacy is further major and critical issue with regards to Big Data. There is an extraordinary open dread with respect to the wrong utilization of private data, especially through relating of data from numerous sources. Dealing with privacy is viably both a technical and a sociological issue, which must be acknowledged to exploit Big Data.

#### *Data Integration*

Big Data Integration is multidimensional and multidisciplinary and requires multi-technology approach that presents a significant challenge.

#### *Security issues in Hadoop*

Hadoop has developed into a company data platform for many organizations. This presents new security challenges, as once siloed data is collected in a large data lake and made accessible to a variety of users throughout the organization. These challenges include:

Ensure that users who access Hadoop are properly authenticated.

Ensure that authorized Hadoop users only have access to the data they have the right to access.

Ensure that data access records are recorded for all users in enforcement with compliance rules and for other important purposes.

Ensures data protection through enterprise - grade encryption, both at rest and in transit.

#### *Objective*

The Big Data, when appropriately analyzed, can be very dangerous to insecure the information of Enterprise data. The biggest challenge for big data from the security point of view is the protection of the user's privacy. The more data is stored, the more imperative it is to ensure its security. A lacking of data security can lead to significant financial losses and reputational damage for a company. As far as Big Data is concerned, losses due to lack of IT security can exceed even the worst expectations, advances in big data analytics are now being applied Security surveillance for more comprehensive and in-depth analysis to protect valuable company resources. Organizations need secure mechanisms and rules to ensure their systems. To protect sensitive data of enterprises. Big data needs extra requirements for security and privacy in data gathering, storing, analyzing, and

transferring. Easily, the data grows every day, we are familiar with websites such as Facebook, Twitter and all users enter the data simultaneously. According to IBM, 90% of the world's data was created in the last two years alone and we create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data. To connect this gap the “Big Data” came into the picture. The Big Data market perpetually increment each year.

The White House promulgated in March 2012 a national " Big Data Initiative" consisting of six federal departments and agencies committing more than \$ 200 million to Big Data research projects. Global Pulse, an innovative lab based on Big Data mining, also uses Big data to ameliorate living conditions in developing countries. Big Data has given the organization an incipient way of effectively analyzing and visualizing their data. For example: *Business*: Customer Feedback, trends etc. Healthcare organizations use Big Data technology to capture all information about a patient to obtain a more complete overview of the coordination, management and outcome of care. Using Big Data helps build a sustainable health system and improves access to healthcare.

## Background

Big data has grown as an important research area for many researchers, reflecting the volume and impact of innovation in modern business organizations' strategies and models. Although Big Data is still in its early stages of development, they still have so many problems. Big data expressions have been attached to so large data sets where software tools usually cannot hold, manage, and process them during an acceptable time frame. An excess of data implies considerably more use-cases prompting more representations of business assessments that at last would prompt better business decision making, this situation will lead more benefits for many enterprises. The paper will further discuss on implementation of authorization using various techniques in Hadoop. At Yahoo, Hadoop has been a work in progress! and, a couple of other association as an Apache open source venture in the course of the most recent 5 years. It is used extensively in the industry. yahoo!, for instance, has deployed dozens of Hadoop clusters with 4,000 nodes and 15 petabytes each. Hadoop is comprised of two essential segments, the Hadoop Distributed File System (HDFS) and the MapReduce engine. HDFS pursues master/slave architecture.

A HDFS cluster for the most part contains a single NameNode and a bundle Data Nodes. NameNode is responsible for monitoring and distributing data to DataNodes. DataNodes inside a same cluster would impart over the network to adjust data blocks, and ensure data is replicated throughout the cluster. MapReduce of Hadoop was originally based on MapReduce of Google. This paradigm type processes application by breaking input into small parts, which can be run on any node in a cluster. A user submits a job of MapReduce to the JobTracker that plans the work to be done on the compute nodes. Each compute node has a small daemon called TaskTracker, which starts maps and reduce job tasks; the task tracker likewise serves intermediate data created by map tasks to minimize tasks. This paper is also very helpful in finding open data integration problems in the Big Data Environment and the problems are the integration of crowd sourcing data, the integration of data from data markets and the provision of a data sources exploration tool.

**Design**

*Hadoop Architecture*

Hadoop is an Open-source Java Framework innovation that avails to stores, access and increase extensive distribution of resources from Big data in a disseminated manner at less cost, high fault tolerance and high scalability. Hadoop handles sizably voluminous amount of data from various system like user data, enterprise data, Structured Query, unstructured information, Email& discussions. A cluster of Hadoops comprises a Master node and many Slave nodes. The master node consists of the Data node, the Name node, the Job Tracker, and the Task Tracker where the slave node acts as both a TaskTracker and a Data node which only contains the calculation and the data only. The Job Tracker manages the planning of work.

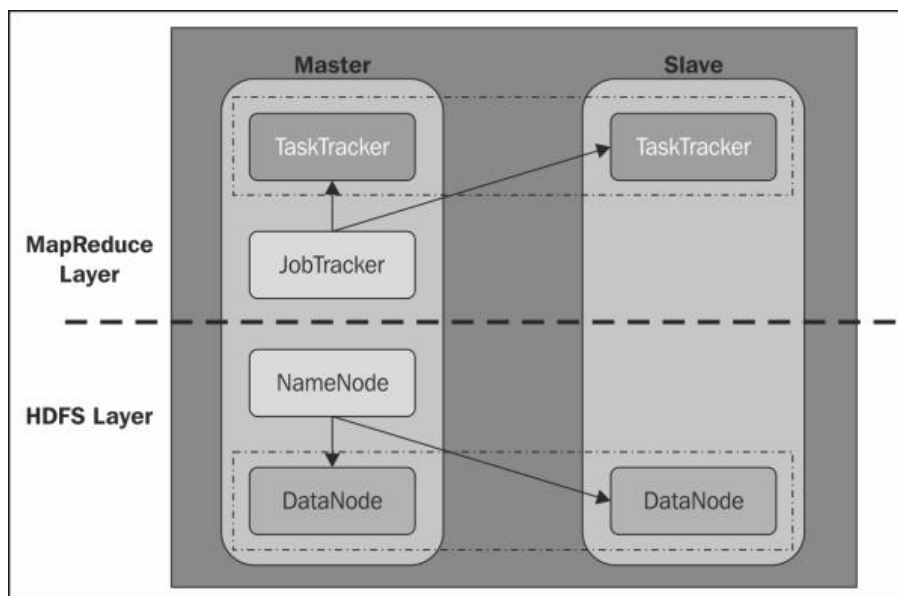


Figure 2. Hadoop Architecture

*HDFS Architecture*

The HDFS is the Java portable file system that is more scalable, reliable and distributed throughout the Hadoop framework. It provides redundant storage of sizable voluminous amounts of data with low latency utilizing commodity hardware, where operations such as " Write Once, Read Many Times" are carried out. The files are stored as a 64 MB default block. Communication between nodes occurs via remote calls to the procedure. Two types of nodes operating in cluster of Hadoop as master-salve or master-worker pattern. Master nodes are NameNode and DataNodes as a workers nodes of HDFS. The namespace of the file system is managed by the NameNode, plenary handles the file system and the metadata for all the files and directories in the entire structure. Datanode stores and access block in accordance with the instructions provided by clients. The data retrieved is recorded back to the namenode together with lists of blocks in it. It is not possible to access the file without namenode. It is therefore very paramount to make namenode is working felicitously.



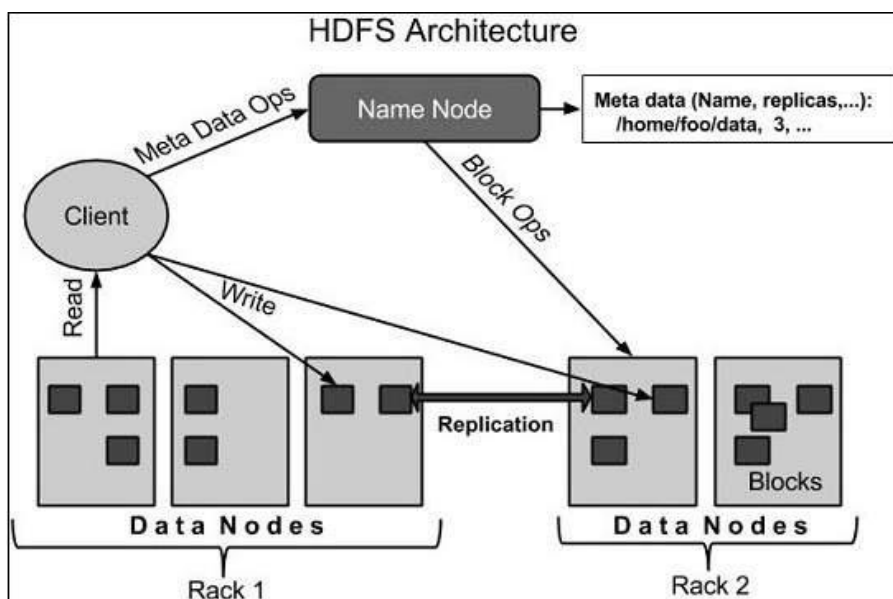


Figure 3. HDFS Architecture

## HADOOP Security Enhancement Authorization

### Security Threats

Unauthorized client: using the data transfer protocol streaming pipeline an unauthorized client can write / read a file block in a data node. And can place a job in a queue or delete or change your job priority if gained access privileges. And can access Map job intermediate data can be accessed through its HTTP shuffle protocol task trackers.

Task: the host OS interfaces utilized by a running task to access other tasks or local data including intermediate map output or local data storage of the data node running on the same physical node. Likewise, A task or node can be masked as a Hadoop service component like a Name Node, job tracker, data node, task tracker, etc.

Unauthorized user: An unauthorized user can execute arbitrary code or perform additional attacks by accessing an HDFS file via RPC or HTTP protocols. Similarly, it can sniff / edit data packets sent to the client by data nodes and can submit a workflow to Oozie as an additional user. Data nodes do not thrust access control, they can bypass the different access control mechanisms or restrictions and from data nodes arbitrary data blocks can be read or garbage data to the data node is written to corrupt them.

### Authorization

Authorization is the process to assure that users only have access to data in accordance with the policies. Hadoop already provides fine - grained permission through HDFS file permissions, resource-level access control for MapReduce and YARN, and service - level coarser-grained access control. The authorization role is

used by providers who make access decisions predicated on the efficacious user identity context for the requested resources. This context of identity is resolute by the authentication provider and the mapping rules of the identity assurance provider. The authorization provider assesses the identity contexts of users and group principals against a set of access policies to determine whether access should be granted to the effective user for the requested resource.

### *Project Rhino*

Project Rhino is an open source project aimed to enhance the data protection mechanism in Hadoop from various security perspectives. Project Rhino broadens the access control for HBase on for every cell premise. Giving Authorization on a cell instead of simply table or column gives more fine grained authorization for users. One user may be allowed to access certain cells in one column, but the same user may not have access to them. Project Rhino add cell-level security. While embedding data to every cell, expressions of the visibility tag are inserted to every cell.

At the point, when the user reads the data, he or she provides his or her own authorization information, including the group to which he or she belongs, the role user has and the approval he or she has according to the groups and roles. Then the user's authorization information will be checked against the visibility tag and dependent on that the user will be permitted to access that cell or not. Therefore, to have cell - based security authorization checks should be carried out in every cell. This will cause some overhead performance. However, it gives more fine grained authorization.

### *Project Sentry*

Apache Sentry is one of the projects that gives the users of services like Hive and Cloudera fine - grained authorization. Sentry is coordinated with the Apache Hive and Cloudera Impala SQL query framework. This section talks about the security improvements to the existing Hadoop security system made by Project Sentry Without Sentry, Hadoop utilizes coarse-grained HDFS file authorization. In Hadoop file level authorization, users can either access the file or not. Therefore, there is no possibility in HDFS file authorization to define multiple groups to have distinctive data access levels. However, Sentry offers authenticated users the ability to define several groups and roles.

Authenticated users are able to control and access data on the basis of privileges with Sentry. Sentry gives fine - grained data and metadata access control in Hadoop. Sentry can give access control to table and view scopes at the distinctive privilege levels which incorporates Select, Insert and All. This will enable administrator to utilize view to control column and row access. Roll-based authorization is provided by Sentry. We can define that several groups have access to the same data set in various privilege models. For example, for a specific set of data, we can allow administrators the privilege to see all columns, Employees to access non-sensitive columns and students to not read columns.

## **BIG DATA Integration**

### **Data Integration**

Data integration combines and converts large data from various sources into one format. Data integration plays an important role in making the right decisions at the right time in the organization. Data warehouses with On-Line Analytical Processing (OLAP) are utilized for data integration and analysis. They are inefficient to integrate unstructured or semi-structured data with streaming.

#### *Big Data Integration*

Big data integration (BDI) implies extensive volumes of heterogeneous data from numerous dynamic data sources are linked or merged.

Two broad Big Data Integration categories:

Integration in Big Data environments of multiple Big Data sources.

Integration of unstructured Big Data sources with company data.

#### *Methodology*

The Internet has rich wellspring of voluminous and heterogeneous information, the size and complexity of which continually grow. Many website pages are unstructured and semi-structured. Extraction of information is an essential undertaking in the process of data integration. The main goal of this extraction process is to extract the right information at the ideal time with the right cost to support the right decision. Data warehouses have traditionally been utilized as multidimensional databases to store large amounts of data. Poor data quality leads to poor decision making which eventually results in poor performance. Completeness, consistency, and correctness of data support organizations are the cornerstone of organizational decision - making systems. The great working and proficiency of an association relies upon the data quality. Poor data quality reduces customer satisfaction and automatically reduces the ability to take decisions and performance. Big data dodges the downsides from conventional methods.

#### *Extract, Transform and Load Process*

ETL comes from data warehouse and is an extract-transform load. ETL carries out the data loading process from the source to the target system. It converts data of the same type or distinctive types into a centralized data warehouse with a standard data format.

#### *Extract*

The " extract " task involves the collection of data from external sources which must be transmitted to the

systems and databases required. The data can be found in standalone databases or spreadsheets which are not integrated with any master database. The data may even be hard copy or data purchased from a data provider. The objective of this errand is to comprehend the data format, evaluate the overall quality of the data and extract the data from its source in order to manipulate it in the next task.

*Transform*

In the “transform” step an assortment of software tools and even custom programming are used to manipulate the data so that it can be integrated with existing data.

*Load*

After the successful transformation of the source data, it is necessary to physically load it into the target system or database. Before loading the data, it is necessary to ensure that the current system is backed up so that rollback or undo can be started in the event of a load failure process. After data has been loaded, audit reports are common so that the results of the merged databases and systems can be reviewed to ensure that the new data has not caused any errors.

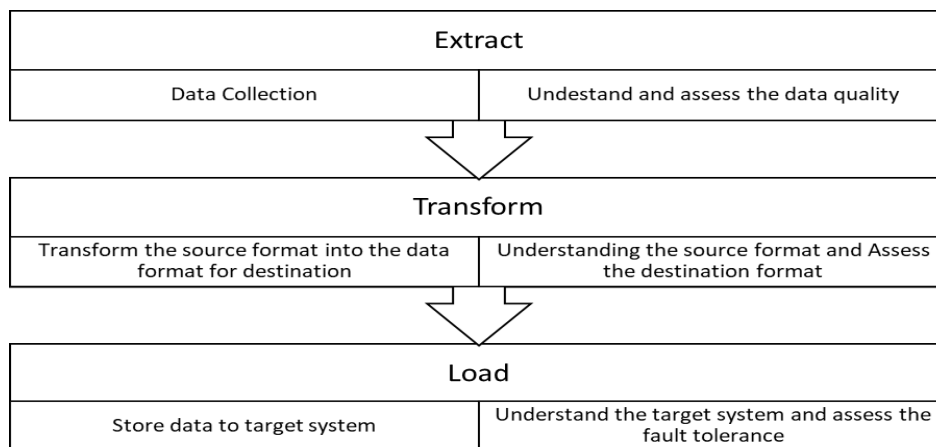


Fig 4. The General Process of ETL

**Implementation Details**

This section will attempt to focus on the various data integrity techniques and confinement of few such techniques. Provable Data Possession (PDP) and Proof of Retrievability (PoR) are the basic systems for data integrity. The following section depicts the data privacy practices for data integrity.

**Provable Data Possession (PDP)**

*Features*

Secure for remote data verification

Based on Homomorphic verifiable tags

Works well with static data

#### *Advantages*

Actually, the server does not have to access the file blocks, fortifying less verification of the block.

Sanctions verification of the public.

#### *Limitations*

Lack of error correction codes to deal with corruption concerns

Paucity of confidentiality

There is no dynamic support

Unbound number of queries.

Provable Data possession (PDP) is a technique to ensure data integrity on remote servers. In PDP, a client who has stored data on a perfidious server can verify that the server does not retrieve the pristine data. Ateniese et al. are the first to consider the ability of public auditing in their defined "provable data possession" model for ascertaining the possession of untrusted storage files.

#### *Basic Proof of Retrievability (PoR)*

Proofs of Retrievability (POR) is a cryptographic method for remotely checking the integrity of cloud - based files without keeping a facsimile of the user's pristine files in local storage. In a scheme, users back up their data file to a potentially mendacious cloud storage server together with some authentication data. Users can use the authentication key to check the data for its integrity stored with CSP without recovering the data file.

#### *Principal of POR*

A POR works in two phases: first, the setup phase and second, the sequence of verification phases.

#### *Setup phase:*

The user preprocesses his data file in the setup phase using his private key to engender some authentication code. He then sends the data file to the cloud storage server together with the authentication code and abstracts it from his local disk. As a result, the user has his private key on his local disk in the terminus of the setup phase, and CSP has both the data file and the corresponding authentication code.

#### *Sequence of verification phases:*

In each sequence of verification phase, the user engenders an arbitrary challenge query and CSP is supposed to provide a short answer or proof of the received challenge query based on the data file of the user and the corresponding authentication data. Users will verify the response of CSP using their private key at the cessation of a verification phase and decide to accept or reject this response from CSP.

## Limitations

It works only for static data sets.

It fortifies only a circumscribed number of queries as a challenge, because a limited number of check blocks are involved.

A POR does not provide the file stored on CSP in prevention.

## Hail

HAIL, high-availability and integrity layer where HAIL sanctions the user to store data on multiple servers so that the data is redundant. The simple principle of this method is to ascertain file data integrity through data redundancy. To ensure integrity, HAIL uses message authentication codes (MACs), the pseudorandom function and the universal hash function. The evidence is engendered by this method, which is independent of the data size and compact in size.

### *Limitations*

This technique applies only to the static data.

More computing power is required.

Not appropriate for thin client.

### *POR Based on Selecting Random Bits in Data Blocks*

Technique involving the encryption of the few bits of data per data block instead of encrypting the entire file, thus reducing the client's computational burden. It is clear that the high probability of security can be achieved by encrypting fewer bits in lieu of encrypting the whole data. The computational overhead for client storage is also minimized because it does not store data and reduces bandwidth requisites. This scheme is therefore suitable for thin customers. Users need to store just one cryptographic key and two random sequence functions in these techniques. The user does not store data in his machine. The user pre-processes the file afore saving the file in the CSP and adds some meta data to the file and stores in the CSP. The verifier utilizes these meta data to verify the integrity of the data at the time of the verification.

### *Limitations*

This technique is used for static data only.

## Results and Analysis

### Comparative Study

This Comparative study provides a concise explication of all the techniques discussed in this paper so far.

Table 2. Comparison between data integrity techniques

<b>Data Integrity Techniques</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Provable Data Possession	This technique gives a vigorous proof data integrity. Support Block less verification. Allows verification of the public.	Lack of error- correction codes to deal with corruption concerns. Lack of preservation of privacy. No support dynamic. Unbound number of queries. Allows for public verification.
Basic Proof of Retrievability	Reduces the client's and CSP 's overhead computation and storage. It additionally minimizes the size of the data integrity proof by reducing the network. Bandwidth.	It works only for static data sets. It fortifies only an inhibited number of queries as a challenge, as it handles a limited number of checks blocks. A POR does not provide the file stored on CSP in obviation.
High Availability Integrity Layer (HAIL)	Sanction data to be saved in multiple clouds.	This technique applies only to static data Unfit for thin clients
POR Based on Selecting Random Bits in Data Blocks	This technique is opportune for thin client. Put minimum overhead storage on client and CSP.	This technique supports only static data. In this technique data prevention mechanism is not implemented.

In Provable Data Possession the data proprietor processes the information file and stores it locally to produce some metadata. the owner expunges the pristine replica of the file after sending the files to the server. The proprietor verifies the file's possession. This technique is used by the client to verify the data integrity. This technique guarantees the client's server security. However, this method has high overhead because it runs over the entire file every time during hashing process. It therefore has exceptionally high computational costs.

Proof of Retrievability Scheme that does not involve whole data encryption. It reduces the overhead of the client by encrypting only a few bits of data per block of data. It does not store data on the client side, so the overhead for client storage is also minimized. Hence, this scheme is therefore suitable for thin clients. This scheme diminishes the overhead for computing and storage of the client and the server. It reduces the bandwidth consumption of the network by limiting the data integrity proof size. HAIL (High Availability and Integrity Layer) is a data integrity scheme that enables a server set to emphasize to a client that a stored file is not modified and can be retrieved. HAIL enables the client to store its data on multiple servers, so that the data is redundant. And Only a small amount of data is stored in the local machine at the client side. Data integrity can be checked in the distributed storage through data redundancy. This produces evidence of the data size that it is independent and compact in size. From the above analysis it is evident that all these techniques have some



advantages as well as some constraints. The technique POR predicated on Selecting Random Bits in Data Blocks is best suited for thin client as well as this technique provides the vigorous proof of retrievability.

## Conclusion

As the title of this research suggests, it goes in depth on security issues in Big data associated with Hadoop. In doing so however, the research briefly explains the theory and technique(s) behind not just security, but data integration in general. The research also proposes an idea that is worth dwelling on for other like-minded researchers.

## Summary

With the widespread popularization of internet and social media, the amount of text data being generated is so massive, that it is now classified as big data. To a layman, this data might be mostly useless, but for professionals such as data analyzers, researchers and data scientists, etc. these are valuable inputs. Hadoop is a popular platform for storing substantial amount of data. There are some gaps with the subsisting security system in Hadoop. Since security plays a paramount role in keeping the sensitive data protected, the aim of this paper is to evaluate security for Hadoop. Two of the projects that worked to enhance Hadoop 's security are Project Rhino and Sentry. The security improvements made by these two projects have been studied from different security aspects, such as authorization. Predicated on what was studied, the project Rhino provides cell - based security that provides more cell-level fine grained access control, in addition to table or column level access control.

Project Sentry provides fine - grained data and metadata authorization in Hadoop. It offers role - based authorization by defining diverse groups to have distinctive access levels to various datasets. The most challenging and burning security problem is data integrity. In this paper various subsisting techniques and their merits and demerits are explained by taking into account the paramountcy of data integrity. The analytical study compares all these techniques briefly.

## Future Work

It is clear from the above comparative study that all of these techniques examined in this paper have both some advantages and some limitations. All of these papers lacked felicitous data integrity mechanisms, fortifying dynamic data operations and high resource and computing costs. The POR technique based on the selection of random bits in data blocks is ideal for thin customers, as this technique provides vigorous proof of retrievability. The only drawback of this technique is that it only works with static data and no mechanism for data prevention. Given more time the future work will therefore be to expand the scope of this paper.

## Acknowledgements


We would like to thank all scientists and stakeholders who are associated with this extensive research work.

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## Lean Manufacturing for Improvement and Productivity in the Supply Chain of a Pisco Company


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**Abstract:** Maintaining proper administration and management within supply chain processes ensures the competitiveness and sustainability of the company. This study aims to propose an improvement in the supply chain of a pisco company through the implementation of Lean Manufacturing tools. The model was designed and validated, subdivided into four components that specify and detail the sequence of the proposal's improvement (analysis and measurement, solution design, application, and evaluation of results). Among the main findings is a 40% improvement in the productivity rates of the packaging process, along with a reduction in downtime during the grape extrusion process (with a saving of approximately 12 minutes per breakdown). Consequently, there was an increase in the mean time between failures (MTBF) by 54.87%, equivalent to an interval of three days with seven hours of work without any faults. Finally, there was an increase in the efficiency of the use of the main resource, "uvina grapes," by 33%, signifying high raw material performance during the extrusion process. This study facilitates the transition to a continuous improvement environment, aiming to stimulate future research to contribute to process improvement in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The expectation is that these companies can develop tools to optimize their main bottlenecks, achieving improvements in their operations in terms of resources and time.

**Keywords:** Lean manufacturing, Beverage industry, Continuous Improvement, Productivity, Autonomous maintenance

**Citation:** Landa-Romero, E.P., Salazar-Cárdenas, M.E., & Ruiz-Ruiz, M. F. (2024). Lean Manufacturing for improvement and productivity in the supply chain of a pisco company. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1417-1425), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

This project is focused on the beverage industry, being more specific in the alcoholic beverage sector in Peru, taking the production of pisco as a reference. Which reflects a progressive evolution in terms of annual liter volume at the national level, obtaining an improvement of 60% from 2010 to date (Ministerio de la Producción, 2019). Likewise, the aforementioned institution states that export activities have increased, obtaining a 66.80% share in the international market of the United States and Chile.

The right way to maximize quality, delivery and overall profitability of an organization lies in proper supply chain management. This management covers all procedures from the acquisition of inputs and raw materials to the completion of the delivery of the product to the determined destination (Chopra & Meindl, 2013). Consequently, thanks to the efficient administration of the SC, the country has reflected a progressive evolution in the national volume of pisco. Managing to obtain a difference of 1.8 to 10.5 million liters from 2001 to 2016 respectively (Ministerio de la Producción, 2018).

Being in a competitive environment, companies are concerned with minimizing costs, maintaining optimal levels of productivity and quality (Monir & Kamal, 2015). Therefore, the success of each company depends on its efficiency in supply chain management and its solid integration. Certain studies highlight the importance of incorporating the 5S tool into the culture of each worker, where process efficiency could increase by 13% (Belhadi et al., 2018). Likewise, implementing the TPM tool they reveal the benefits of performing autonomous maintenance to reduce equipment downtime by 75% and increase its availability by 3.8% (Duques et al., 2020).

Companies are adversely affected by product loss or waste generation within their supply chain. Particularly, in the production and processes area, due to obsolescence, machinery inefficiency, or lack of worker training (Dawood, 2018). Likewise, they assert that the major problem lies in the underutilization of physical space and unnecessary movements in stations, which tends to cause delays in material, personnel, and information flows within the chain (Sharma & Gandhi, 2018).

In consequence, this study aims to manage the implementation of lean manufacturing tools to enhance the efficiency and productivity (Rojas & Gisbert, 2017) of a pisco company's supply chain. Based on the foregoing, the following research question was defined: Is it possible to improve productivity in the supply chain of a pisco-producing company through lean tools?

## Diagnostic

In most industries, there are challenges that can hinder the supply chain procedure, and the bullwhip effect is one of them, which is a phenomenon in the process flow that can negatively affect more than one stakeholder, referring to the increase in demand variability (Cannella et al., 2010). Therefore, with the aim of exhaustively

classifying the causes that give rise to the identified problems at the top level, it was decided to create an Ishikawa diagram, identifying those challenges that lead to low productivity levels. Subsequently, the design of the model followed for the case study is presented in Figure 1.

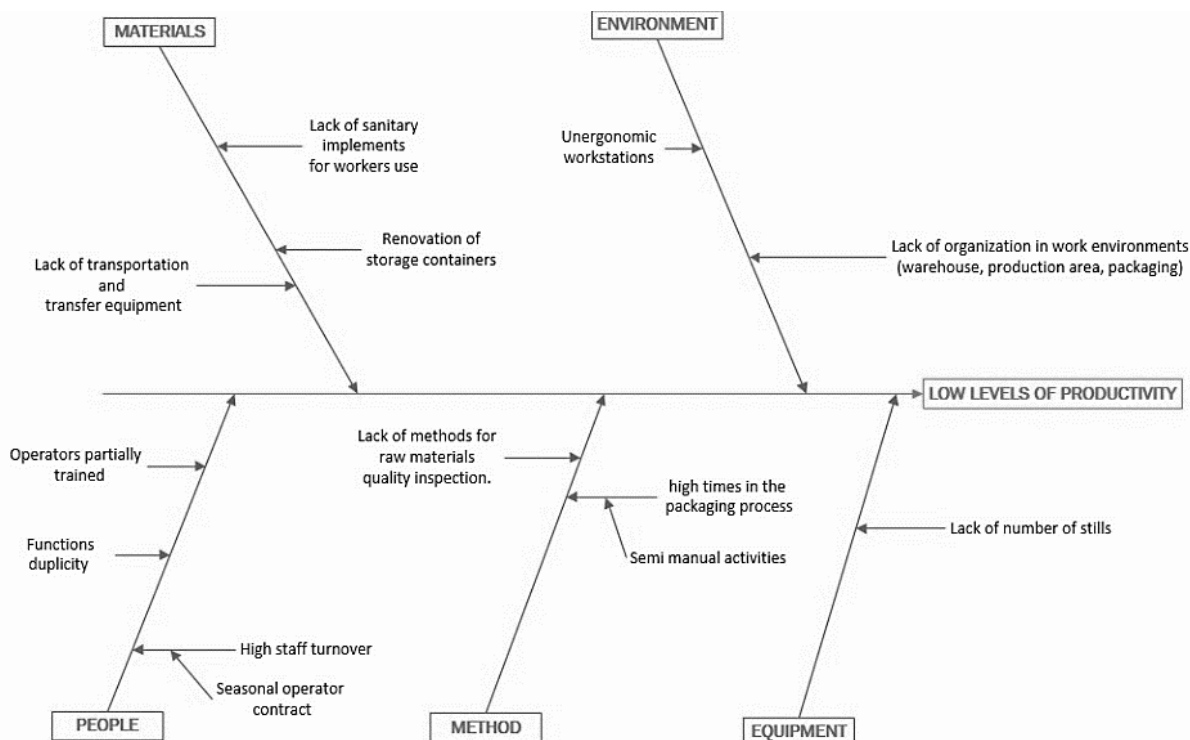


Figure 1. Ishikawa's diagram

The main problems that arise in the pisco company are related to the extrusion of the grapes and the packaging of the final product, which end up reducing the efficiency of the production program, and end up altering the forecast made in terms of time, volume and resources. As for the first, due to the large amount of waste generated by the initial operation, the machine usually presents various failures due to lack of speed and capacity, causing the machine to stop; while the second, the bottling line is semi-manual, making the process dependent on the productivity of human resources. However, they point out that interdependent, joint and harmonious work will guarantee adequate compliance with internal processes to result in a finished product in optimal conditions (Akanmu & Nordin, 2022).

Continuing with the presented issues, the Pareto principle was used to identify the problems with the greatest impact. Among them are the high times in the packaging process due to lack of organization and automation in the plant (Salawu, E et al., 2018). Additionally, the inadequacy of machinery and equipment leads to the maximum production capacity being lower than the plant's operational capacity. An example of this is the insufficient number of stills and fermentation vessels, which do not allow the expected raw materials to be stored. Lastly, the lack of prevention against possible equipment failures, which may be caused by age, incorrect operation or natural failures of the machines. Due to the problems presented, a process optimization model is

proposed as a solution through the application of 5S and TPM tools. The purpose of which is to eliminate those activities that do not add value during the process, obtaining better times and reducing costs and resources (Lopes et al., 2015).

**Method**

This document outlines a case study focused on simulated improvement rather than applied improvement, which is structured into three phases or components. Firstly, there's the analysis and measurement of KPIs (pre-test) to pinpoint root causes alongside the mentioned indicators. Secondly, there's the design of the proposed solution using lean tools. Thirdly, there's the application of the simulation model, followed by the evaluation of results (post-test).

In the initial stage, the pre-test aims to assess the starting situation by utilizing the value stream mapping tool and analyzing indicators across the entire supply chain of the pisco company. The tool's implementation was chosen to observe non-value-adding activities, gather key process data, and assess key performance measures in the final product flow, primarily including cycle time (CT), capacity, and availability (Dawood et al., 2018). The second stage involves using Lean Manufacturing tools like Kanban, TPM, and 5S to gain deeper insights into issues, root causes, and future improvement implementations. Additionally, an improvement simulation model will be applied using engineering software, which will be compared in the post-test phase to evaluate the research's initial and final situations. On one hand, the design of the initial solution proposal links the root causes of the central issue with lean techniques and tools, facilitating the generation of a solution proposal. Subsequently, based on norms and standards of the pisco sector, and the methodological development of selected lean tools, certain results are obtained that are useful for comparison with the indicators analyzed in the first component. Lastly, in the results evaluation phase, scenarios are compared based on the main indicators of the pilot model and the second simulation. Following this, the most suitable model is chosen, and the results are interpreted. As a final point, a continuous improvement and control plan is suggested to maintain the positive results.

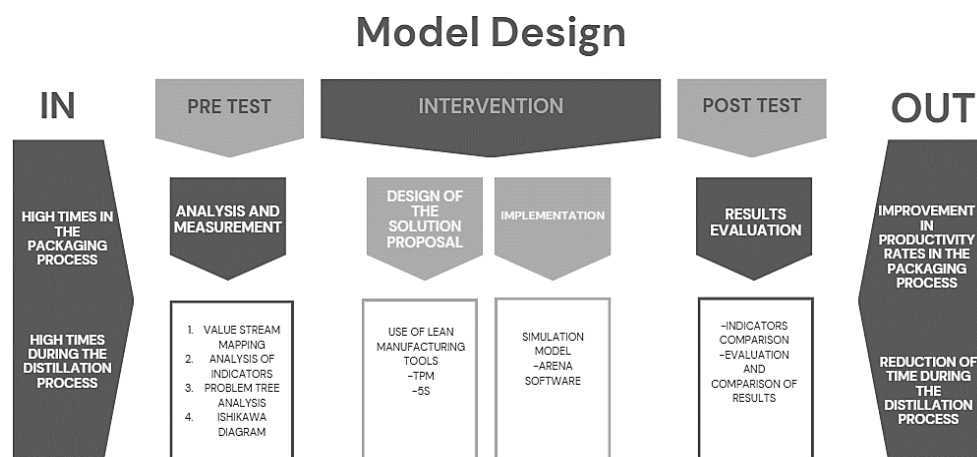


Figure 2. Model Design

## Results

In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed solution, it was decided to carry out the TPM simulation in the Arena Simulator software, which was structured in three stages: raw material supply, extrusion process and bottling. The grape crusher machine operates 192 hours per month and is one of the main bottlenecks, experiencing 13 failures during this period, resulting in 403 minutes of downtime. Through the simulation proposal, a 53.48% reduction in machine availability was achieved, reducing the number of failures and the average repair time.

First, the average time between two consecutive failures in the same equipment was calculated. The longer the time obtained, the more beneficial it will be for the company, since production is continuous without presenting any inconvenience, managing to operate for longer periods without failures. The company's current procedure presents a failure every 856 minutes, its mean, every 14 hours of work. With the improvement proposal, a result of 1897 minutes was obtained, representing an improvement of 54.87%.

In second place, it is important to find the average number of minutes or hours that the machine returns to work after a failure. In this case, the shorter the repair time is a positive result for the company because the production line will be able to continue operating. Currently, it takes an average of 31 minutes for the technician to repair the machine. With the improvement proposal, a result of 24 minutes was obtained, representing a saving of 7 minutes for each breakdown.

Finally, it is necessary to visualize the fraction of time in which no failure is occurring, with this, it is possible to identify the percentage of availability that the machine is suitable for use. It is currently at 96.50%, and with the improvement proposal it reached 98.77%. Some results presented are shown in Figure 3, where the current model proposal, the improvement model proposal, and the percentage variation between both exercises are indicated.

Current model (pre test)	Improvement model (post test)	Variation
$MTBF = \frac{11\,520 \frac{\text{min}}{\text{month}} - 403 \text{ min}}{13 \text{ failures}} = 856 \frac{\text{min}}{\text{failures}}$	$MTBF = \frac{11\,520 \frac{\text{min}}{\text{month}} - 142 \text{ min}}{6 \text{ failures}} = 1897 \frac{\text{min}}{\text{failures}}$	54.87%
$MTTR = \frac{403 \text{ min}}{13 \text{ failures}} = 31 \frac{\text{min}}{\text{failures}}$	$MTTR = \frac{142 \text{ min}}{6 \text{ failures}} = 24 \frac{\text{min}}{\text{failures}}$	22.58%
$\text{Availability} = \frac{855 \text{ min}}{31 \text{ min} + 855 \text{ min}} = 96.50\%$	$\text{Availability} = \frac{1897 \text{ min}}{24 \text{ min} + 1897 \text{ min}} = 98.77\%$	2.29%

Figure 3. Current model and improvement model of TPM management indicators

On the other hand, the packaging process improvement was 22.22%. This percentage was obtained in relation to the liters obtained from the current situation and the simulated improvement proposal, using the production speed of each situation, specifically 3 minutes per bottle and half a minute per produced bottle, respectively.



Regarding the yield of kilograms of grapes per liter of pisco, it was considered that with lower use of raw material, the result of the final product, liters of pisco, is higher. A comparison was made of 35,000 liters of pisco in the current situation and 46,666 liters in the simulated situation during 3 months of production, showing an improvement from 8.3% to 11.1%.

In reference to the implementation of the 5s tool, which was carried out through instructions and training plans. The operator has been able to evaluate and identify problems related to order, cleanliness and organization (Vásquez, I et al., 2016). A daily work plan was developed, which consists of taking a tour of the plant at the beginning of the day and evaluating whether the operational areas present any problems. Secondly, make an action plan to adequately manage each of the “S”, the aspects to be evaluated and the different opportunities for improvement must be defined. Third, continuous monitoring predominates to ensure that implementation is going as planned.

## Discussion

According to Torres et al. (2021), after the incorporation of lean tools (TPM and 5S), it is possible to achieve improvements in production indicators and achieve long-term continuous process improvement. On one hand, regarding the TPM simulation, the eight pillars are influenced by the exposed KPIs, ensuring that all machines and equipment are in good condition, producing efficiently and with less waste.

On the one hand, regarding the project results, the current average productivity indicator is 0.088 liters/kg of grapes, while the average value from the simulation showed a value of 0.11 liters/kg of grapes, favoring the productivity of the pisco production process. On the other hand, according to Torres et al. (2021), based on results that have been obtained from the simulation on the fictitious representative winery. Those results have been validated with the simulation in the 10 real wineries, in which the simulated results were different among them (depending on the initial inventory level and the communication between processes basically) but in a similar range of improvement, a raw material reduction from 8% to 16%. This improvement related to the results obtained based on the use of Arena simulation software to achieve a higher yield of kilograms of grapes per liter of pisco, resulting in a better utilization of raw materials from 8.3% to 11.1%.

The case study from Nigeria presented by Amos et al. (2020), on the implementation of TPM in a beverage industry to reduce excessive downtime, supply failures, and low surplus capacity caused by one of the valves in the bottling machine. This resulted in a 50% increase in Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) in a 7-day trial period, with a trend towards achieving over 85% in overall equipment effectiveness if TPM was fully executed within a 4-week period. In contrast, the simulation results indicated a 4-week duration for this model, generating a 53.48% availability and improving MTBF and MTTR indicators by 54.87% and 22.58% respectively.

The case study presented by Burawat (2016) on improving delivery times for a small bottled water company

details the positive impacts of eliminating and optimizing processes that do not add value due to excess order waste. Achieving a 31.30% improvement through the implementation of 5S, a plan for cleaning, documentation, and labeling. Under this same approach, the implementation of the tool managed to increase the efficiency of all personnel by 15%. Additionally, regarding the results obtained in this research, the redesign of workstations and the implementation of the checklist were two fundamental elements for improvement in terms of standardization, order, and cleanliness, reducing a quarter of the time spent on executing daily tasks.

## Conclusion

After implementing the TPM tool, the company has been able to optimize its processes by properly managing the preventive maintenance schedule. Which has made operators better organized in the weekly work plan. Regarding the results obtained, availability increased and managed to exceed the set goal, positively impacting the optimization of resources, time and money. The results are reflected in the proposed indicators, where the number of stoppages was reduced by 53.48%, and the time between each failure increased to an interval of 3 days with 7 hours of shift. The application of the 5s tool in the pisco company, under the execution of the checklist and continuous training, succeeded in increasing efficiency in processes as well as ensuring a clean and organized work environment, fostering a positive work atmosphere and enhancing employee performance. Finally, the average value from the simulation showed a value of 0.11 liters/kg of grapes, favoring the productivity of the pisco production process and based on the use of Arena simulation software, a higher yield of kilograms of grapes per liter of pisco was achieved, resulting in a better utilization of raw materials from 8.3% to 11.1%.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the company implement a program aimed at workers called “Factory of Ideas”, where operators will be able to provide improvement proposals to streamline and make profitable the processes carried out in the plant. With this initiative, each operator will be able to contribute, based on their experience, those initiatives that they consider important to improve productivity, since they are the ones in the operation and mainly know the causes that fail to maximize efficiency. The worker who obtains the best proposal is awarded a financial bonus.

It is important to train people involved in supply chain management courses, since it is necessary for suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers to understand the bullwhip effect that entails if all actors are not evaluated and considered equally. Although each one is concerned about achieving their objective, if the other stakeholders are affected it can end up harming the area and causing the chain to cease to be sustainable over time. While the company is providing a good level of customer service, it has been shown that it can save on staff costs, operational efficiency and productivity if it aims to go beyond the daily routine.

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## Significance of EST Text Selection in an Online Learning Environment at Universities


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**Abstract:** One of the most notable developments in English language pedagogy is the teaching of English for Science and Technology (EST). This includes providing language learners of various scientific fields with their specific language needs. This study was conducted as a component of a pilot study on qualitative data collection into the reading of EST materials that focuses on the problems and significance of EST materials for university students. Data were collected among 30 students enrolled in various Engineering courses in a public university in Malaysia. From the sample, 12 students were purposively selected to take part in the focus group interviews. Data were collected through focus group interviews that were analyzed descriptively and thematically using SPSS and NVivo respectively. The findings revealed that, firstly, students suffer from language deficiency due to insufficient linguistic knowledge and language exposure. Their major problems included vocabulary, grammatical structures, and terminologies specific to the reading texts. Secondly, the findings revealed the importance of text selection of EST materials as students were able to relate the content posted on an online teaching platform known as Interactive reading of Academic Disciplines (iREAD) with background knowledge of Science and Technology to fully understand what they read. This implied that Schema Theory plays a vital role in understanding the information by retrieving and applying previous knowledge. Thirdly, the significance of EST text selection strengthened students' knowledge of their content course as students were able to enhance their cognitive thinking, synthesize knowledge, and achieve freedom of expression. An implication that can be drawn from this study is the need to integrate specific text selection based on the subject matter for learners to be exposed to materials related to their field of study.

**Keywords:** English for science and technology, Online reading, EST text materials

**Citation:** Fatima, S., Azmuddin, R. A., & Kassim, A. (2024). Significance of EST Text Selection in Online Learning Environment at Universities. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1426-1441), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

English is regarded as a bridging language of economy, international business, science & technology. It has been continuously developing as the prime means of communication in science and technology and has eventually gained a major importance over other languages. Undoubtedly, English is consequential for the students' professional and academic success, mainly for university students as a major part of their field of specialization materials are written in English. In language learning, reading is regarded as a basic skill to gain information, explore knowledge and broaden the academic scope. Reading comprises a notable source of linguistic input and reading texts are crucial tool of information (Azeroul 2013; John & Davies 1983) for ESP & EST students. For this reason, there has been an apparent need to promote the learner's competence in the reading skills (Azeroul 2013).

To fulfil the demands for human resources in Science and Technology (S & T), Malaysia has progressed towards an inventive and researched based economy. Universities in Malaysia are now conducting courses in English for scientific courses like medicine and engineering (Siew-Eng and Muuk 2015). The plans and policies of the government have integrated English and S & T. The Malaysian government has intensified its efforts to enhance the availability of skilled human resources in S&T to increase its international competitiveness. According to the national policy on Science, Technology, and Innovation (Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation, 2016), society needs to be a contributing factor for the future development of science & technology and meet the innovative needs of the growing scientific and progressive society. Hence, science literacy is an overarching goal in becoming a developed nation.

According to Samsiah (2011) there are three main assumptions held by the government as to why the capability and capacity of the nation's S & T must be enhanced. Firstly, students would be able to understand English scientific concepts as they advance in the journey of education when they are exposed to scientific English at an early stage. This will lead to improved English proficiency. Secondly, to provide S&T manpower and enhance the country's endeavors in research and development, the success of S & T programs at the tertiary level is important. Finally, to ensure local S & T professionals can read and keep abreast with the latest innovations in S & T, students need to be independent readers to read books, academic journals, and internet postings in English.

In particular, science students need to interact with multiple scientific information resources available online by reading scientific topics and scientific data related to their fields.(Tsai, Hsu et al. 2012). Various factors such as lack of vocabulary, difficult reading materials and poor language proficiency are said to be contributing factors to the reading problems faced by tertiary level students in Malaysia (Faizah, Zalizan et al. 2002, Wong Bee and Mardziah Hayati 2003, Nambiar 2007). For example, Thang and Bidmeshki (2010) discovered that students from Science and Technology degree programs at a local university in Malaysia claimed to have difficulties reading English academic texts, not only in understanding the main ideas but also in comprehending sentence structures. However, such difficulties could be overcome when students are taught how to utilize new

technology to manage their skills through online courses that teach them to become self-directed learners (Fard, Hazita et al. 2014). In addition, not only the students read online but they also face challenges in reading EST online materials. Hence, this study aims to:

investigate the reading problems faced by students when reading English for Science and Technology online materials.

investigate the significance of using English for Science and Technology materials in an academic online reading environment.

To strengthen the background knowledge of the students, it is important to give them exposure to EST materials. This in turn becomes applicable to their specific field of study. According to Ruhil Amal et al. (2020), when students are exposed to online information of EST materials, their language and EST knowledge proficiency improves. This new knowledge is also significant in their academic fields of study. Students may find ESP texts difficult to understand when they deal with ESP texts in their second language. This is due to the fact that the technical terminologies which are used in ESP texts are rather challenging, specifically if English is the students' second language. This is why, it is a significant criterion in text selection for ESP that is must relate to S&T students and expose them to various EST materials online.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Discussion**

Schema theory is based on acquired knowledge gained from past experiences. Schemata are stored in a person's memory based on the existing knowledge or the concepts of the world in various fields. (Anderson and Pearson 1984). A world concept is known as background knowledge that includes discourse schemata and linguistics. Established on this theory, recall and comprehension are dependent on the background knowledge of the reader and how it is matched to textual data. This becomes significant in the current study as students consistently read materials which are related to their academic field of study. Schema Theory posits that reading is a process in which readers are active and constructive. They are required to understand the information by retrieving and applying their previous knowledge. Readers must be able to relate their knowledge with the content of the text to fully understand what they read (Carrell and Eisterhold 1988). In the current study, for example, relating EST to student's background knowledge on S & T based on their field of study was significant.

#### *English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Model*

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) hypothesized ESP as having absolute and variable characteristics. Absolute characteristics consist of

- 1) ESP meets the specific needs of the learners



- 2) ESP emphasizes methodology and activities in various fields it serves
- 3) ESP is based on the language, skills, genre, and discourse appropriate to the given activities.

EST is a subcategory of ESP, and it shares few basic components with the discipline of ESP. Its focus is on practical and beneficial learning of English. The interactive needs of the students is the prime consideration of curriculum design. EST is related to the oral and written discussion of the language for occupational, professional, academic or vocational needs. It primarily deals with students at the tertiary level and takes on the responsibility for their particular needs in work, study and research (Rao 2014). To be specific, these ESP courses or programmes can be used to aid engineering students in skilled communication at their work place which includes writing skills, reading skills and conversation skills (or more particularly, speaking and listening skills). An engineer's prerequisites for work on the writing and reading part can fall into any of the following four categories: visual/figure, procedural, informational and report tasks (Rao 2014).

According to Langan (2010), unlike general English materials that do not have scientific or technical terminology. Science and technology text can be very challenging to read not only for ESL students but also for native speakers of English as it is written for experts and native speakers in the field. In addition, Langan (2010) and Harrison (2004) asserted that readers use different reading strategies to read scientific texts compared to other genres such as social sciences and business. This is supported by Ho, Tsai et al. (2014), who agreed that the features of web-based scientific reading can be rather challenging. These challenges include the perplexing concept and syntax of science and the abstract layout of the scientific information. This leads to students finding it difficult to accurately read scientific texts (Schiltz, Frederickx et al. 2017). Reading these types of texts is extremely demanding, especially for ESL students who learn S&T abstract concepts at a progressive level in their second language.

#### *English for Science & Technology*

EST is different in nature and characteristics from other forms of written English (Thanasoonotornerk 2004; Trimble 1985). EST refers to English text for academic, occupational and professional reasons which includes commercial journals in S&T materials for employees, for instance, industrial companies. Presenting facts, theories and other comparable types of information are the main priorities of EST texts. According to Thanasoonotornerk (2004). EST rhetoric can be defined as the writing method and information arrangement used by an author in a text. It is one of the factors that affect readers' comprehension. Text determination is determined by the aim and specific readers.

#### *Difficulties in Reading EST Materials:*

Reading comprehension has been identified as one of the major issues that most of the foreign language students deal with. In fact, students at the college level, who have pursued English as a subject for a long time still experience in comprehending English text, particularly in the explanatory style (Thanasoonotornerk 2004). Higher proficiency in a foreign language is required particularly when reading for academic validation such as

in technology and science (Thanasootornrerk 2004). Along with the ability to understand sentences or words, the understanding of a specific topic, reading strategies, text structure and sub-technical vocabulary arrangement are also required in reading comprehension of technology and science texts (Thanasootornrerk 2004; Trimble, 1985).

Many EFL students have difficulties in understanding EST texts. Linguists claim that teaching scientific documents only through grammar and vocabulary is insufficient (Durongphan 1981; Thanasootornrerk 2004). Marshall and Gilmour investigated the difficulties of Papua New Guinea students in the comprehension of EST texts. According to their research, students have issues with lexical knowledge in EST which includes sub-technical vocabulary, and this is referred as the term that explains relationship between fundamental scientific concepts (Thanasootornrerk 2004).

Kavaliauskienė (2002) researched learners' opinions about their goals and requirements for learning EST in universities. Data were collected using a variety of questionnaires and the finding indicated that almost three-fourths of the students struggled with tenses, prepositions and ESP vocabulary. Nearly two-third of the students do not believe that EST reading is simple.

#### *Significance of Text Selection*

Reading texts are considered the commonest teaching material in language learning lectures (Tomlinson, Burns et al. 2001; Mohammed, Aljaberi et al. 2022). On the other hand, using improper material can cause students to lose their skills (Charalambous, 2011). Therefore, the analysis of a text is important to determine the significance of resources for instructional design (Lee 2013).

Previous research (e.g. Abdualameer 2016; Herbert 2016; Pyle 2017; Sidek 2012) has demonstrated the beneficial impact of text structure teaching on learner's reading proficiency level. It was suggested by Abdualameer (2016) that the English language curriculum's syllabus should place special emphasis on instructing students on reading methods for various reading texts and reading comprehension. As a result, instructing students on these methods will develop their proficiency in reading texts. Hebert et al. (2016) found that text structure instruction improves the students' comprehension level while reading expository texts like, textbooks, informative websites, self-help books, and science books.

Reading text and activities selection is significant as students will be able to retain information if EST materials provide students with the background knowledge that in turn will fulfill the academic needs of students. For instance, understanding complicated topics by using videos. It was stated by Ruhil Amal et al. (2020) that the use of visual platforms was highly efficient in teaching concepts. This increases analytical thinking and enhances understanding. The discussion of Taiwanese teachers on material development at the higher level i.e university level for EST classes has been documented by Thanasootornrerk (2004). The author surmises that it is necessary for teachers to use EST materials as sources of data with an array of skill, activities, tasks and texts

and choose what is suitable and is adaptable for their students. At the same time, the integration of topic based approach, selection of appropriate materials designed or chosen to enhance student's comprehension level, concept oriented materials and skills approach is recommended to learn EST.

#### *Significance of Online EST Material:*

Typically, EST reading materials contain challenging technical content, therefore it is certainly a barrier for ESL readers to engage with scientific texts with their specific characteristics (Abdul Hamid 2012). For example, ESL learners who are trying to comprehend abstract concepts at a higher level might find it harder to understand due to its perplexing structure. According to Kalpana (2017), these students have two significant difficulties, the language and the content. Therefore, in order to aid ESL students, comprehend EST materials, English language teachers adopt a variety of pedagogical strategies, including the use of technology. It is currently the most effective device for this use. Technology has been found to be beneficial in assisting and facilitating ESL students to read EST resources online in many ways (Ruhil Amal et al. 2020). Learners can enhance their capabilities of identifying technical words, grasp definitions, link senses to a core meaning and learn word parts with the aid of appropriate materials and techniques (Rao 2014). Abdul Hamid states that since scientific texts consist of EST'S unique syntactic and narrative characteristics for science and technical areas, readers of the texts must be both linguistically competent in the language and knowledgeable about the specific scientific concepts that are reiterated in the text. In order to aid students' better understanding of the engineering-related text, technological tools should be used along with EST materials (Kim 2013)

## **Methodology**

The primary goal of this pilot study was to gather qualitative data prior to the main study to anticipate potential future issues that might arise during the main data collection. Data collection focuses on reading problems and the significance of EST materials in an academic online environment for ESL university students. All the students were utilizing iREAD, an online platform tailored for reading purposes. Additionally, it was intended to improve the process of gathering data and to improve research questions for interviewees.

## **Participants**

The research employed a purposeful sampling technique to acquire abundant data. Purposeful sampling is the intentional choice of a sample to investigate the primary concept under study (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Out of 614 students enrolled in English for Technical Communication across a range of Science and Technology courses, a sample of 30 students was chosen. However, only a group of 12 students were chosen to participate in the gathering of qualitative data collection. The proportion of male and female students in the 21–23 age range was equal. Every student was enrolled in the same level 2 English course offered by the institution. A consent form was given to each student who participated in the study.

### *Instruments*

**Semi-structured interview protocols** were used to support the data gained from the focus group interview (FGI). A series of questions was created based on a similar study by Chen et al. (2009) that investigated reading problems and strategies faced by students in reading online materials for academic purposes. The same aspects were investigated in the current study. Hence, the questions were reorganized and used for the current study that investigated the reading problems faced by university students when reading EST academic texts online.

**Focus Group Interview Protocols** were one of the instruments utilized to collect data to gather a collective understanding that focused on the issue under study. The focus was to identify a shared understanding of the significance of text selection for reading EST online academic materials. Text selection was one of the important elements of this study. Based on the university's curriculum the texts were selected from English for Technical Communication (ETC), which is a compulsory Level 2 course taken by the students.

### *Data Collection*

Two data collection sessions were held throughout a 14-week academic cycle, in Week 2 and Week 4. Week 2 was chosen as students could settle in the first week and week 4 for chosen to give a week's break between 2 cycles of data collection. In Week 2, each student responded to a series of questions on the difficulties or problems they encountered when reading EST materials online. In Week 4, the students were involved in FGI where the interviews took place at the participants' selected time and location. During this stage, the objective was to obtain a shared understanding of the importance and significance of EST text selection in an online environment. All twelve participants completed the consent forms and gave their approval to participate in the study. Additionally, it was decided that to maintain secrecy, pseudonyms would be employed throughout the research.

### *Data Analysis*

The six processes outlined by Creswell (2014) for data analysis—data preparation and organisation, coding exploration, theme creation, narrative representation of themes, interpretation of findings, and validation of findings—were applied to the analysis of the semi-structured interviews as well as FGI data. Based on the established themes, data were verified using Cohen Kappa inter-rater reliability analysis. The calculation produced a K value of 0.7, indicating a strong agreement and a high degree of trustworthiness for the data analysis

### *Problems in Reading EST Online Materials*

One of the major themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews to answer the research question 1

was semantic challenges. This refers to a number of issues such as the use of difficult words, unfamiliar terminologies, and grammatical structures. Example 1 highlights interview excerpts gained from the semi-structure interviews intended to understand the problems students faced while reading EST online materials.

Example 1:

Sub-themes	Interview Excerpts
Difficult words	<p>I cannot understand if the article use bombastic word, somethings that is hard to understand and when I read it, I do not want to open the dictionary (Omar).</p> <p>I have some difficulty in some English vocabulary I do not understand (Amin).</p> <p>Ummm, problems. There will be some words, which is too deep for my level so I have to refer the meaning (Kaden).</p> <p>Mostly meaning of some words that difficult to understand maybe because the level is high for me (Will).</p>
Unfamiliar terminologies	<p>Sometimes it contains the terms that we don't understand actually. Especially from the...like the medical field things, the medical terms (Tini)</p> <p>Generally, I think there is difficult terms that are difficult to understand. (Ida)</p>
Grammatical structures	<p>Sometimes the article have the high level language that I do not understand (Fatin)</p> <p>Some grammar maybe I do not know to understand what is inside the articles (Cindy)</p>

According to Omar, Amin, Kaden, and Will, the use of certain English words made it difficult for students to understand the content of the EST online materials they read. This finding is consistent with Eghlidi, Abdorrahimzadeh et al. (2014), who found vocabulary to be the most difficult problem for students in understanding online materials. Similarly, the terminologies used in these reading materials can also be a problem for students. As elaborated by Tini, and Ida, when they are faced with these terms it makes it difficult for them to comprehend the text. However, according to Azeroual (2013) a big portion of these semantic challenges are caused by language deficiencies that can be overcome through linguistic knowledge. Students need to acquire sufficient linguistic knowledge as it generates meaning of the text by constructing mental representations.

It is believed that students tend to skip the website or the online reading material if the jargon or language was too difficult for them to understand (Nurul Adila, Maslawati et al. 2017).

Overall, students found word choice, terminologies, and grammatical structures to be the main reasons problems they face in understanding EST online materials. This is because reading EST online materials can be rather challenging due to its perplexing structure and abstract nature of presentation (Ho, Tsai et al. 2014). This is especially problematic for S & T students who are learning abstract concepts at a more advanced level in their SL. Hence, students need to have exposure to features that provide detailed information or explanation to understand the text better to achieve learner accomplishment and interest in learning (Hamdan, 2017). In

summary, majority of the students identified semantic challenges to be the biggest problem in reading online EST academic texts.

### *Significance of EST Online Reading Materials*

Several themes emerged for the significance of EST online reading materials selection. They consist of: 1) the discovery of other methods through comparison and contrasts, 2) freedom of expression in technical writing, and 3) the ability to explain complicated scientific knowledge. Based on the focus group interviews, students believe that there is a need to select EST materials for them to work with to identify, distinguish, and compare between the different types of texts that they were reading online. For example, introducing students to more technical materials such as processes and technical descriptions. When they were introduced to these types of materials, they were able to make comparisons between descriptions. Based on the first theme, it was easier to understand these technical materials because they were introduced through other mediums such as watching videos.

### *Discovery of Other Methods Through Comparison and Contrast*

When students were able to compare and contrast the EST materials, they discovered that comprehension was attained through other mediums or methods such as viewing videos. Students managed to understand the difference between directional processes and informational processes by watching two videos that described these processes. Example 2 illustrates this:

Pseudonyms	Interview excerpts
Gina	I feel like, that I learnt about there are actually many different ways to do, to explain about the procedure of something just like the video shown. One is more on graphic and simple word, simple instructions to teach you how to do a red velvet cake, the other one will be more informative. It is more sounds and wording.
Rowena	From this activity, it is actually easier to compare between how to and what to, like one is instructional and the other one is informational. So, if describing through words, it might be harder to understand but if we do something practical, it is easier for us to understand
Gerard	In both the washing machine and rearranging of the volcano process materials, it shows a quite different way of delivering and explaining information but however they do show similarities where the information delivered are clear and easy to be understand
Tim	The cake, I think is like, it did not explain much about how to do, it just show the steps and then for the rice one, it gives more information and if compare to the video about the cake one. Means that the second video may have more information if compare to the first video

According to Gina, and Rowena, the EST video provided descriptions that were more graphical and included

sounds. To these students, it was easier to comprehend the materials as the videos provided better understanding. Hence, exposure to such EST online materials via other methods such as videos enables students to make comparisons of the types of processes. Students also believe that by viewing these two videos, they gained a clearer picture of the differences because of the visual impact. This corroborates Chou and Hsiao (2010) claim that visual scaffolds assist students to sustain more information. This notion was portrayed when students were able to critically examine the delivery of the different types of processes by providing examples.

In addition, Gerard concluded that both videos provided a visual impact as the delivery of information was compared and provided. Supported by Liu, Jang et al. (2018), using video clips that feature audio and graphics, would be a more efficient way in teaching a concept compared to using a picture book. Similarly, Tim believes that the video on the process of ‘how rice is grown’ was provided with more information, whereas the process of making a red velvet cake was just provided with steps. This indicated that he did not merely understand the processes involved but was able to make comparisons. He was able to elaborate on the differences between how the two processes were different in the videos by providing justifications. This indicates that learning with the use of video clips becomes more meaningful when comprehension is achieved. The discovery of other methods through compare and contrast assisted students in understanding EST online materials. Hence, this indicates a consistency of data whereby the use of technological tools assists students in learning when combined with the use of EST online materials using other methods that provide visual impact (i.e videos).

*Freedom of Expression in Technical Writing*

Another important significance in introducing EST online reading materials is that it allows the freedom of expression for students in their technical writing. Students believe that it gave them the ability to elaborate on ideas introduced to them. Example 3 depicts this point:

Student	Interview excerpt
Henri	For me, from this activity, I know how to express my word, express myself in writing.
Vicky	For the process explanation, it teaches us how to become expressive.
Shah	I can write it in my essay with my own words, my own creativity. Based on the passage and supporting details
Elisa	For me, first when I read all these science and technology hypertext, not only we first using skim and scan first and like those find the definition of the words, the phases, we mean we can annotate it and explain in our own ways, so that when we are answering the question, we can easily define in our own ways, so that the markers will really understand what we are understanding, not just copy and paste from the passage
Gina	For me, like this IREAD activities, it will help me in writing because for example for my Engineering in Society subject, the lecturer ask us to find a video online and then to write about like the disasters that made by the careless engineer. So we need to look through the



	whole video and then need to write the essay on our own. The essay is about 2-3 pages, is around 700-1000 words. So for the activities, I will learn how to describe in my own through the video
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Example 3 illustrates five students' expressions indicating the need to be expressive in their writing of EST online materials because developing creativity and explaining terminologies on their own would lead to better comprehension. This will ultimately assist in the writing process.

For example, Gina believes that the EST online materials introduced in iREAD provided knowledge, understanding, and skills in the current Engineering in Society subject taken. She believes it assisted in technical writing in a more organized manner and tapped into his schemata to complete the assignment. In summary, students believe that EST online materials introduced to them in iREAD gave them the freedom of expression in technical writing for both their English subject as well as Engineering subjects. This provided students with the ability to synthesize ideas and write from understanding instead of copying and pasting ideas from the passage. Hence, encouraging creative and critical thinking among students.

#### *Ability to Explain Complicated Scientific Knowledge*

The ability to explain complicated scientific knowledge is an important skill for learners because students deal with EST materials regularly. In Example 4, Gary elaborates in detail what this is meant.

STUDENT	INTERVIEW EXCERPTS
Gary	As a Science student, process explanation is an important element for us in order to deliver information especially regarding to scientific knowledge and information which are complicated most of the time. Through these activities, we are able to analyse and learn the way of explaining a certain process or object in a simpler way. For example, photosynthesis process for plant which involved numerous steps can be explain by arranging the steps like what the volcano process. This eventually makes a complex process to be understand easily.
Sam	I can improve my writing skills. For example, the chocolate making passage, before I only know roasting process. Then now I learn something new is winnowing process, which is removing the nutshell of cocoa bean. I can know it in detail how chocolates are made
Edwin	I learnt some of the key words especially is mainly used in Science and Technology field and how those names of the process is quite important such as welding, and so on. The key word is important because the key words might lead to further understanding and more easy to define the process.
Victoria	First, what I learn in technical text is terminology. Example the magnetic field in compass text. I also learn how to summarize videos in my own words.

Example 4 shows that Gary believes that with such scientific knowledge, other subjects in his academic field will be easily understood because he learned it in English subject. The English subject introduced S & T terminologies that became the basis or foundation for other S & T related subjects relevant to their academic field. It provides them with background knowledge in the related topics. Hence, it is significant to select ESP materials based on S & T references to fulfill learners' needs (Kim, 2013).

They were able to understand processes and identify S & T keywords and terminologies. These interview excerpts reflect students' beliefs in their ability to describe, elaborate, and explain complicated scientific knowledge because of their exposure to scientific activities and materials in iREAD.

## Conclusion

Two conclusions can be drawn from the findings on reading problems faced by students in reading online academic EST materials. Firstly, students lack linguistic knowledge of the language which leads to language deficiency. This evidence suggests students' lack of exposure to general English (grammar and vocabulary) that is reinforced through EST. This finding is consistent with studies that found vocabulary, grammatical structures, and insufficient exposure to domain-specific text (i.e. S & T) to be the biggest problems for ESL and EFL students in understanding online materials (Pookcharoen 2009, Eghlidi, Abdorrahimzadeh et al. 2014, Nurul Adila, Maslawati et al. 2017).

Secondly, a lack of background knowledge of scientific information can become rather challenging due to its structure and distinct features. The role of prior knowledge plays an important feature in learning as it contributes to comprehension of grammar, vocabulary, and content of EST. The findings support the belief that reading such abstract knowledge in the SL involves learners' background knowledge and experience. The findings indicate that Schema Theory (Carell & Eisterhold, 1988) is associated with relating the content of the text in iREAD with their knowledge of S & T to fully understand what they read. Hence, Schema Theory plays a role in acquiring knowledge in an online environment because reading is considered an active process where readers create understanding of the information based on retrieving and applying previous knowledge. For example, exposure to EST materials such as description of processes would strengthen student's background knowledge. In a way, the students gathered and synthesized knowledge from an array of resources by exercising their cognitive ability to reach an understanding of the said phrase, information or concept (Park, Yang et al. 2014). In turn, this knowledge will guide and equip students in other subjects they are undertaking during the course of their study.

Findings from the current study indicate positive and encouraging responses regarding the use of online materials and activities in iREAD. Students were able to reflect on the materials and activities in iREAD. They were also able to discover other methods through comparison and contrast. This was attained through watching videos of complicated EST materials. Students were also able to achieve freedom of expression in technical

writing that allowed them to tap into their schemata for other Engineering subjects. The EST online materials also enabled them to identify and understand processes. In addition, the findings indicated that students were able to enhance their cognitive thinking by relating to background knowledge that is associated with S & T based on their field of study. The notion of Schema Theory (Carrell, 1988) is clearly reflected here as students explore new knowledge or information based on previous experiences.

## Recommendations

Since reading takes place in all subject areas, a greater focus on ESP should be advantageous for students because the materials are relevant to their academic fields. This encourages critical thinking as they are exposed to English language materials that have S & T content and exhibit the distinctive features of S & T for them to be motivated to learn. This begins with educators recognizing the differences in the materials. For example, science content differs to that of history. Teaching students syntactic and discourse features that are generally used in the language of S & T will help students approach texts with different perspectives. To help students achieve a better understanding of EST, adapting teaching methods for EST reading using stylistics should also be based on content.

## Acknowledgment

This research was supported by Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah Post-Graduate Research Scheme (PGRS) research ID: PGRS230338.

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## Enhancing the Supply Chain of a Company in the Peruvian Food Sector through Digital Transformation


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**Abstract:** The success of the supply chain is assessed through the efficiency and effectiveness of the innovative strategies that a company provides to its customers. Currently, companies face significant challenges in improving their service levels due to constant innovations in digitization. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of digitization and automation on the supply chain of a Peruvian fast-moving consumer goods company. Using a three-phase simulated design methodology with the involvement of relevant departments within the company, the goal was to analyze the impact of implementing new software to improve Fill Rate, a service level indicator used by the company. The main findings reveal a technical gap of 14.38%, and the objective of achieving 80% is expected to be met by the end of this year. Finally, this research serves as a starting point for further evaluation and analysis of the indicator's impact with the software in other areas. This will enable the investigation of new tools that are more aligned with the specific needs of each area to enhance its service level.

**Keywords:** Digitalization, Fill Rate, Supply Chain, Food Industry.

**Citation:** Cieza-Miraval, F.J., Llerena-Igreda, O.J., & Ruiz-Ruiz, M.F. (2024). Enhancing the supply chain of a company in the peruvian food sector through digital transformation. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1442-1451), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Digitalization has been a topic of great relevance in recent years for various economic sectors, including the Peruvian food sector. The implementation of digital technologies in the food supply chain can generate significant benefits for producers, distributors, and consumers. The use of technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), process automation, and data analytics, among others, is revolutionizing the food supply chain in the Peruvian sector and enabling greater efficiency and better real-time



decision-making.

Supply Chain (SC) refers to elements or activities that interact dynamically to form a system. Because the SC system is not integrated and decentralized, it makes its processes variable and complex (Furstenau et al., 2022). SC is defined as strategic assets, capabilities, and a source of competitive advantage where the integration of processes or activities can be evaluated to measure and optimize the performance of companies (Liu & Chiu, 2021). The SC must be flexible to respond to unexpected changes in customer needs and competitor movements. This flexibility needs to be directly related to digitization to simplify and optimize processes within the company with customers (Khalayleh et al., 2022).

SC in the food sector, from production to consumption, involves farmers, intermediaries, processors, exporters, distributors, and logistic services. In the production stage, farmers, fishermen, and ranchers generate raw materials. Intermediaries sell to processing or exporting clients, while the transformation of raw materials is carried out in more than 2,500 companies in the sector (Sociedad Nacional de Industrias, 2015). Exporters are responsible for selling internationally, and local distribution supplies various points of sale. Logistic services, such as transporters and customs, facilitate the efficient mobility of products. The end consumer completes the chain by acquiring products for consumption. This complex system reflects the collaboration among different actors in the Peruvian food sector.

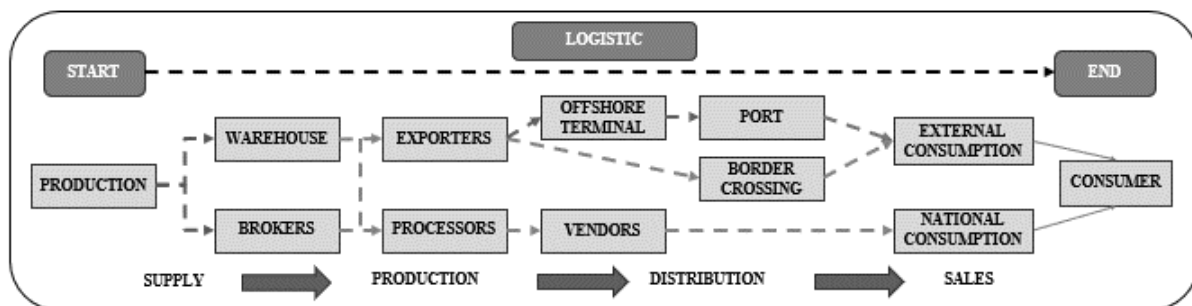


Figure 1. Supply chain of a fast-moving consumer goods company

On the other hand, the level of service and product quality are intrinsically related in a fast-moving consumer goods company. According to previous studies, a high level of service, which includes aspects such as product availability and timely delivery, is directly linked to consumers perception of quality (Jain & Singh, 2016). Likewise, product quality plays a fundamental role in customer satisfaction and in building brand loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 2019).

In relation to this, digital technologies, by transforming the dynamics of interaction between organizations and consumers, directly impact the structuring of processes, products, and services (Caputo et al., 2021). This profound change not only drives innovation in product offerings but also redefines the relationship between the company and the customer. The strategic implementation of these technologies in fast-moving consumer goods companies thus becomes a key pathway to staying at the forefront in a highly competitive and dynamic market. In this context, the present research focuses on the characterization, analysis, and projection of the digitization

of the supply chain for the Peruvian food sector. It is expected that the digitization of the supply chain will contribute to improving efficiency and transparency in the management of logistical processes, as well as enhancing quality, food safety, and level of service (Pintado, 2023).

### **Contextual Analysis**

The level of service in fast-moving consumer goods companies refers to the ability of a company to meet customer expectations in terms of product or service availability, quality, and delivery. In recent years, several studies have highlighted the importance of the level of service in the context of fast-moving consumer goods. Service level is a critical factor for customer retention in the fast-moving consumer goods industry (Samanta & Jain, 2021). The authors emphasize that companies must ensure products are readily available, as lack of availability can lead to customer loss and decreased customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the level of service is also linked to customer loyalty in mass consumption companies (Zhou et al., 2019). The authors found that a higher level of service correlates positively with customer loyalty and positive word of mouth. This suggests that companies that succeed in providing superior service can earn the trust and loyalty of customers, generating a positive impact on their customer base and business profitability.

The level of service and product quality are intrinsically linked in a mass consumption company. According to previous studies, a high level of service, which encompasses aspects such as product availability and timely delivery, is directly associated with consumers' perception of quality (Jain & Singh, 2016). Additionally, product quality plays a pivotal role in customer satisfaction and brand loyalty generation (Zeithaml et al., 2019). Therefore, a mass consumption company that succeeds in providing excellent service and high-quality products is more likely to garner consumer preference and build enduring relationships with them.

In the present research work, the indicators of a leading company in the food and consumer products sector in Latin America will be analyzed. Headquartered in Peru, the company is engaged in the manufacturing and marketing of a wide range of products spanning categories such as food, personal care, home care, and animal nutrition. It has a strong presence in various countries in the region and is recognized for its quality, innovation, and commitment to sustainability.

However, the lack of digitalization in the field of logistics poses a challenge impacting the planning and monitoring of supply chains and trade and transportation corridors in Peru. It has been suggested that establishing a Logistics Observatory could be a valuable solution to address this issue, as its primary function would be to monitor and assess progress in improving supply chains (World Bank, 2016).

The quantitative analysis of evidence regarding the causal factors contributing to the low level of service in mass consumption companies, due to a lack of digitalization or appropriate technologies, underscores the importance of examining organizational operational records and indicators. By relying on concrete data such as

average delivery time, customer satisfaction index, and operational costs, a precise quantitative insight into the direct and indirect reasons behind the problem was obtained.

The analysis of operational records revealed that manual and outdated processes, such as inventory and order management, generate inefficiencies and service delays. Quantitative data demonstrated that inefficient communication among different departments and stakeholders within the supply chain hampers the ability to respond rapidly and cohesively to customer needs. Furthermore, it was observed that the absence of automated systems and data analytics tools results in delays, errors, and an inability to identify improvement opportunities.

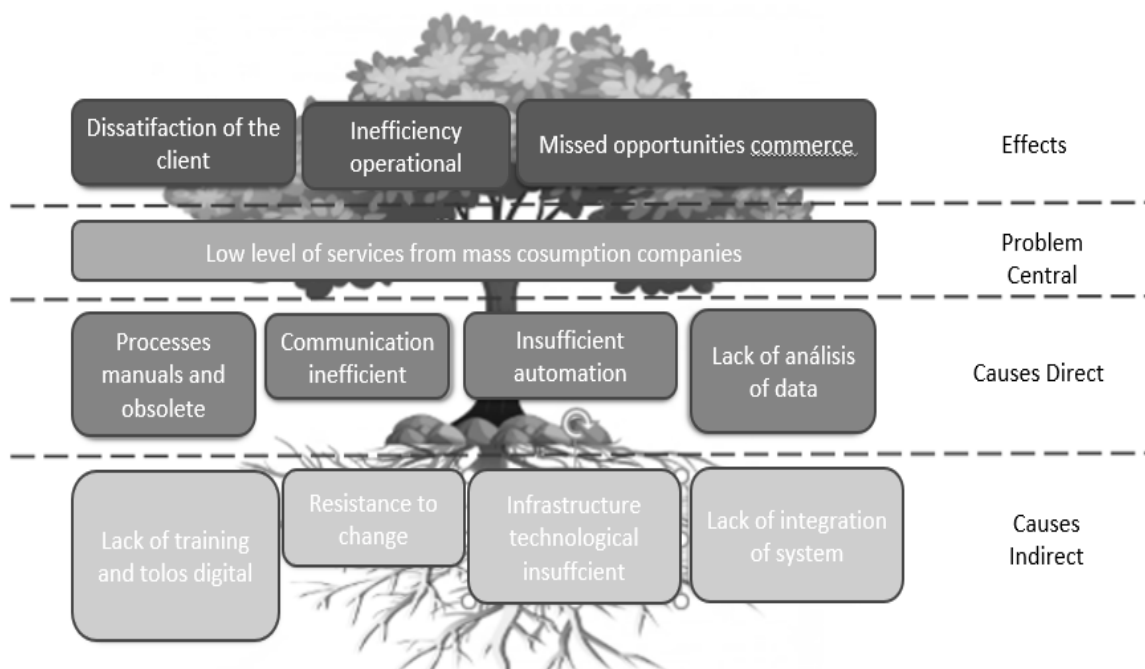


Figure 2. Root cause tree of low service levels in mass consumption companies

## Method

Firstly, an initial diagnosis is conducted through interviews with sector experts to gather relevant data. This pre-test enables an understanding of the current situation of the supply chain and the specific challenges the company faces. The primary technique employed is the SIPOC tool, which aids in data analysis to identify the main factors of the process where improvement will be applied.

Next, the proposal is designed using the TPI technique (Transactional Process Improvement). Additionally, within this method, the tool to be utilized will be the Arena software. Through simulation, various scenarios and strategies can be identified and evaluated to optimize the supply chain. This encompasses the implementation of digital solutions, such as inventory management systems and real-time tracking. Below, we present the simulation model that we used to demonstrate an improvement through digitization (Figure 3).

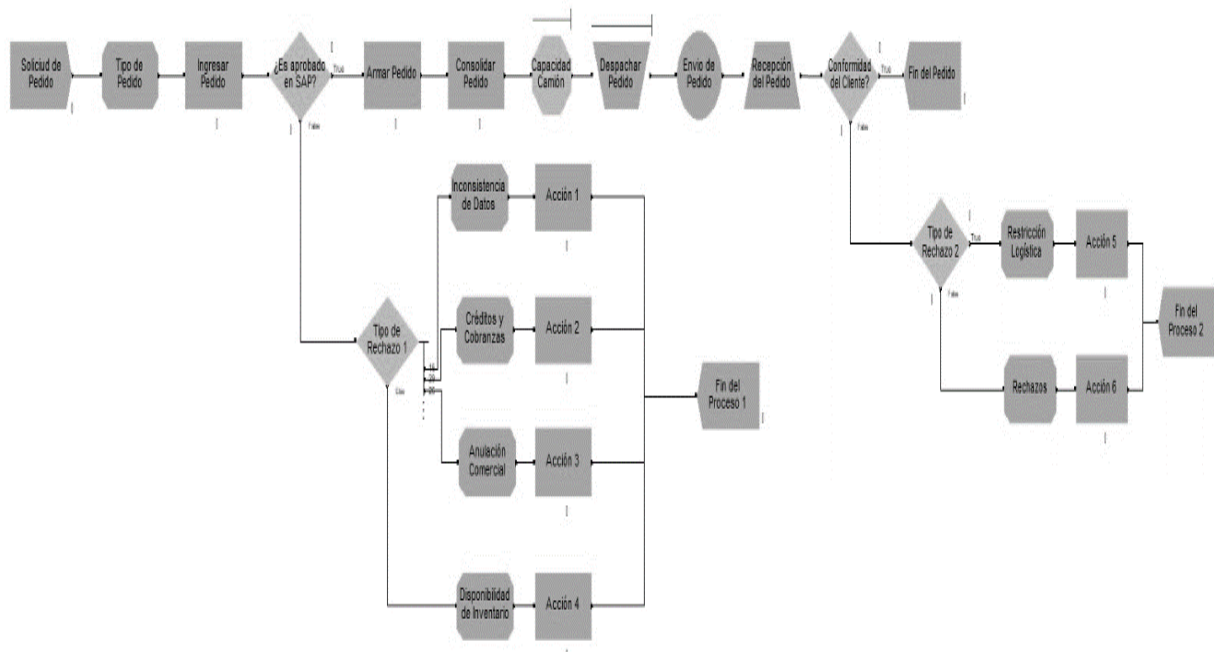


Figure 3. Simulation model in Arena

Once the proposal is designed, results validation is conducted in a post-test. Strategies before and after implementation are compared, analyzing the impacts on reducing the service level gap. Furthermore, the obtained data is analyzed to measure the success of digitalization in improving the supply chain.

Table 1. Design of the proposal model

Stages (components)	Techniques/Tools	Validation
Initial diagnosis (pre-test)	Expert interviews	Triangulation with company
	Document review	personnel and experts
	SIPOC	Process confirmation with the company
Design and simulation of the proposal	Transactional Process	
	Improvement (TPI)	Analysis of statistical criteria
	Arena Simulator	Impact matrix
	Software v16.2	
Result Validation (post-test)	Comparative KPI matrix	Methodological confirmation
	Data analysis	with experts
	Interviews	

In the initial stage of diagnosis, a comprehensive review of academic articles and relevant studies on improving the service level in mass consumption companies is conducted. This review facilitated the acquisition of a solid foundation of theoretical knowledge and best practices in the field, offering a deeper understanding of the subject and guiding the focus of the diagnosis on the specific company.

If any discrepancy or inconsistency was identified in the collected information, additional verifications were conducted to ensure precise and reliable data. In the event that the information was deemed correct and reliable, specific problems and challenges affecting the service level in the company were then identified.

In the subsequent stage, the entire process was grounded in the application of the Transactional Process Improvement (TPI) technique, which is utilized to enhance the efficiency of business operations. This technique focuses on identifying and eliminating waste in the information flows that occur during transactional processes.

By applying this technique, a thorough analysis of existing information flows is conducted, areas or processes with greater improvement opportunities are identified, and changes and adjustments are implemented based on findings and identified best practices. This includes streamlining information flows, automating repetitive tasks, and optimizing information systems used in transactional processes.

In the final phase of the process, it commences with the creation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to compare the results obtained in the second stage of the project. As a result of this analysis, a comparative matrix is generated to visualize and evaluate the collected data.

## Results

The company employs a primary indicator to measure the consolidated service level across its various areas, known as Fill Rate. This indicator can be viewed at the SKU level, distribution center, or distribution channel, providing a straightforward means to assess the performance of different organizational links concerning the service delivered to customers. The calculation of this indicator is as follows.

$$FR = \frac{\text{Invoiced orders}}{\text{Orders requested}}$$

The company utilizes rejection levels to categorize and assess the reasons behind the non-fulfillment of orders. In this research, we focus on three fundamental areas of the system (sales, distribution, and planning) that experience significant impacts due to various forms of rejection. Below, we present a detailed classification of rejection types within these three areas and their subdivision by type of rejection (table 2).

Table 2. Types of rejection

Area	General rejection type	Specific type of rejection
Commercial	Data inconsistency	Chain price difference
		Discontinued product
		Business decision
	Accounts receivable and collections	Credit rejection

	Commercial cancellation	Order error
	Logistic constraint	The customer did not pick up the order
Distribution	Rejections	Product lifespan
		Late delivery
	Logistic constraint	Unfulfilled order
Planning	Inventory availability	Out of stock
		Machine and equipment issues

Below is a table presenting an As-Is - To-Be comparison of the measurements made in the simulation based on the type of rejection (Table 3).

Table 3. As-Is vs. To-Be

	As – Is	To - be
<b>Fill Rate</b>	75.5%	86.4%
Level 1 reasons for rejection	24.5%	13.6%
Data inconsistency	4.7%	2.6%
Credit and collection	3.9%	2.2%
Commercial cancellation	4.4%	2.4%
Inventory availability	4.7%	2.6%
Logistical constraint	5.4%	3.0%
Rejections	1.5%	0.8%

## Discussion

Regarding the obtained results, Fill Rate did not reach the proposed goal in the research, although an improvement of 11.04% was achieved compared to the previous year's results. In this regard, the adoption of the new SAP Leonardo software has generated a considerable impact, as revealed by the simulation results. These data not only provide promising figures but also ensure a better positioning against competitors. The implementation of this technology places our company in an advantageous position within the context of Industry 4.0, consolidating it as an innovative entity adapted to the demands of the current market.

Additionally, the company continues to constantly investigate ways to enhance its systems and how to apply them in its processes. Furthermore, through potential improvement initiative tests, the company is investing in training its employees to be prepared for the new digitization systems. Moreover, the implementation of the new SAP Leonardo software has contributed to improving the company's traceability, both internally and in relation to its customers.

Digitalization, supported by technological advancements and substantial investment in modern technology, has

become an essential pillar for improving supply chain in the food industry (Khalayleh et al., 2022). This enhances the competitiveness of companies, enabling them to adapt to changing demands and improve their long-term position. Additionally, traceability has emerged as a strategic tool for sustainability, enhancing efficiency and transparency throughout the SC (Latino et al., 2022). Collaboration and vertical integration are crucial, as companies with common interests in digital technologies cooperate in areas such as finance, human resources, and technology (Grubor et al., 2022).

In a similar context, the implementation of digitalization supported by artificial intelligence in India generates a vast amount of data that will be utilized to generate knowledge, thereby ensuring traceability, transparency, and security in information management (Sharma et al., 2022). Therefore, digitalization not only enhances the performance of the company but is also crucial for the internal integration of the supply chain (Liu & Chiu, 2021).

The integration of systems represents a significant advancement in digital transformation, particularly relevant for improving the supply chain in the Peruvian food industry. However, to fully harness this potential, a strategic approach focusing on high-value cases, flexible integration architectures, and staff training will be required (Kundurur, 2022). It is advisable for the implementation to be accompanied by active and frequent maintenance to assess the continuous learning of artificial intelligence, as the volume of data constantly grows, but so does the percentage of useless data (Gackowiec & Podobińska, 2019; Van Diter et al., 2022).

The generated tracking systems offer advantages for reliability and quality in production environments, while logistic operations are experiencing increased flexibility and speed due to the growing importance of predictive analysis (Pratap & Pendyala, 2022). Furthermore, future work aims at enhancing the development of software elements and subsystems to increase code affinity (Bakhtadze & Suleykin, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

The implementation of the new software does not meet the expectations set forth in this year's work. Nonetheless, an 86.56% coverage of the technical gap is achieved, resulting in a sales increase of 1161 million soles compared to last year. In other words, the implementation of SAP Leonardo brings significant improvements for the company by addressing rejection types and boosting sales. However, it is important to note that the project entails risks, primarily concerning time management and the adaptation of the company's human resources to the implementation of this innovative tool.

The participation and collaboration of all involved areas were crucial for the success of this project's simulation, as they enable addressing multifaceted challenges and fully leveraging the potential of digitalization. Digital transformation not only enhances operational efficiency and transparency in the supply chain but also prepares companies to adapt to environmental changes.



## Recommendations

It is suggested to consider extending the project's execution period from one year to two years to achieve and surpass the previously established goal of reaching an 89.9% indicator. Additionally, it is proposed to repeat the research within a five-year period, given that the gradual incorporation of artificial intelligence tools in the industry is emerging as a trend. The consideration of this suggestion is justified by the possibility of harnessing the consolidation of artificial intelligence as a means for continuous improvement in the near future.

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# **Towards a Comprehensive Vision for Re-Imagineering Higher Education: Shaping the Future of Higher Education Promoting Sustainable Development Goals**

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to develop a new vision that will involve shaping the future of Higher Education for promoting sustainable development goals (SDGs). This comprehensive vision will undergo the analytical research concept of the Re-Imagineering paradigm that is involved in the design, evaluation, development, testing, modification, inspection, and maintenance of a wide range of products, structures, and systems. Besides that, this study will investigate the relationship between organizational governance and faculty governance in higher education and the role of universities in entrepreneurship, in which higher education can adopt the Total Quality Management (TQM) principles and its four main areas that must be met. This study will conclude the clear path to redirect the future of higher education toward an (Education Area) that is sustainable, responsible, peaceful, democratic, collaborative, and prosperous. And then shape the (Future) We Want; as Higher education can and must play a significant role in equipping students around the world with the skills, values, and knowledge they need to find answers to today's sustainability concerns. The study will also suggest combining the top instructional strategies to develop immersive and interesting learning experiences. And combine technological expertise with creativity to produce novel concepts that can alter our educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, SDGs, Re-Imagineering, Shaping the future.

**Citation:** Jarrar, A.G. (2024). Towards a Comprehensive Vision for Re-Imagineering Higher Education : Shaping the Future of Higher Education Promoting Sustainable Development Goals. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1452-1462), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## **Introduction**

The current situation of higher education institutions emphasizes their fundamental inability to do their role to prepare qualified individuals with high skills: academic, professional, cultural, and personal that are compatible with the needs of society and the labor market, as what is observed is a general weakness in the level of training, research, and the ability to think with creativity and critically. Besides enhancing time management, decision-making, taking responsibility, accepting other opinions, and working within teams, in addition to low general culture, lack of knowledge of society's problems; whether environmental, social, economic, or political, and

indifference to society's concerns and local and global events (Dewey, Codallos, Barry, Drenkhahn, Glover, Muthig & Abbott, 2020).

The future of educational institutions is closely linked to the real implementation of their role derived from their vision, mission, and goals. Their role goes beyond providing knowledge to creating and transferring knowledge, research, and innovation, transferring experience, culture, and science, and creating job opportunities in the market to become an instrument of real change toward economic growth and sustainable development. Accordingly, the university bears the responsibility of moving from education to learning and preparing a qualified graduate who has multiple skills that suit the needs of the global labor market and can start entrepreneurial businesses and projects (Ferrer-Estévez & Chalmeta, 2021).

The ranking of higher education institutions is an evaluation methodology based on a variety of criteria. Each type of classification uses a different set of quantitative variables to base its results on, so none of the classifications accurately provides a comprehensive picture of an organization's capabilities. The ranking is not limited to a specific entity, as there are several journals, newspapers, websites, governments, and academics interested in publishing multiple types of classifications.

Most ranking organizations typically provide a ranked list of programs, departments, and colleges, as well as entire educational institutions. The rankings take into account a variety of factors, such as funding to universities, the impact factor of distinguished research, the experience of specialists in these educational institutions, the application and admission criteria for students, as well as the alternatives available to them, the number of times they have received academic awards, and the university's ability to transform towards globalization, graduate rates, relationships with industry institutions, historical reputation, and much more (Fernandes & Singh, 2022).

### **Importance of the study**

The importance of the research stems from adding a proposed strategic perspective to develop the governance of higher education institutions in Arab countries, by studying the concept of governance of higher education institutions, how higher education institutions are managed; and how monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for all parties related to the university, and support mechanisms and principles of organizational governance for universities. Also, activating the organizational governance of Jordanian universities through a set of guiding standards that can be relied upon when judging the quality level of universities' performance. This research can contribute results that are useful in:

1. Redirecting the future of higher education toward an (Education Area) that is sustainable, responsible, peaceful, democratic, collaborative, and prosperous.
2. Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses in the practice of organizational governance and its application mechanisms in universities.

3. Recognizing the importance of practicing governance in universities to fulfill their role in social responsibility.
4. Investigating the relationship between organizational governance and faculty governance in higher education and the role of universities in entrepreneurship, in which higher education can adopt the Total Quality Management (TQM) principles and its four main areas that must be met.

### *Problem statement*

Studies analyzing higher education in the Arab World, and in Jordan reveal shortcomings and defects in the institutional governance of universities, which included extreme slowness in responding to demands for change and development. Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015, Goal 4 (Education) is allocated, for which higher education is mentioned in target (4.3) of Goal 4; which calls for, by 2030, to ensure all women and men have access to a quality university education (Chaleta, Saraiva, Leal, Fialho & Borralho, 2021).

Despite the importance of universities in advancing the process of economic and Higher education in Jordan has not yet reached the necessary level where it can be influential and interact with development aspirations in all fields, as the reality of the situation indicates that higher education has not effectively produced the type of graduates required to meet the challenges of the global economy. This is true despite the importance of universities in advancing the process of economic and social development and their role in modernizing and developing societies. The following questions were addressed by this research:

- 1- What are the current total quality management trends in the higher education sector?
- 2- What conditions must be met before using complete quality management?
- 3- How to combine the best practices of education to create engaging and immersive learning experiences in universities?
- 4- What is the relationship between organizational governance and faculty governance in higher education?
- 5- In light of overall quality management and the information and technology revolution, what is the suggested vision for expanding and upgrading the elements of the educational process at universities?

### *Literature review*

The International Conference on Governance in Higher Education Institutions held in Jordan (2017) recommended that university governance should be considered one of the requirements for university accreditation and must be linked to quality and accreditation standards. The conference recommended that the governance of Arab universities requires developing indicators and standards to evaluate the performance of universities in the field of governance and developing a guide for applying the quality standard and ensuring quality in each university, with performance indicators indicating the implementation of the standard across six

concepts: accountability, transparency, participation, and the impact of the political, economic, and social environment on Strengthening governance, the role of stakeholders in university governance, and governance and quality assurance. As well as analyzing the experiences of national, regional, and international higher education institutions, comparing governance in Arab universities, the outcomes of higher education, and linking governance to strategic planning.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action recognizes that a well-established and well-regulated higher education system may increase possibilities for success, equity, quality, and relevance, and urges for the development on current international accords in support of higher education. In order to maintain sustainable development and reap the benefits of technology, open educational materials, and distant learning, it can also lessen the dissonance between what is taught and what needs to be learned (Mulà, Tilbury, Ryan, Mader, Dlouhá, Mader & Alba, 2017).

In order for the educational process to meet the needs of its beneficiaries and provide effective results that satisfy societal demands, a number of requirements and conditions must be present. This is how the concept of quality in education is best described. In accordance with these definitions, comprehensive quality within the context of the higher educational institution entails a number of contents, the most crucial of which are (Nasim, Sikander & Tian, 2020):

- 1- Adopting the method of cooperative teamwork, and using all capabilities, talents, and experience possessed by the human resources in the organization.
- 2- Ensure continued improvement and development to improve quality.
- 3- Reducing errors based on performing the work correctly the first time, which leads to reducing the cost to a minimum while obtaining the satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the educational process.
- 4- Ensure that the cost of quality is calculated within the organization to include all work related to the service provided.
- 5- A comprehensive approach to all areas in the educational system, such as goals, organizational structure, work methods, motivation, motivation, and procedures

The administrative process in the twenty-first century is characterized by a serious and distinguished effort to notice change, follow up on developments and developments, and make the most of them. Educational administrations at all levels seek to reform education, improve its conditions, and keep pace with technical developments and the information and communication revolution, which has imposed many changes in the lifestyle and the requirements of education. Highly qualified human resources in the field of knowledge, creativity, diverse skills, and the pursuit of competition in quality performance. From this standpoint, higher educational institutions began to pay attention to total quality management in order to gain a good reputation through diligent work and provide solid outputs to society from active human resources, in line with scientific and technological progress, and keeping pace with developed countries in applying the comprehensive quality system as an indicator of civilizational indicators and striving for the well-being of society. The issue of

universities' interest in the principle of applying total quality is a bold, pioneering step in investing in the human mind and benefiting from its energies and creativity through the quality and excellence of university education (Zhalalovna, Shishov, Rozhnova, Rozhnova, Polozhentseva & Lobacheva, 2020).

## Discussion and Results

Because a university is, in many ways, a much more complex institution than a corporation, good governance in higher education is particularly crucial because it must provide a framework for a really diverse set of stakeholders. However, the fundamentals of corporate governance also apply to the governance of higher education. Although higher education leadership may have values that are similar to those in business, this does not indicate that they should act in a businesslike manner. (Abdeldayem & Aldulaimi, 2018).

In order to manage relationships between various stakeholders and guarantee sustainability, universities must practice effective governance. Governance is the first and last step toward sustainability. A university can't succeed if its values aren't followed. A university's ability to develop and thrive is facilitated by good governance, which provides information and promotes decision-making. A university can be viable in the long run when governance (as an overall structure) is combined with accountability and openness. (Indarti, Mundiri & Ferandita, 2021).

One of the main strategic aims for every institution should be centered on effective governance and contemporary management. To that end, the following strategic objectives have been established:

1. Strengthening the principles of good governance, such as accountability, participation, justice, and gender equality.
  2. Establishing processes for quality assurance and establishing the standards of excellence and accreditation.
- To keep up with international best practices, institutional performance must be improved.
- 4- Achieving the University's financial stability through varying its funding sources.
  5. Strengthening digital transformation while streamlining and automating activities.

The following Figure 1 shows the university's good governance aspects. Figure 2 also shows the connection between faculty governance and organizational governance in higher education (Williams, 2015).

The Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, which call for compliance in at least four key areas, can be adopted by higher education.

- ✓ First, TQM is used to manage higher education generally or to enhance administrative and operational tasks.
- ✓ Second, TQM is included into the teaching methods.
- ✓ Third, TQM is used to classroom instruction.



- ✓ Fourth, TQM is used to oversee research initiatives in higher education.



Figure 1. university's good governance aspects

Source: <https://www.collidu.com/presentation-university-governance>

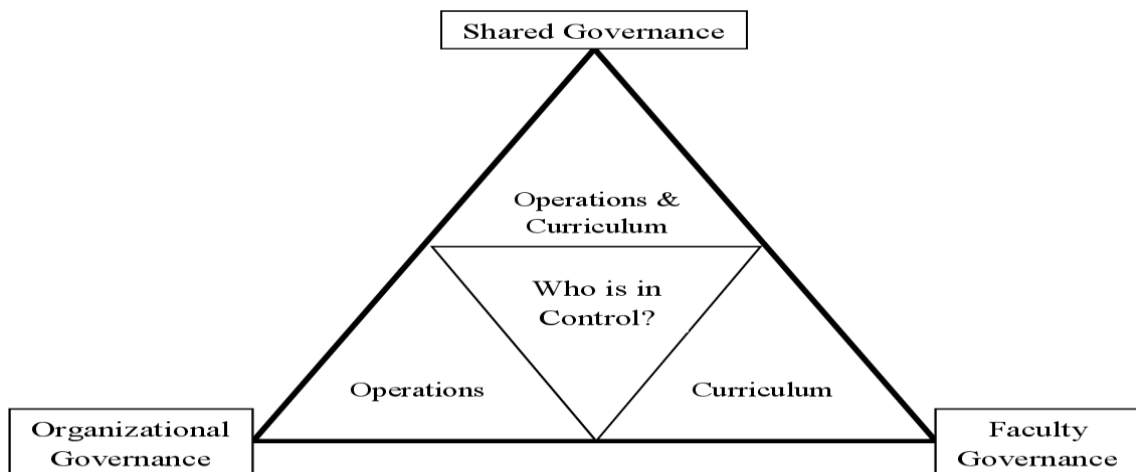


Figure 2. the connection between faculty governance and organizational governance in higher education

Figure 3 shows Total Quality Management (TQM) As a Corporate Strategy in Higher Education.



Figure 3. Total Quality Management (TQM) As a Corporate Strategy in Higher Education  
Source: <https://newcluk008.blogspot.com/2018/08/total-quality-management-tqm-as.html?m=1>

For that, the importance, and Benefits of TQM in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are:

1. HEIs are compelled to use methods in a worldwide framework in the current social environment.
- 2- Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management theory and method of thinking that has assisted higher education institutions in their quest for excellence in educational delivery.
- 3- TQM needs to be broadly accepted and successfully implemented in HEIs in order to guarantee high-quality services, meet market demands, and satisfy stakeholder interests.
- 4- TQM adoption will aid higher education institutions in keeping up their competitiveness. The majority of higher education institutions face roughly the same issues globally in the twenty-first century.
5. Overcoming obstacles is crucial for competing, surviving, and achieving excellence.
- 6- By achieving a number of advantages, like enhancing

For that, We Need To: Redirect the future of higher education toward an (Education Area) that is sustainable, responsible, peaceful, democratic, collaborative, and prosperous. And we must: Shape the (Future) We Want; as Higher Education can and must play a decisive role in providing learners across the world with knowledge, competencies, and values to discover solutions to today's sustainability challenges.

The *Re-Imagineering* Concept includes:

**Re:** Derived from Latin, again: anew.

**Engineering:** Involved in the design, evaluation, development, testing, modification, inspection, and maintenance of a wide range of products, structures, and systems.

**Imagination:** The ability to imagine things that are beyond knowledge, and the ability to form systems in our mind of something that have not seen or experienced.

For that, the *Re-Imagineering* of Higher Education has the following keystones:

- 1- Combine the best practices of education to create engaging and immersive learning experiences.
- 2- Combine creativity with technical know-how that results in innovative ideas that can transform our educational institutions.
- 3- Although higher education systems are in a constant state of change, they are difficult for the public and private sectors to reform. And for increasing higher education efficiency; establishing mechanisms to coordinate the development of higher education systems is a must.

Therefore, higher education creates lifelong opportunities that promote economic success, political participation, and other benefits. And attention must be drawn:

- 1- To the need for effective policy structures to manage higher education,
- 2- To link the costs of reforms to benefits such as increased opportunity,
- 3- To take account of the institutional constraints to change as well as to carefully articulate educational reforms with other public policies that influence the performance of the higher education systems.

Besides that, *Re-Imagineering* Higher Education shows the following possibilities (Haider, Akbar, Tehseen, Poulouva & Jaleel, 2022), as shown in Figure (4).

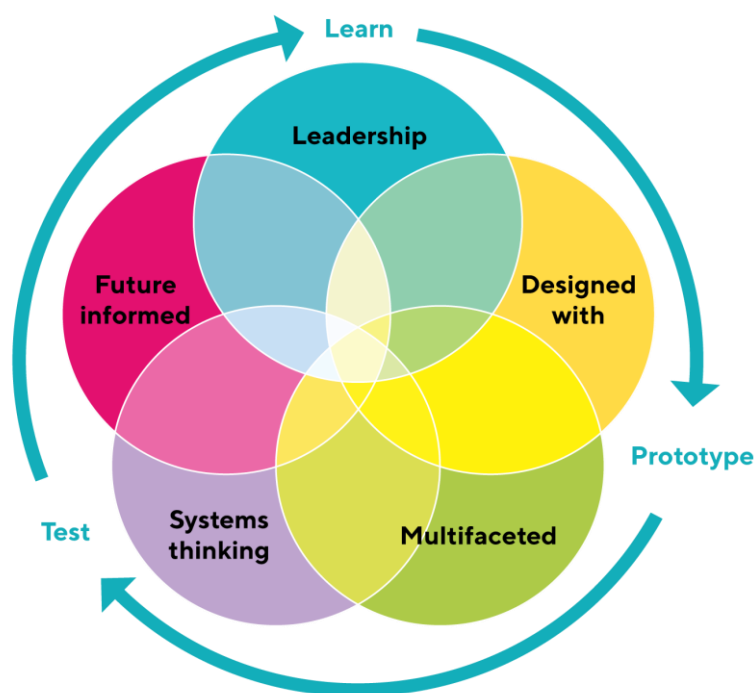


Figure 4. *Re-Imagineering* Higher Education shows the following possibilities.

For that, having leadership skills is helpful in many fields, but it's crucial in higher education.

1. If you work in this sector, you can be in charge of supervising staff members and employees or instructing pupils.
- 2- No matter what your precise tasks and responsibilities are, you must use leadership abilities if you want to be successful.
- 3- Choosing which aims to concentrate on or making important decisions at your educational institution can both benefit from your leadership skills.
- 4- Having leadership skills might also make it easier to deal with obstacles you have in this type of work.

According to the Future of Higher Education Report (2023), there are seven pillars of the Future of Higher Education, these pillars are:

**Pillar one:** More versatility means being more applicable, lasting longer, and providing more options and possibilities:

- ✓ The democratization of access to education is made feasible by digitization.
- ✓ This will result in a wider range of users and pupils.

**Pillar two:** Multiversity: multiple disciplines, itineraries, formats, and campuses:

- ✓ In this new paradigm, the primary vector of evaluation is now learning level, rather than memorization.
- ✓ There are numerous learning itineraries.

**Pillar three:** Eco-systemic: The university's economic and social impact is increased by contact with the ecosystem of players in the education value chain.

**Pillar four:** Students will seek out universities with a purpose and values that align with the shifting priorities of the next generation. The educational institution has a mission.

**Pillar five:** Training itineraries based on skills, aptitudes, and areas of interest are called pathways and traces. There are many exits but few entrances. additionally, via a number of academic institutions.

**Pillar six:** An enhanced learning environment is created by digital technology, which also changes the role of the teacher.

**Pillar seven:** The new problems brought on by a changing environment will require leadership with new qualities like a digital attitude, a vision for the future, or the ability to facilitate change. From surviving to thriving amid uncertainty.

## Conclusions

The quality of Higher Education systems is central and fundamental to individuals and countries alike. At the individual level, education affects future income, employability, health, and even family structure. On the national level, quality education reflects positively on economic growth, reduces poverty levels, and enhances social justice. Thus, shaping the future of Higher Education and promoting Sustainable Development Goals includes:

- 1- Higher Education is the driving force for establishing sustainability since it is one of the main communication vehicles and the basis for the “sustainability mindset”.
- 2- Higher Education institutions are viewed as “changing agents” and “catalysts” in the development of sustainability-related issues.
- 3- SDGs are forcing higher education institutions to change to respond to a world in crisis.
- 4- Higher education institutions have a great responsibility to form future sustainability leaders and support the ambitious SDGs targets implementation.
- 5- Sustainability is also an essential aspect of a university's reputation globally.
- 6- Higher education institutions need to be drivers of culture change and develop curricula based on sustainability concepts.
- 7- Education is the basis for the achievement of all the SDGs and has an essential contribution to the formation of a society willing to support different SDGs aspects (e.g., global citizenship, gender equality, respect for human rights).
- 8- Despite the key role in social transformation:
  - Several challenges and barriers need to be tackled inside the higher education institutions (e.g., curricula, ethical principles),
  - Externally (e.g., different types of audiences, political environment, stakeholders' interest), that need to be tackled for the realization of the world that we want.

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## Automated Assessment of Students' Codes Using the Coderunner Tool at Oran1 University

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented global health crisis, has not only significantly impacted public health but has also caused substantial disruptions to conventional education systems. In response to these challenges, our institution has undertaken innovative measures within the realm of education. A pivotal aspect of our response involves the establishment and implementation of an advanced online learning environment. We have employed state-of-the-art technologies to cultivate heightened autonomy in student learning processes. The integration of the CodeRunner Moodle plugin has been instrumental in realizing this objective. Serving as a sophisticated tool, this innovative plugin facilitates the administration of customized interactive coding tests designed for students enrolled in Java and JavaScript courses. Over a comprehensive week, we diligently conducted these coding tests to assess the performance of CodeRunner. The outcomes yielded valuable insights, showcasing not only the efficacy of the plugin in evaluating coding skills but also elucidating the students' enthusiastic embrace of this novel assessment approach. The pronounced levels of interest demonstrated by the student body underscore the potential impact of technology integration in enriching and captivating learners within the dynamic landscape of contemporary education. This initiative signifies substantive progress in adapting education to address challenges in the modern world and underscores our unwavering commitment to delivering dynamic and impactful learning experiences for our students.

**Keywords:** Online laboratory, Automatic assessment, Coderunner, Computer programming skills.

**Citation:** Bengueddach, A., & Hamdadou, D. (2024). Automated assessment of students' codes using the CodeRunner tool at Oran1 University. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1463-1476), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the traditional educational landscape, leading universities to adopt online learning environments to ensure educational continuity (Bojović et al., 2020). Online learning offers students the flexibility and convenience of accessing lessons from anywhere and at any time (Hosseini et al., 2008). However, implementing e-learning in universities with a large number of students can be challenging,



particularly in engineering faculties that employ various teaching formats, including online remote real labs (Taj et al., 2021).

The literature emphasizes the importance of infrastructure in e-education labs (Duan et al., 2006). Universities must carefully consider the infrastructure required to support e-learning, taking into account the needs of both students and faculty. This includes ensuring that platforms are fast and reliable, that educational content is adapted to meet demand, and that remote laboratories or WebLabs are designed with accessibility, reliability, and security in mind (Tawfik et al., 2014). By doing so, universities can provide high-quality e-learning experiences that meet the needs of all students, regardless of their location or circumstances.

Creating an effective online learning environment for programming courses involves careful consideration of various factors, including the selection of appropriate software technologies and the assessment of programming skills. (Garcia-Zubia et al., 2007) have made significant contributions by analyzing and selecting the best software technologies for implementing the client and server sides in a WebLab. Similarly, (Moussa, Abdelhalim, et al., 2021) have evaluated the time response of the laboratory architecture they designed and developed to assess programming skills.

Detecting errors in code is a crucial aspect of assessing programming skills, but it is not sufficient on its own. It is equally important to determine whether students can correct those errors (Lobb & Harlow, 2016). This requires a tool that can provide detailed feedback on students' code and help them identify and correct mistakes.

In this context, we have used the CodeRunner plug-in for Moodle to teach programming courses at the University of Oran 1. CodeRunner has helped us automate the testing of code submitted by students in response to a variety of programming questions in different languages. We have experimented with CodeRunner and discussed its effectiveness in assessing programming skills. Our findings and future perspectives will be presented in the following sections.

### **Method: Designing Effective Remote Laboratories**

Setting up a remote lab from scratch can be difficult because it requires much knowledge about computer network programming. This can limit the experiments that teachers and students can do. To avoid this problem, it's a good idea to create a straightforward and adaptable way for the client and server computers to communicate first. Then, teachers can use a set of programs and libraries to organize a remote experiment without needing to learn network programming. This way, teachers can focus on setting up the computer-controlled lab experiment, making the process easier and more effective.

Figure 1 illustrates the remote measurement lab that we developed for this study, designed with a simple network architecture to facilitate server setup. The architecture is divided into three zones: the Client Zone, the

Moodle Zone, and the JOBE Zone. The Moodle Zone houses a server that handles domain name resolution and hosts the Moodle platform, while the JOBE Zone contains a server that the Moodle server can access for compiling programming languages used in the course. The Client Zone provides access to the platform's features for students and teachers.

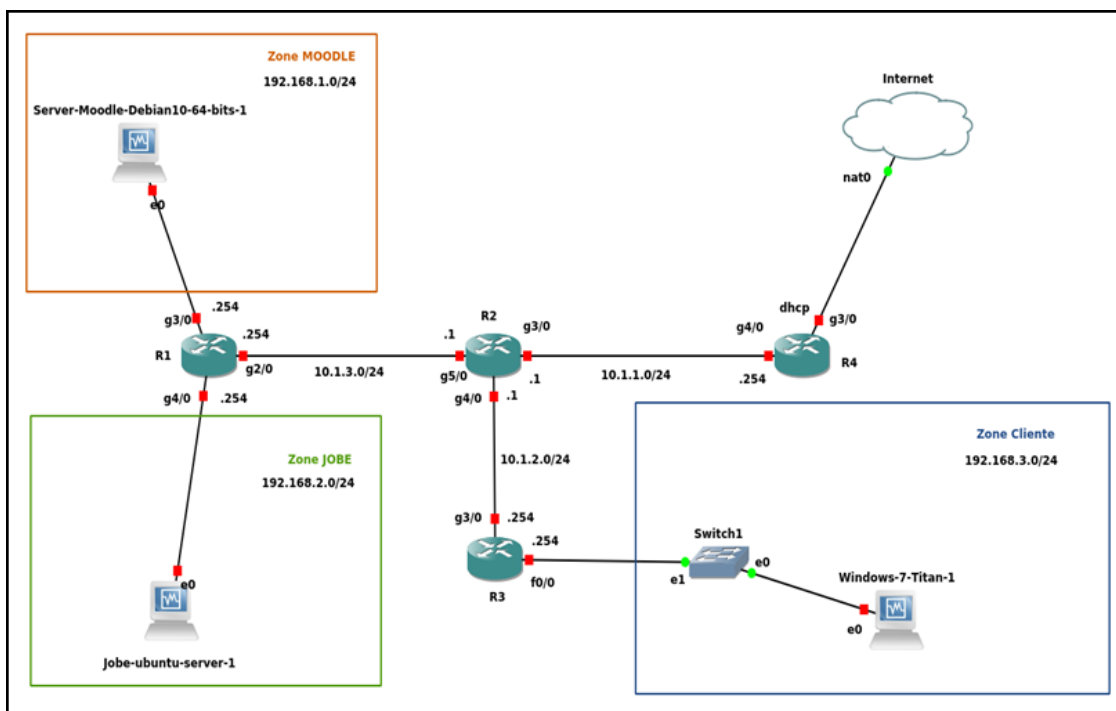


Figure 1. GNS3 Remote E-Learning Labs

To implement this network architecture, we followed a three-step process. First, we prepared the necessary machines, taking into account the high hardware resources required for our applications. We utilized a high-performance PC and employed VirtualBox software to create one or more virtual machines within the same operating system, each with a unique IP address and connected to the local network. This setup allowed us to implement the network architecture and deploy the servers and machines on a single physical machine, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. VirtualBox Settings for Virtual Machines

Work environment	Configuration features								
2 computers	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Brand: LENOVO YOGA 510</td> <td>Brand: HP ELITE BOOK</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Processor: Intel Core i5 RAM 8 GB</td> <td>Processor: Intel Core i7 RAM 8 GB</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hard Disk: 256 SSD</td> <td>Hard Disk: 256 SSD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Operating System: Ubuntu 20.04.2</td> <td>Operating System: Windows 10 Pro</td> </tr> </table>	Brand: LENOVO YOGA 510	Brand: HP ELITE BOOK	Processor: Intel Core i5 RAM 8 GB	Processor: Intel Core i7 RAM 8 GB	Hard Disk: 256 SSD	Hard Disk: 256 SSD	Operating System: Ubuntu 20.04.2	Operating System: Windows 10 Pro
Brand: LENOVO YOGA 510	Brand: HP ELITE BOOK								
Processor: Intel Core i5 RAM 8 GB	Processor: Intel Core i7 RAM 8 GB								
Hard Disk: 256 SSD	Hard Disk: 256 SSD								
Operating System: Ubuntu 20.04.2	Operating System: Windows 10 Pro								

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GNS3	Emulator for CISCO	Juniper routers	Firewall
Virtual Box	Client Machine	IP Addressing,	Windows 7 Titan
3 servers	Debian 10 Moodle server.	Ubuntu 20.04 JOBE server	Ubuntu Server 2.2.19

---

In the second step, we integrated the virtual machines into GNS3, a network emulator that works with real devices. We configured the virtual machines using VirtualBox, as previously explained. Each machine added to GNS3 can only have one instance. Finally, we configured the routers, which were not available as default devices when GNS3 was initially installed. We had to manually download the Cisco router configuration from the GNS3 official website.

### **E-Coder: Automated Programming Education Assessment**

In our study, we found that standard Moodle quizzes with basic questions like multiple-choice were not sufficient for assessing programming tasks. These tests could check students' understanding of programming concepts but not their ability to write code or solve problems using algorithms. Additionally, without tools like a syntax checker, it was challenging to edit code without starting over.

To address this issue, we used CodeRunner to assess the Web Development material before the final JavaScript test. The students in the Web Application Development module submitted weekly assignments, and the teacher explained and shared answers in the group's Telegram channel. The class also had a significant project to test HTML and CSS skills for 20 credits.

The use of CodeRunner as a midterm test with automatic scoring provided several benefits for both students and teachers. Firstly, it allowed us to assess a large number of students quickly and efficiently, without the need for manual grading. This saved time and resources, allowing us to focus on other aspects of teaching and learning.

Secondly, the automated feedback provided by CodeRunner was invaluable for students. It helped them identify and correct errors in their code in real-time, allowing them to learn from their mistakes and improve their skills. This feedback was particularly useful for students who were struggling with programming concepts, as it provided them with specific and targeted guidance on how to improve their code.

#### *E-coder Response Time Evaluation with JMeter*

To evaluate the response time of E-coder, we used the Apache JMeter tool. JMeter (*Apache JMeter - Apache JMeter™*, n.d.) is a free software project for testing the performance of applications and servers using various protocols and functional testing. It can test different types of servers, such as web, LDAP, and databases. JMeter

has a user-friendly interface that makes it easy to create scenarios, which can be complex and involve loops, conditions, variable extraction and reuse, loading variables from external files, and various charts and statistics.

As the Moodle server is the only one that can connect to the JOBE server, we used JMeter to simulate requests from multiple users. When a Moodle user compiles code, it sends a POST object or a run\_result request. We set up a group of 10 users in JMeter to make requests three times each. By adding an HTTP POST request, JOBE could send requests to the Moodle server's IP address.

The graph in Figure 2 provides valuable insights into the performance of the system throughout the day. The average response time, displayed on the Y-axis in milliseconds, varies significantly depending on the time of day. The peak in response time occurs around 8:00 AM, with an average of approximately 450 milliseconds. This peak is likely due to higher user traffic in the morning, as students and teachers log in to access course materials and submit assignments.

As the day progresses, the average response time decreases, reaching a trough around 4:00 PM with an average of about 200 milliseconds. This decrease in response time is likely due to a decrease in user traffic as the day goes on. The graph highlights the importance of considering user traffic patterns when designing and managing online learning systems.

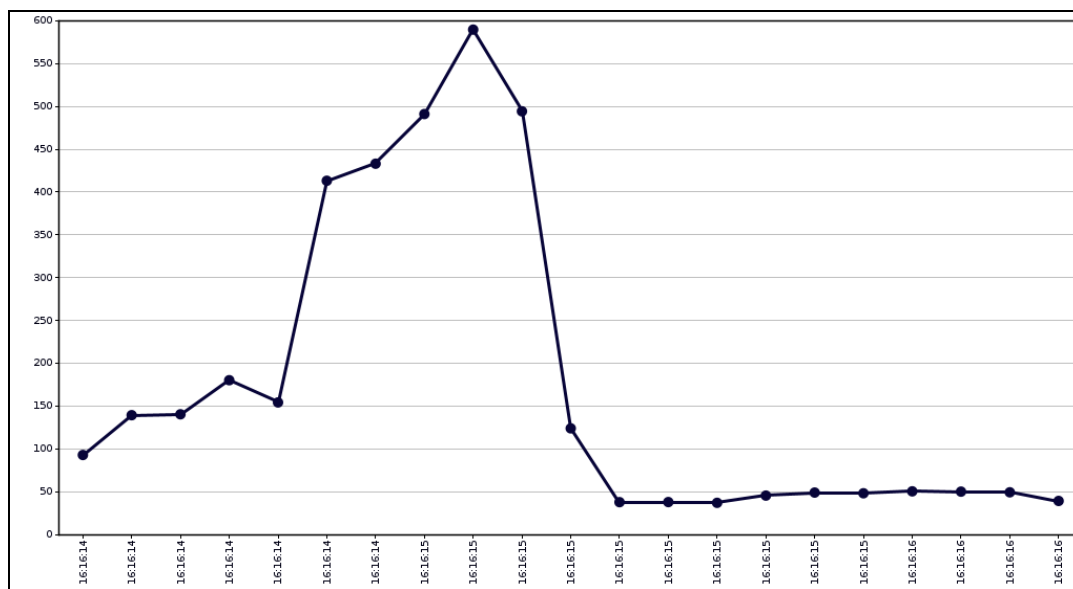


Figure 2. JMeter Response Time for 100 Users

By understanding the performance of the system throughout the day, educators and system administrators can make informed decisions about how to optimize the system for peak usage periods. For example, they may choose to allocate additional resources to the system during peak usage periods to ensure that it can handle the increased load. Alternatively, they may choose to stagger the release of course materials or assignments to reduce the strain on the system during peak usage periods.

*CodeRunner: Programming Skills Assessment*

CodeRunner (Lobb & Harlow, 2016) is a free and open-source Moodle plugin that allows teachers to assess students' programming abilities by presenting them with coding questions. Compared to traditional written exams, CodeRunner tests provide a more realistic evaluation of students' technical programming skills. CodeRunner can be incorporated into Moodle quizzes alongside other computer-graded question types, such as multiple-choice, numeric, short-answer, or matching questions. Additionally, human-graded essay questions can also be included in the quiz. By integrating CodeRunner into Moodle quizzes, teachers can create a comprehensive assessment that evaluates both programming skills and other relevant course content.

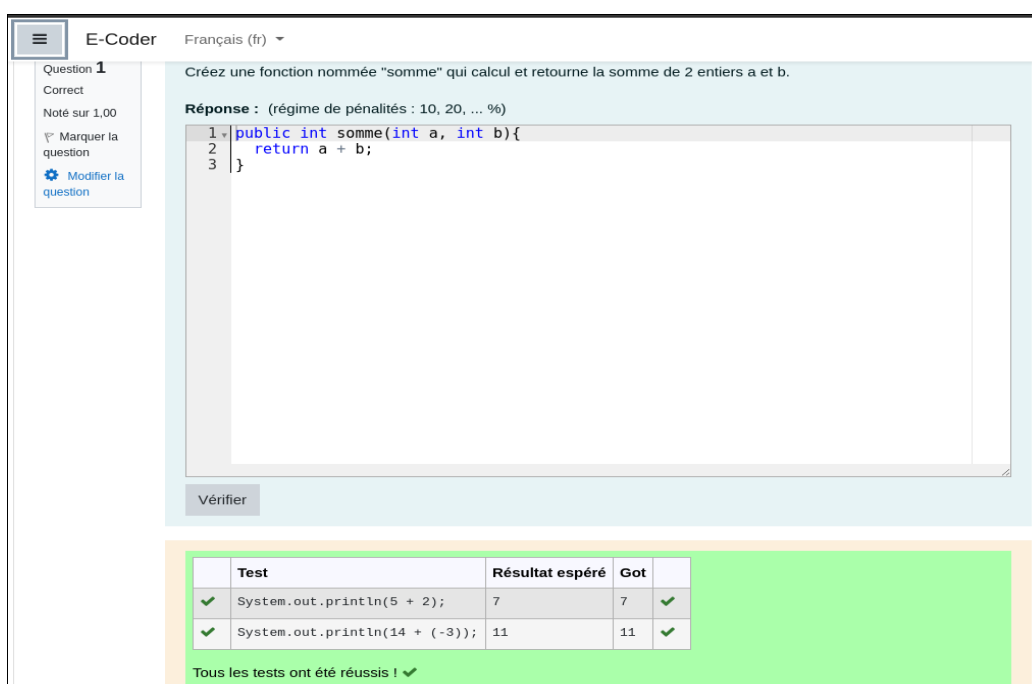


Figure 3. E-coder Platform for Code Testing

By offering web-based questions, CodeRunner allows students to complete assignments from home or after class, freeing up lab time for students who need assistance. The E-coder platform (Figure 3) provides a simulated development environment where students can write and test their code. Students receive immediate feedback on their answers and can resubmit them with a penalty.

*CodeRunner: Web Dev & OOP Question Creation*

CodeRunner is an excellent tool for assessing programming skills in beginner programming classes, particularly those that cover fundamental concepts like if statements and loops. In our web programming course, we utilized CodeRunner to evaluate students' JavaScript code (Node.js). Although the default setup includes question types for Python and PHP, we focused solely on JavaScript for our course.

To implement CodeRunner, we installed Moodle on a server, added the CodeRunner plugin, and set up the JOBE server to compile student code. To assess JavaScript programming skills, we created a set of questions that concentrated on basic programming concepts.

CodeRunner verifies the correctness of a student's code by executing it and comparing the output to the expected outcome. For JavaScript, console.log() is used to display the output. If the output matches, the test passes, and a green checkmark appears. If the code fails to compile, the student receives feedback on the first error.

Figure 4 displays an example of a JavaScript question where students are required to write a function using Math.random() to generate a number between 1 and 6. If the code compiles successfully, the message "all tests passed" appears, motivating students. If the code is incorrect, the student must scroll down to view the feedback and try again. CodeRunner's ability to provide real-time feedback and automated grading makes it an invaluable tool for assessing programming skills in a beginner programming course.

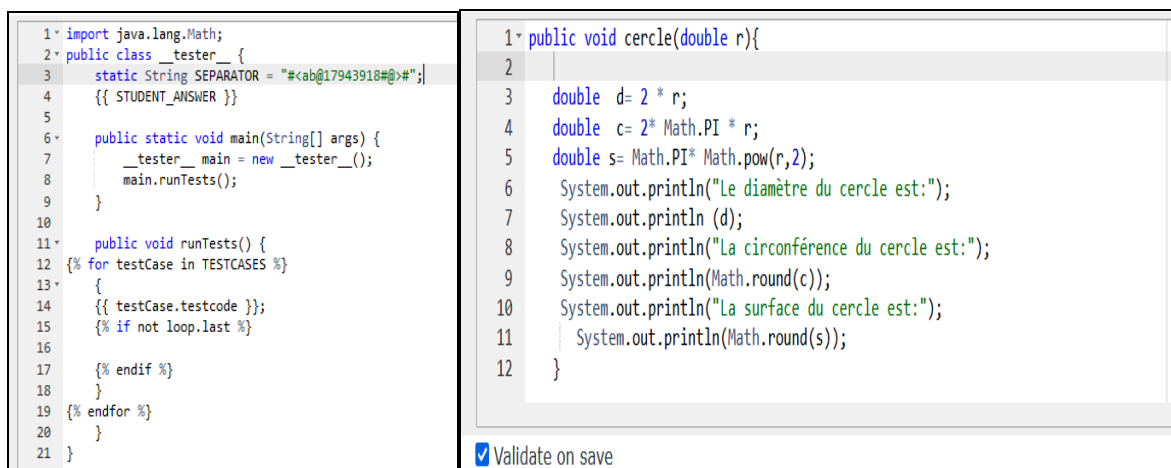


Figure 4. CodeRunner Incorrect Feedback Example

In a Java Object-Oriented Programming (OOP) course within the second-level curriculum, we developed formative assessment questions using java\_program and java\_method for testing. These question types enable us to test students' understanding of Java programming concepts and object-oriented principles.

The java\_method type allows for the inclusion of a method within the Answer class, while java\_program enables the use of import statements. To grade the code and access the student's answer code, we utilize template classes and system variables such as STUDENT\_ANSWER.

CodeRunner evaluates the student's answer by incorporating it into a template as a method or class. For instance, if we are testing a Math function, we must import it using the "import" statement (see Figure 5, line 1). By using CodeRunner's template classes and system variables, we can provide automated feedback and grading for students, enabling them to identify and correct errors in real-time.



```

1 import java.lang.Math;
2 public class __tester__ {
3     static String SEPARATOR = "#<ab@17943918#@>#";
4     {{ STUDENT_ANSWER }}
5
6     public static void main(String[] args) {
7         __tester__ main = new __tester__();
8         main.runTests();
9     }
10
11     public void runTests() {
12     {% for testCase in TESTCASES %}
13     {
14         {{ testCase.testcode }};
15         {% if not loop.last %}
16
17         {% endif %}
18     }
19     {% endfor %}
20 }
21 }

```

```

1 public void cercle(double r){
2
3     double d= 2 * r;
4     double c= 2* Math.PI * r;
5     double s= Math.PI* Math.pow(r,2);
6     System.out.println("Le diamètre du cercle est:");
7     System.out.println (d);
8     System.out.println("La circonférence du cercle est:");
9     System.out.println(Math.round(c));
10    System.out.println("La surface du cercle est:");
11    System.out.println(Math.round(s));
12 }

```

Validate on save

Figure 5. Java OOP Formative Assessment

CodeRunner employs System.out to determine whether a test has passed or failed. A test passes if the output aligns with the expected output; otherwise, it fails. The Math library includes the "Math.PI()" function for calculating the perimeter and area of a circle. By utilizing a method call, we can execute the test code and define the anticipated output.

## Experimental Findings: DevWeb and OOP Courses

In this section, we look at how helpful auto-assessment tools are, especially when students use CodeRunner questions on DevWeb. To prepare for the final test, we set up student accounts a week in advance. This allowed them to practice answering questions and receiving feedback similar to what they would get in the actual test. It also helped them get more comfortable with JavaScript syntax.

After the positive results from DevWeb, we decided to conduct another experiment for the Object-Oriented Programming (OOP) course. We designed a set of Java questions for practice and assessment. Our goal was to see how motivated and engaged students were and whether they found the tool helpful in understanding class concepts.

### Evaluating JavaScript Web Dev Skills

The Web Development course is a part of our undergraduate Information Systems program that teaches the basics of front-end web programming. Students learn HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, along with front-end



frameworks like Bootstrap, which is used for creating responsive and progressive user interfaces. Assessment is a vital part of learning, and we provide several tests during the course:

- Two pre-tests were developed to help students prepare for the final exam.
- We conducted four summative quizzes using CodeRunner over four days to give students more chances to improve.

The stats in Table 2 show how many students finished their formative quizzes, including session numbers, completed quiz counts, and percentages compared to the total enrollment (N=176) and participation (N=176). Sessions 1 and 2 had no completed quizzes, so the completion rate is zero. Also, Table 2 gives enrollment and participation numbers for DevWeb course quizzes.

At first, most students tried the quizzes but didn't confirm their answers, leading to a 4% drop in participation on the second attempt. We offered one-hour online quizzes for a week, letting each student try three times (check Table 3). Even though we used the CodeRunner tool, student involvement decreased during the first and second quizzes.

Table 2. Formative Quiz Participation Stats

Number of formative Quizzes done	% of total registered (N =176)	% of total engaged (N =176)
Session 1	≈ 16%	0
Session 2	≈ 12%	0

The table below shows the statistics of summative questionnaires completed by students during four sessions of training. The data is divided into four columns: session, number of completed questionnaires, percentage compared to the total number of registered students (176), and percentage compared to the total number of participants (176).

It should be noted that questionnaires were not used during sessions 1 and 2, as no questionnaire was completed. However, participation rates were significant for sessions 3 and 4, particularly remarkable for session 4, demonstrating the success of using summative questionnaires during these sessions.

These summative questionnaires, more formal and in-depth than formative questionnaires, aim to evaluate the knowledge and skills acquired by students at the end of their training. Their results can be used to evaluate students or identify areas requiring improvements in the training process.

Therefore, it is crucial to encourage the use of summative questionnaires during sessions 1 and 2 to obtain a more precise evaluation of students' achievements and improve the overall quality of the training.

Table 3. Summative Quiz Attempt Statistics

Number of summative Quizzes done	Day	Time (1H)	N = 176
Session 1	09/06/2021	18:05	15
Session 2	10/06/2021	19:05	27
Session 3	11/06/2021	19:05	60
Session 4	15/06/2021	12:45	127

The bar chart illustrates the completion rates of questionnaires for four distinct training sessions, with two sets of data compared: the completion rate relative to the total number of registered students (N=176) and the completion rate relative to the total number of participants (N=176). Notably, for sessions 1 and 2, there were no completed questionnaires, resulting in a 0% participation rate for both data series. However, sessions 3 and 4 exhibit a high participation rate, with session 4 peaking in both series.

Figure 6 displays the participation of students in the quizzes, with blue bars representing students who did not confirm their answers, and red bars representing those who completed the test. Approximately 10% of students took the first quiz, while around 20% to 30% participated in the second and third quizzes. Impressively, over 70% of students confirmed their answers for the fourth quiz.

It is important to note that the series "Percentage of Total Registered Students" is consistently lower than the series "Percentage of Total Participants", which is logical, as the number of participants is necessarily lower than or equal to the number of registered students.

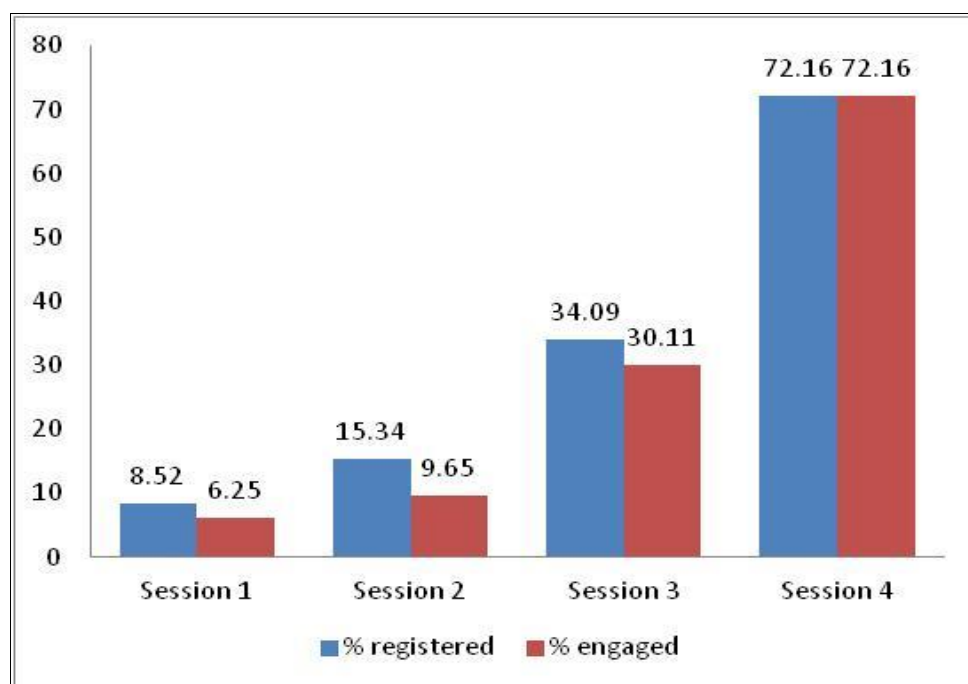


Figure 6. One-Week Summative Assessment

To sum up, the results demonstrate the successful use of questionnaires in sessions 3 and 4, with a high participation rate in the final quiz. However, to enhance the overall participation rate, it is crucial to increase participation in sessions 1 and 2.

#### *Java Formative Assessment*

The formative assessment with Java aimed to support students in preparing for their Object-Oriented Programming (OOP) exams through tailored practice quizzes.

Table 4 outlines the quiz participation, with only 26 students attempting it, revealing that 14.77% completed the quiz while 10.22% did not achieve a passing score. Despite some students continuing to use the quizzes post-module, likely due to extended website access, the notably low participation rate suggests the evaluation could be viewed as an added burden, particularly towards the end of the academic year or during periods of overlapping deadlines.

Table 4. Formative assessment attempted by students

Test on OOP language	% of total engaged (N = 26)	% of registered (N = 26)
tentative 1	10.22%	14.77%

After the module concluded, a subset of students persisted in using the quizzes, benefiting from continued access to the website for several months. However, due to the notably low participation rate, the evaluation might be regarded as an extra load, especially during intense periods such as the end of the academic year or when multiple deadlines coincide.

#### *DevWeb Student Success: Assessment Analysis*

The graph 7 illustrates the distribution of students' grades in a computer science exam. The horizontal axis represents the grades, ranging from 0 to 20, while the vertical axis indicates the number of students who received each grade.

The grade distribution is bimodal, with two distinct peaks. The first peak is at 10/20, indicating a large number of students who received an average grade. The second peak is at 18/20, indicating a group of students who achieved excellent grades. The curve is symmetrical on both sides of the two peaks, suggesting that there are an equal number of students who received grades below the average as those who received grades above the average.

Additionally, few students received very low grades (between 0 and 5) or very high grades (between 19 and 20).

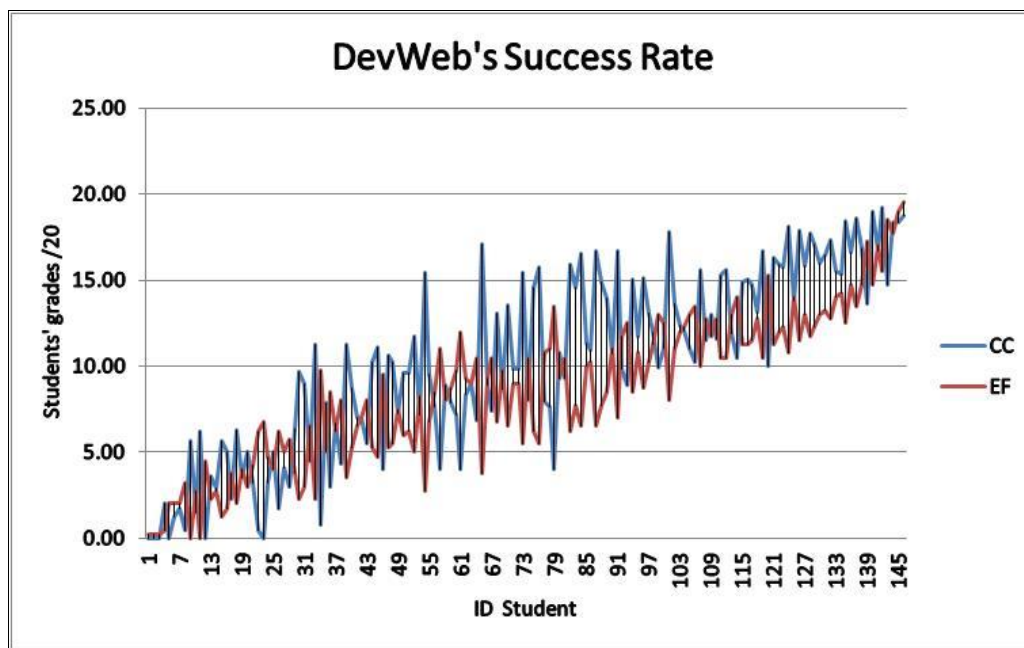


Figure 7. Analyzing DevWeb's Success Rate

The bimodal distribution suggests that the class can be divided into two groups of students: those who have understood the course content well and those who are struggling. The high number of students who received an average grade indicates that the exam's difficulty level was appropriate for most students. The presence of a group of students who achieved excellent grades shows that some students excelled in the course. The low number of students at the extremes of the distribution indicates that the teaching was effective for most students.

In light of this, we can infer that the implementation of CodeRunner was particularly advantageous for the top-performing students in DevWeb, further validating the saying “excellent students always have excellent tools”.

## Conclusion

With the implementation of our innovative online lab teaching method, students are presented with a dynamic learning environment that fosters rapid and effective learning. Beyond traditional course materials, students now have the opportunity to engage with an online lab platform, enabling them to practice and apply their knowledge independently, outside of regular class hours and at their own pace.

Our methodology involved the meticulous configuration of a network architecture featuring two pivotal servers, Moodle and Jobe, where we integrated a range of cutting-edge technologies. The integration of the CodeRunner plugin within Moodle empowers educators to craft code-based assessment questions and provides students with a code debugger offering real-time feedback, enhancing the learning experience significantly.

In our performance evaluation, we scrutinized response times through the orchestration of HTTP requests to the Jobe server for source code compilation. Under stress testing conditions with 100 concurrent users, the server exhibited performance degradation due to increased request loads, highlighting the direct correlation between response times and request volume, as well as network speed.

The practical implications of our study have led to the commencement of the deployment phase on the servers of Oran1 University. The current system architecture includes dedicated access points for administrators and instructors delivering web development modules, aligning with the institution's stringent security protocols. Future plans involve extending remote access to students via UO1's VPN infrastructure, enabling real-world response time testing and broadening the application of CodeRunner across various computer science disciplines.

Looking ahead, the automation of assessment processes by computer science educators will revolutionize practical work completion, offering students the flexibility to engage in hands-on activities anytime, anywhere, independent of physical lab constraints. This advancement signifies a significant leap towards a more accessible and efficient learning ecosystem for computer science students.


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## **Productivity Loss Factors in NCR Commuters Amidst Traffic Congestion: Exploring through Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling**


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**Abstract:** The National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines has long been plagued by traffic congestion that has affected the quality of life experienced by its commuters. Residents within the area have learned to adapt to the case and have created unique ways to cope with the situation. This paper aims to assess factors that influence the productivity of commuters amidst the challenges posed by traffic congestion in the Philippines. Using convenience sampling, a total of 518 employees responded to the online survey. The methods used to gather data were through an online survey. The data gathered was treated using exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The findings of the study suggest that the factors of traffic congestion such as time wasted, confusing distance, general physical health, stress, and punctuality positively influence traffic congestion; furthermore, traffic congestion positively influences the behavior of commuters. Also, the purchase of a personal vehicle, relocation, use of taxi applications, and leaving home early positively influence the behavior of commuters towards traffic congestion; moreover, the behavior of commuters positively influences the productivity of commuters, and finally, the health and quality of life, financial aspects and increased prospects positively influence the productivity of commuters.



**Keywords:** Exploratory Factor Analysis, Multivariate Analysis, National Capital Region, Productivity loss, Structural Equation Modeling, Traffic Congestion,

**Citation:** Lagundimao, R. M.B., Bosto, J.P., Yu, S.W.J., Navarro, M.M., Tenerife, J.T., Panganiban, R.M.M., Serrano, A.S. (2024). Productivity Loss Factors in NCR Commuters Amidst Traffic Congestion: Exploring through Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1477-1504), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Due to the pandemic, transportation activity in many countries was halted. During the pandemic, the workforce and students in the Philippines shifted from a face-to-face setup to an online setup to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Lim et al., 2022; Chen, 2021; Navarro et al, 2021). Due to this, the traffic in the country decreased dramatically and public transportation was affected severely (Roquel et al., 2021). At this time, economic activities are slowly being reopened by countries, and as a result, the level of traffic congestion is also coming back to pre-COVID levels. According to Wang et al. (2021), in some of the urban areas in the United States of America, traffic congestion is slowly returning.

Moreover, it was also found that the traffic congestion is 25% higher than pre-COVID conditions. Based on the study, the high number of traffic congestion can be attributed to the increase in the use of private vehicles due to the perceived health risks of using public transportation. A study also conducted by Suzara et al. (2021) suggested that the Philippines has a shortage of public transportation systems which worsened when the pandemic hit. Suzara et al. (2021) suggested that the problem arises on how the government solves traffic congestion. The government employs a car-centric approach which puts priority on the creation of infrastructures that will house more vehicles rather than investing in proper public transportation which puts commuters at a disadvantage.

The works of Fattah et al. (2020) suggest that traffic congestion has negative effects on the social and economic aspects of an individual. It was stated that traffic congestion causes stress which also affects the economy with a loss of 2.01 million USD per day in Bangladesh. Also, traffic congestion extends the time spent on travel and can negatively impact productivity. Balabanian (2020) suggested that due to traffic, students spend more time traveling which affects productivity. In the same study, Balabanian also found out that distance traveled also affects the productivity of the students. It was also suggested that the variables of time and distance traveled go hand in hand in terms of tackling the effects of traffic on the productivity of students. Additionally, Ralph et al. (2020) suggested that people who overestimate time will likely also overestimate distance traveled. Due to the long hours spent in traffic, the perceived distance traveled can be overestimated which causes disorientation.

Further, punctuality is also affected by traffic congestion. Alarba et al. (2019) stated that traffic congestion negatively impacts student performance in the Philippines in aspects of punctuality and opportunity loss. Due to the traffic, students induce attendance-related violations in their institutions which also leads to opportunity loss because they have missed the chance to participate in group activities and assessments. Wee et al. (2019) also suggested that overall physical health and sleep quality are also factors that are associated with the punctuality of workers. Kamruzzaman and Rumpa (2019) also stated that traffic congestion is associated with punctuality, productivity, stress, and overall health. Khreis (2020) also suggested that traffic congestion can be linked to cognitive decline, neurodegenerative diseases, and numerous metabolic conditions such as diabetes and obesity which can affect the quality of life and productivity.

The literature suggests that people experience some kinds of productivity loss. Lwesya et al. (2021) stated that in Tanzania, there is a perceived economic loss across the community. Business owners experience low turnovers and bus conductors and operators consume more fuel due to traffic congestion which leads to monetary loss. Ghazali et al. (2019) found out as well that in Seri Kembangan, residents have perceived economic, opportunity loss, and quality of life loss, where respondents suggested that due to traffic congestion, more time is spent on traveling that can be used for doing other meaningful activities. Spending more time in traffic also affects the quality of life workers experience, meaning that traffic congestion has also an effect on leisure time. According to the works of Cui et al. (2019), leisure time is essential to productivity. Moreover, the respondents were also concerned about the cost of fuel that is being consumed due to traffic congestion which leads to monetary loss. The study of Khreis (2020) suggested that traffic can be linked to health loss as well. Health loss pertains to the degradation of health that affects the productivity of an individual.

When people perceive that there is a problem, solutions are conceptualized. In the study of Jiang et al. (2020), it was found that when workers experience perceived economic loss and opportunity loss, people are forced to relocate to an area that would provide better opportunities and monetary incentives. A study conducted by Guanzing et al. (2021) suggested as well that 4th-year medical students in a college in the Philippines consider relocating due to perceived economic loss and opportunity loss. Interestingly, the study highlighted different aspects namely: micro-level which talks about family, education, and socio-demographic status; meso-level which deals with organizational setting and level of income; and macro-level which talks about the political and economic situation of the country. The study found that most of the respondents strongly agree that there are better career opportunities and monetary rewards as an overseas worker, which can be translated as that when there is a better opportunity, people will likely relocate.

Xue et al. (2020) analyzed the relocation behavior of families in Beijing, China, and discovered that the respondents relocated to places that have access to comfortable living accommodations, better public transit, and shorter commutes to work and education. In contrast, Ma and Ye (2019) suggested that workers with short commute times will likely have better productivity. It can be deduced that other than relocating, workers can find jobs that are near their household.

Khreis (2020) suggested that people who experience less traffic congestion will likely have better health. Exposure to Traffic-Related Air Pollution (TRAP) can increase the likelihood of experiencing diseases. If traffic congestion is mitigated, the effects of TRAP will be less severe. Furthermore, Metz (2022) suggested that detouring as suggested by navigation apps is extremely helpful and has a positive impact on the traffic congestion experienced by users. Thereby effectively reducing the perceived effects of factors associated with productivity loss induced by traffic congestion.

According to Hickman et al. (2018) traveling outside of peak hours can be an effective way to combat the effects of traffic congestion. Moreover, Hickman et al. also suggested that in Manila, people often rely on private transportation to avoid the use of unreliable transportation systems and exposure to unpleasant environments when using the public transportation system. Furthermore, booking applications in the Philippines such as Angkas, Grab, and Joyride are extremely popular with commuters. Chalermpong et al. (2023) suggested that due to the traffic congestion being experienced in Southeast Asian countries, motorcycle taxis are becoming popular.

Interestingly, Chang et al. (2021) suggested that population density is linked to traffic congestion in an area. If more people are to move into cities for shorter commute periods, traffic congestion will also increase. According to Chu et al. (2022), there is a strong correlation between urbanization and the intention to purchase new cars. On the other hand, huge increases in the number of cars may have an impact on traffic congestion (Zadobrischi et al., 2020). Interestingly, some responses had a good result in handling traffic congestion and seemed to have a good effect as well on the perceived factors associated with productivity loss, but some can increase the intensity of traffic congestion. Moreover, people cannot also ignore that actions implemented by larger organizations such as the government will have a bigger effect in solving traffic congestion. Suzara et al. (2021) suggested that solving traffic congestion will improve the quality of life of commuters if the government veers away from a car-centric approach and leans towards a more sustainable and people-oriented approach.

This paper aims to evaluate the factors that contribute positively to commuters' productivity in the face of challenges posed by traffic congestion in the National Capital Region of the Philippines. In this study, the research employed both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Structural equation modeling (SEM) for a more robust approach. The utilization of EFA was employed in the early stage of this paper to reduce a large set of variables to a smaller number of latent factors, this method helps to explore the structure of the data and identify latent factors that explain the observed patterns of correlations.

Once latent factors are identified through EFA, they can be used for SEM analysis to test and refine theoretical models that specify the relationship between these factors and observed variables. The results from EFA guide the development of the measurement model in SEM on which it defines the latent factors and indicators. Meanwhile, the SEM extends EFA by incorporating both observed and latent variables into a structural model. With these combined approaches, this paper offers a comprehensive approach to assess the factors affecting the productivity loss of employees due to traffic congestion in the National Capital Region of the Philippines.

**Hypothetical Research Model**

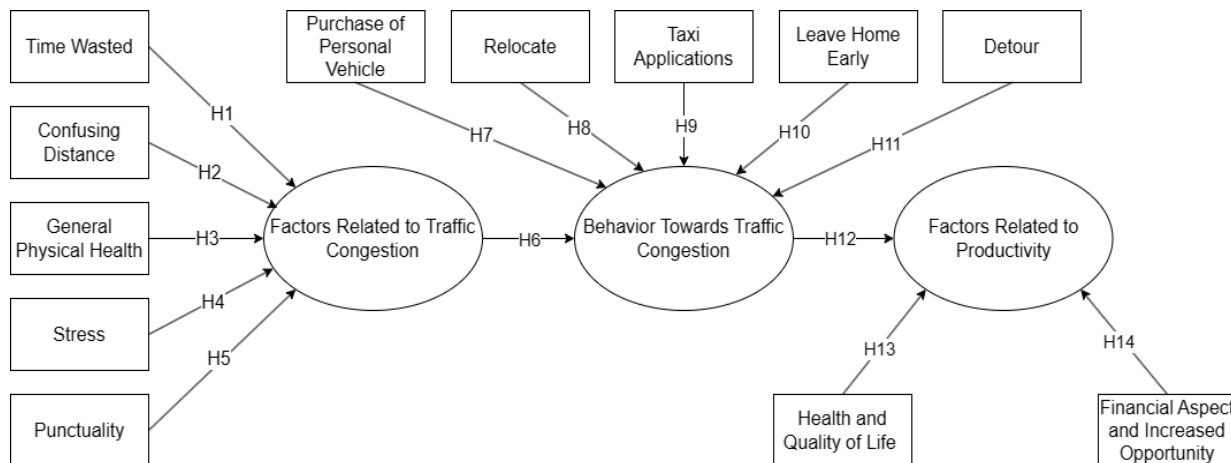


Figure 1. Hypothetical Research Model

Figure 1 illustrates the Hypothetical research model of the study. In measuring endogenous variables in a research, exogenous variables are needed. Endogenous variables are variables that cannot be directly measured but can be measured using exogenous variables. The endogenous variables of this study are factors related to traffic congestion, actions, and factors related to productivity loss. The exogenous variables used to measure factors related to traffic congestion were time wasted, confusing distance, general physical health, stress, and punctuality. Time wasted pertains to the time lost due to traffic congestion (Balabanian, 2020).

Moreover, confusing distance pertains to the distortion of the perceived distance traveled due to the time spent on the traffic (Ralph et al., 2020). According to Kamruzzaman and Rumpa (2019), general physical health refers to the physical condition of a person. Additionally, Kamruzzaman and Rumpa mentioned that stress which pertains to strained mental state, and punctuality which refers to the ability of a person to come on time is another factor related to traffic congestion.

The exogenous variables of the endogenous variable behavior towards traffic congestion were the purchase of a personal vehicle, relocation, taxi applications, leaving home early, and detouring. Hickman et al. (2018) mentioned that people who experience traffic congestion prefer to use private vehicles instead of utilizing public transportation. Additionally, Hickman et al. stated that one method to combat traffic congestion is to leave home early or travel outside rush hour. Xue et al. (2020) and Ma and Ye (2019) mentioned that people tend to relocate to places near workplaces to mitigate the effects of traffic congestion. Chalermpong et al. (2023) stated that taxi applications, specifically motorcycle taxis, are becoming popular nowadays to combat traffic congestion. Moreover, Metz (2020) stated that navigation applications are becoming popular with motorists.

Due to traffic congestion, productivity loss is being experienced by people. The measures used to observe the

endogenous factors related to productivity were health and quality of life, financial aspects, and increased opportunity. Khreis (2020) and Ghazali et al. (2019) mentioned that health and quality of life loss are factors related to productivity loss due to traffic congestion. Health loss refers to the degradation of health status due to external factors that affect a person. Moreover, quality of life loss means that people lose time for leisure activities due to traffic congestion which in turn affects productivity. Ghazali et al. (2019) also mentioned that economic and productivity loss is also associated with productivity loss experienced by people. Economic loss pertains to the monetary loss experienced by people such as more fuel being spent by businesses to transport goods. On the other hand, opportunity loss refers to the loss of chance to improve an individual's quality of life or career due to missing out on opportunities.

Traffic congestion is the accumulation of excess vehicles in a section of the road at a specific time, causing a significantly slower movement of the vehicles which leads to an increase in the travel time from one point to another.

*Hypothesis 1: Time wasted will positively influence traffic congestion*

Time wasted refers to the amount of unnecessary time that is spent and does not produce any beneficial results. It also pertains to the time lost due to traffic congestion (Balabanian, 2020).

*Hypothesis 2: Confusing distance will positively influence traffic congestion*

Confusing distance pertains to the distortion of the perceived distance traveled due to the time spent on the traffic (Ralph et al., 2020).

*Hypothesis 3: General physical health will positively influence traffic congestion*

The overall condition of a person's physical body considers everything from the absence of diseases to fitness level. According to Kamruzzaman and Rumpa (2019), general physical health refers to the physical condition of a person and this is highly affected by traffic congestion.

*Hypothesis 4: Stress will positively influence traffic congestion*

Stress refers to the body's physiological and psychological reaction to perceived threats or difficulties, which sets off a series of intricate reactions meant to help the body adjust to or deal with the stressor. According to the study of Kamruzzaman and Rumpa (2019), traffic congestion can cause stress among commuters.

*Hypothesis 5: Punctuality will positively influence traffic congestion*

Punctuality is being regularly on time, following or adhering to schedules, and honoring deadlines are the habits of punctuality (Li et al., 2020).

*Hypothesis 6: Traffic Congestion will positively influence action/behavior against traffic congestion*

The presence of traffic congestion in an individual's daily life has a significant impact on how a person will react and mitigate the negative effects. Behavior toward traffic congestion is an individual act that may drive patiently, cooperatively, aggressively, and impulsively (Li et al., 2020).

*Hypothesis 7: Purchasing of personal vehicles will positively influence action/behavior against traffic congestion*

Buying a vehicle increases the mobility of individuals when traveling from place to place, this is because of the exemption from queueing lines and the availability of public transportation. Hickman et al. (2018) mentioned that people who experience traffic congestion prefer to use private vehicles instead of utilizing public transportation.

*Hypothesis 8: Relocating will positively influence action/behavior against traffic congestion*

Relocation refers to moving from one place to another that is more accessible in terms of distance from the workplace. Xue et al. (2020) and Ma and Ye (2019) mentioned that people tend to relocate to places near workplaces to mitigate the effects of traffic congestion.

*Hypothesis 9: Taxi applications will positively influence action/behavior against traffic congestion*

Taxi applications are a medium of transportation where people rent motorcycles or cars to go to their designated locations. Chalermpong et al. (2023) stated that taxi applications, specifically motorcycle taxis, are becoming popular nowadays in the Southeast Asia Region to combat traffic congestion.

*Hypothesis 10: Leaving home early will positively influence action/behavior against traffic congestion*

Leaving home early refers to a person's advanced departure from home to prevent instances that can cause late arrival time (Hickman et al., 2018).

*Hypothesis 11: Detouring will positively influence action/behavior against traffic congestion*

Detouring refers to the usage of other routes to avoid traffic congestion. According to Metz (2022), the usage of navigation apps in the National Capital Region is becoming popular.

Productivity is the output and efficiency of work as determined by the amount of input to output in multiple tasks or processes. According to Singh and Chaudhary (2022). The organization's work culture now places a high value on productivity. Broadly speaking, productivity is the process of transforming inputs like labor, capital, and time into outputs.

*Hypothesis 12: Behavior /Action will positively influence productivity*

Actions or behavior are the response of a person when faced with difficulties that aim to achieve a goal, either to mitigate or improve a situation. According to Nazir (2018), action is a response to a stimulus. In the case of the research, the stimulus is traffic congestion which in turn incites employees to take action to combat the adverse effects.

*Hypothesis 13: Health and Quality of Life will positively influence productivity*

Health is the general state of physical, mental, and social well-being of a person. Quality of life, on the other hand, is a person's perception of their position in life which also includes physical health, psychological well-being, environmental condition, and social welfare. In essence, health and quality of life are closely related concepts that reflect an individual's holistic well-being and fulfillment about their life conditions. Khreis (2020) and Ghazali et al. (2019) mentioned that health and quality of life loss are factors related to productivity loss due to traffic congestion. Health loss refers to the degradation of health status due to external factors that affect a person. Moreover, quality of life loss means that people lose time for leisure activities due to traffic congestion which in turn affects productivity.

*Hypothesis 14: Financial Aspect and Increased Prospects will positively influence productivity*

The financial aspect refers to the monetary components of various aspects of life, such as personal, social, and professional. It includes income, savings, investments, debts, and financial management. Increased prospects pertain to the number of opportunities present and possibilities for success, improvement, or achievement in life. These prospects can relate to personal development, career growth, financial stability, or any other aspect of life where success is pursued. Ghazali et al. (2019) mentioned that economic and productivity loss is also associated with productivity loss experienced by people. Economic loss pertains to the monetary loss experienced by people such as more fuel being spent by businesses to transport goods. Opportunity loss refers to the loss of chance to improve an individual's quality of life or career due to missing out on opportunities.

## **Method**

### **Data Collection**

The target population for this study consisted of employees in the NCR in the Philippines. The study adopted the convenience sampling method. Data collection occurred from October 2023 to November 2023. A total of 518 responses were gathered. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents' confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. A structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was designed to collect quantitative data, ensuring clarity and precision.



Table 1. Demographics

Variable	Category	No.	Response information N=518
Gender	Male	323	62.40%
	Female	187	36.10%
	Prefer not to say	8	1.50%
Age	18-20	35	6.80%
	21-29	351	67.80%
	30-39	97	18.70%
	40-49	23	4.40%
	More than 50	10	1.90%
<b>Educational</b>			
Attainment	Primary School	10	1.93%
	High School	104	20.08%
	Vocational	29	5.60%
	Bachelor's Degree	329	63.50%
	Master's Degree	35	6.80%
	Doctorate	11	2.10%
Employment Status	Full-time Employee	392	75.70%
	Part-time Employee	31	6.00%
	Business Owner	20	3.90%
	Unemployed	34	6.60%
	Retired	4	0.80%
	Self-employed	9	1.70%
	Others	28	5.40%
Civil Status	Single	429	82.80%
	Married	86	16.60%
	Widowed	2	0.40%
	Legally Separated	1	0.20%
<b>Monthly Income</b>			
(Php)	Less than 12,082 Php	103	19.90%
	12,082 Php to 24,164 Php	141	27.20%
	24,164 Php to 48,328 Php	187	36.10%
	48,328 Php to 84,574 Php	54	10.40%
	84,574 Php to 144,984 Php	22	4.20%
	144,984 Php to Php 241,640		
	Php	7	1.40%
	More than 241,640 Php	4	0.80%

The demographic profile of the study consists of a total of 518 respondents. It shows a diverse representation of across various categories. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were identified as male, constituting 62.40% of the data, while females accounted for 36.10%. A small percentage of 1.50% chose not to disclose their gender preference. The age distribution shows a predominantly young and middle-aged population, with 67% falling within the 21-29 age group. Participants aged 30-39 constitute 18.70%, followed by a smaller percentage of 18-20, 40-49, and over 50 age brackets. In Educational attainment, among the participants, a significant majority (63.50%) hold a Bachelor's Degree. High School graduates comprised 20.08% while those with a Masters and Doctorate Degree constituted 6.80% and 2.10% respectively. With regards to employment status, the majority of participants identified as full-time employees (75.70%), with a smaller percentage working part-time (6.00%) or being self-employed (1.70%). In addition, 3.90% were identified as business owners, and 6.60% were unemployed. Retirement status was less common, with 0.80% of participants retired. Civil status shows a predominantly single population, accounting for 82.80% of respondents, while married individuals constituted 16.60%. A small percentage constituted widowed (0.40%) and separated (0.20%). Finally, participants' monthly income distribution shows a diverse final background. The largest portion (36.10%) fell within the 24,164 Php to ₱48,323 Php income range, followed by those earning 12,082 Php to ₱24, 164 Php (27.20%). Lower income brackets (< 12,082 Php) and higher brackets (48,328 Php to 241,640 Php) had respective representations of 19.90% and 10.40%, and lastly with the highest income bracket (> 241, 640 Php) constituting 0.80% of the data.

#### *Data Analysis*

##### *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test*

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test of adequacy is a test used by data analysts to identify the adequacy of data for factor extraction. The KMO gives a score between 0 and 1 where results that are equal to or greater than 0.8 are said to be adequate. This means that when data is tested with KMO and yields a score of 0.8, the data size is said to be sufficient and the correlation between the variables can be explained by a hidden variable (Nkansah, 2018). Moreover, this study utilized an online sample size calculator that computes the required number of respondents to represent the population. The parameters used in computing the number of respondents needed is a 95% confidence interval with a 5% margin of error.

##### *Exploratory Factor Analysis*

Multivariate analysis, specifically factor analysis was used to unveil hidden observed variables in the data set. According to Tavakol and Wetzel (2020), this technique allows us to simplify a set of complex variables or items using statistical procedures to explore the underlying dimensions that explain the relationships between the multiple variables/items. The EFA simplifies the complexity of the analysis. It offers the means to construct a model that illustrates the intricate relationships between these latent factors and their corresponding observed variables, providing valuable insights into the factors that contribute to productivity loss.

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results

Corresponding Measure	Factor Loadings
I experience less frustration and annoyance when I spend less time in traffic	0.649
I believe that spending less amount of time stuck in traffic has a positive impact on my overall quality of life	0.625
Reducing my exposure to traffic will affect my health positively	0.611
I think I can enjoy life more if I experience less traffic congestion	0.609
I feel like I have more time to do other things if there is no traffic congestion	0.600
I do not feel tense when there is traffic after acting against it	0.594
I experience less stress and anxiety after doing something to combat traffic	0.580
Less exposure to traffic makes me more energetic and healthier	0.575
I am able to meet deadlines faster because I do not spend too much time in traffic congestion	0.573
I feel more productive because I have more time to do meaningful things instead of being stuck in traffic	0.568
After taking action to combat traffic congestion, I have more spare time	0.567
I noticed that prolonged exposure to traffic congestion leads to a decrease in my overall physical fitness and health	0.538
I try to find ways to reduce monetary losses from traffic, like carpooling or telecommuting (WFH)	0.674
I believe that I will spend less if there is less traffic congestion	0.668
I feel less frustrated when I do not miss important meetings or events due to traffic delays	0.666
I believe that taking action on traffic-related delays can positively	0.642

impact my career or personal opportunities

I believe that if there is less traffic congestion, my expenses will be less 0.639

I believe that taking action against traffic congestion is worth spending my money on 0.609

I experienced less burden about the financial costs induced by traffic congestion when I took action about it 0.582

After taking action to combat traffic, I believe that it positively affects my finances 0.568

I worry less about the potential missed opportunities that could arise from being consistently late due to traffic if there is less traffic congestion 0.518

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I think that buying my own vehicle will positively affect my productivity 0.749

I plan to purchase a personal vehicle due to traffic 0.739

I feel the urge to have my own vehicle due to traffic 0.727

I believe that having a vehicle as a service will reduce my travel time 0.702

I feel like having my own vehicle will have a huge impact on my arrival time at work 0.691

I think that having a vehicle will make my everyday commute easy. 0.668

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If I move my residence near my office, I think it will be beneficial for me 0.760

I think that the best way to avoid traffic is to relocate nearer to my office 0.742

I like the idea of living near my office so that I can avoid traffic 0.723

I think that living near my work will positively affect my life 0.692

I believe that if I live near my work, I will be more productive 0.685

I want to buy/rent an accommodation that is nearer to my work because 0.652

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of the traffic

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Instead of riding the bus/jeepney, I book taxi services to get to work on time. (e.g., Grab, Angkas, taxi, habal, etc.)	0.740
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I feel the urge to switch from mass transportation to taxi services or motor services to prevent being late for work	0.720
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When the queue in the mass transportation is long, I opt to take other modes of transportation	0.712
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I believe that using taxi and motorcycle services is an effective way to avoid traffic	0.691
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When I get stuck in traffic while riding mass transportation, I hail/book taxis to avoid further delays. (e.g. taxi, Grab, Angkas, habal, etc.)	0.677
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I switch from jeepneys/buses to faster-commuting options just to arrive early at work and avoid getting stuck in traffic	0.648
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I feel a sense of relief when I leave home early because I will not be late for work	0.734
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I have noticed that by leaving home early, I can accomplish more tasks and be more productive at work	0.729
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I believe that leaving home early will save me from being stuck in traffic	0.718
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I think that leaving home early will positively affect my productivity at work	0.656
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I believe that leaving early will save me from being late due to traffic	0.640
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I feel nervous when I do not leave home early because of the traffic	0.557
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Traffic is consuming a lot of my time	0.758
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I feel like my time is wasted on traffic	0.754
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The traffic makes my travel time longer	0.720
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I feel like I can do better things if I do not spend a lot of time in traffic	0.706
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I feel like I spent a lot of time in the traffic	0.661
I think detouring positively affects my arrival time	0.679
I feel that detouring has a huge impact on my productivity at work	0.672
I can avoid traffic by taking other roads	0.662
Detouring makes me arrive faster in my destination	0.630
I usually plan ahead of time to detour because of traffic congestion in the area	0.600
I detour usually because of traffic	0.596
I do less work because of the time I spend in traffic	0.701
I am late even when my house is not far away because of the traffic	0.678
I feel like the distance I perceived from my home to my destination is more far because of the traffic	0.650
Traffic makes me perceive the distance between my home and my destination as longer than it actually is	0.644
I do less work because of the time I spend in traffic	0.591
I experience stress and physical discomfort when stuck in traffic, and I think it takes a toll on my physical well-being	0.684
I believe that spending long hours commuting in heavy traffic negatively affects my overall physical health	0.678
I believe that the sedentary nature of long commutes in traffic has a negative impact on my physical fitness and well-being	0.628
I noticed that traffic congestion leads to fatigue and physical strain, impacting my ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle	0.626
I find myself with reduced energy and vitality after spending time in traffic jams	0.569
I feel stressed when I am almost late, and the cars are not moving	0.717

I feel less energized because of the stress caused by traffic	0.633
I feel tense when I am almost late because of the traffic	0.616
I do not like the idea of being in a traffic	0.555
When stuck in traffic, I get irritated	0.528
I find that traffic-related delays have a noticeable impact on the convenience of my daily commute	0.527
Traffic-related delays affect my overall productivity or performance at work or other commitments	0.710
I do less work because I arrive late because of the traffic	0.646
I find myself stressed and frustrated when stuck in traffic on my way to appointments or work	0.621
Traffic is a common reason for my occasional tardiness	0.621

Table 2 shows the treated and final version of the rotated component matrix. The results unveiled 12 observed variables. The resulting variables were: time wasted which refers to the time being wasted in the traffic; a confusing distance which refers to the distortion of the perceived distance; general physical health which refers to the overall health of a person; stress which refers to the mental state being strained; punctuality which refers to the ability of a person to come on time; purchase of personal vehicle which refers to the buying of own vehicle; relocate which refers to moving to a place that is much nearer to the workplace; use of taxi applications; leave home early which refers to traveling outside rush hours; detour which means taking other roads that is less congested to arrive in the same destination; health and quality life of life that pertains to general health and overall outlook in life; financial aspect and increased opportunities which refers to the increase of monetary wealth and that more opportunities are available due to more time to be more productive.

### *Structural Equation Modeling*

Testing theories about the effects of interacting factors is done through the multivariate Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. The SEM is a multivariate approach of testing hypotheses regarding the influences of one variable on another during the interaction between the variables. By doing so, a study can test hypotheses about how variables are related, assess whether their theoretical models fit with the observed data and make predictions about how changes in one variable might affect changes in other variables within a study.

In this paper, the SEM is performed using AMOS 22. The study utilizes the Statistical Package for the Social



Sciences (SPSS) to treat data for Factor Analysis and Reliability Testing. Abuhasel (2023) suggested that SPSS is a great statistical tool to treat data and provide a graphical representation of the results for uncomplicated interpretation. Analysis of Movement Structure (AMOS) will also be used for creating the structural equation modeling. The AMOS is a popular tool that is used in several researches to showcase if the data that is gathered by researchers can be explained by a structural construct (Na et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2023, Ibrahim et al., 2021).

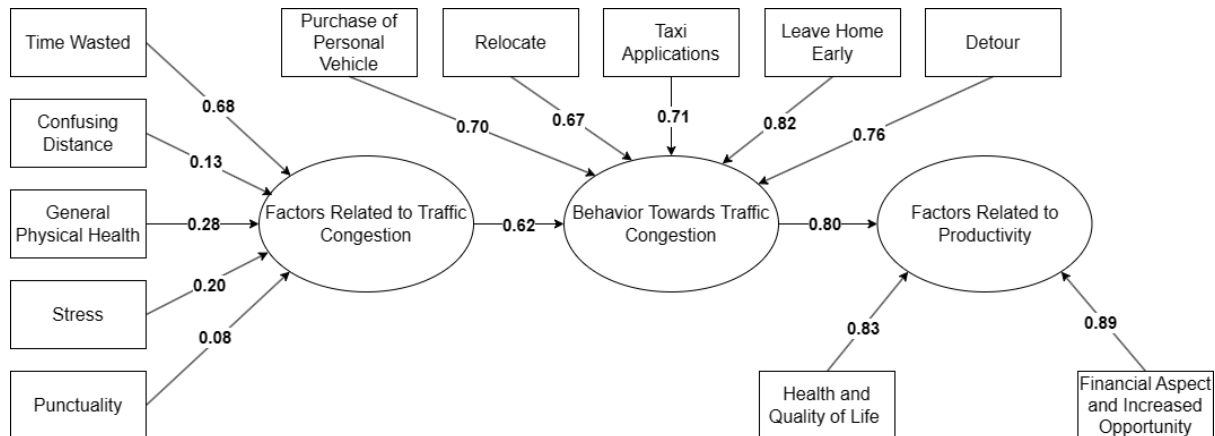


Figure 2. Initial Structural Equation Model for Factors Affecting Productivity Loss due to Traffic Congestion

Figure 2 conveys the initial statistical model of the study.

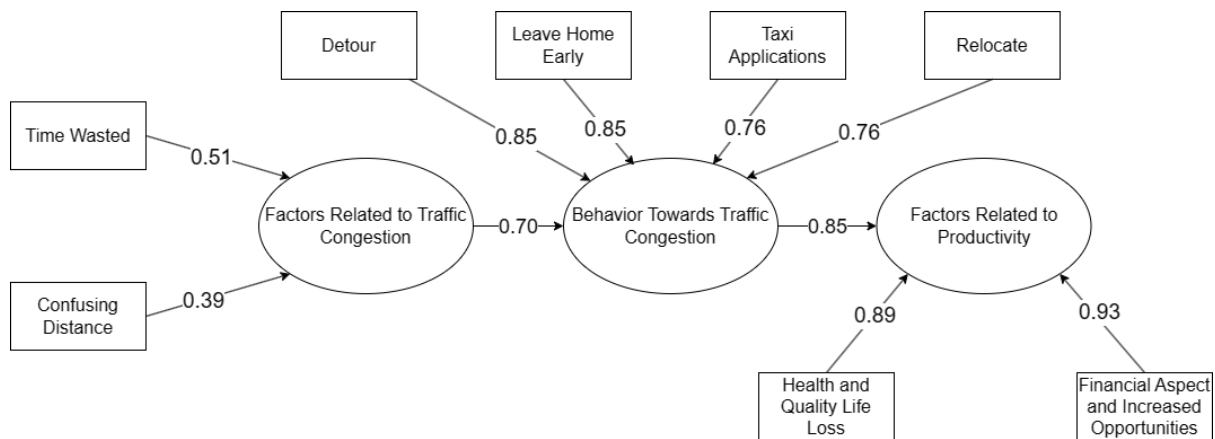


Figure 3. Final Model on Factors Affecting Productivity Loss due to Traffic Congestion

The model should comply with the model fit indices to ensure that the results are acceptable. The initial model does not comply with some of the model fit indices and treatments were required to ensure compliance. The common model fit indices used in studies about SEM according to Kang and Ahn (2021) are the Chi-square/degrees of freedom (df), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Chi-square/DF, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI/TLI), Root Mean Square Residuals (RMR), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The said model fit

indices were suggested by Bhale and Bedi (2023), and Kang and Ahn (2021). A value that is less than five in chi-square/DF is acceptable according to Marsh and Hocevar (1985). Moreover, according to Na et al. (2022), Ibrahim et al. (2021), and Lee et al. (2023) GFI, TLI, NFI, and CFI must have a value greater than 0.90. Moreover, AGFI must have a value greater than 0.80 to be acceptable. Additionally, RMSEA and RMR must have a value of less than 0.10 to be considered acceptable.

The results of the SEM show that two exogenous variables can measure factors related to traffic congestion. An exogenous variable is an independent variable that is not affected by external factors. The exogenous variable is somehow related to an independent variable. The endogenous variables are the items that are being affected by external forces. The two exogenous variables were time wasted and confusing distance. The exogenous variables positively impact the endogenous variable of traffic congestion. On the other hand, the variables that impact behavior towards traffic congestion were relocation, taxi applications, leaving home early, and detours. The results also show that health and quality of life, financial aspects, and increased opportunities are measures of factors related to productivity.

### *Reliability Testing*

In the works of Abdallah et al. (2023), the cut-off value for Cronbach's alpha is 0.7 to be said acceptable. A value that is equal to or greater than 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability. The purpose of reliability testing is to assess the set of measures if they are internally consistent. The meaning of internally consistent is that all measures of a certain variable measure the same item.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha

Measure	Cronbach's Alpha	Cut-off	Remarks
Time Wasted	0.801	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Confusing Distance	0.898	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Factors Related to Traffic Congestion	0.804	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Detour	0.910	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Leave Home Early	0.841	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Taxi Applications	0.889	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Relocate	0.873	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Behavior Towards Traffic Congestion	0.815	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Health and Quality of Life	0.857	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Economic and Opportunity	0.890	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Productivity	0.800	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable

Table 3 reflects the results of a reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of factors related to traffic congestion, behavior towards traffic congestion, and factors associated with productivity. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of reliability, indicating how well the items within a set are correlated.

*Model Fit Indices*

In SEM, it is important to evaluate if the observed dataset corresponds with the proposed theoretical model. According to Bhale and Bedi (2023), model fit indices show an understanding of the available data that can be explained by the theoretical model. It is important that the requirements of the model fit indices be satisfied to ensure that the dataset can be explained by the model used.

Table 4. Model Fit Indices

Model Fit	Value	Cut-Off	References	Remarks
Chi-Square/df	2.62	< 5	Marsh and Hocevar (1985)	Acceptable
GFI	0.90	≥ 0.90	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
AGFI	0.85	> 0.80	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
RMR	0.05	≤ 0.1	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
TLI (NNFI)	0.93	≥ 0.90	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
CFI	0.93	≥ 0.90	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
NFI	0.90	≥ 0.90	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.06	< 0.10	(Na et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023)	Acceptable

\*Note: GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; RMR = Root Mean Square Residual; TLI = Tucker Lewis Coefficient; NNFI = Non-normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; df = degrees of freedom

Table 4 shows the model fit indices of the modified model. Results show that all model fit indices are satisfied. Model fit is an important statistical tool that allows researchers to understand if the dataset can be explained by the proposed hypothetical model.

## Results

The results unveiled 12 observed variables. The resulting variables were time wasted, confusing distance, general physical health, stress, punctuality, purchase of personal vehicle, relocating, use of taxi applications, detour, health and quality of life, and lastly, financial aspect and increased opportunities. Initially, there were 16 variables identified from different literature, but factor analysis suggests that there are only 12 variables based on the measures created. Additionally, the resulting KMO score computed is 0.961 and is above the minimum cut-off of 0.7 which means that the data set to be sample adequate. This means that the sample size is already adequate for factor extraction. Moreover, results suggest that the total variance is 72% which means that the research explains 72% of the study and there is still 28% undiscovered.

Proceeding on to the SEM, the final model results revealed that two factors can measure factors related to traffic congestion. The variables were time wasted ( $\beta = 0.51$ ) and confusing distance ( $\beta = 0.39$ ). This means that the two exogenous factors positively impact traffic congestion. Moreover, other exogenous variables of traffic congestion such as general physical health, stress, and punctuality were removed from the statistical model because estimates show low beta values that cause problems in the model. The results of the data analysis showed that the four exogenous variables such as relocation ( $\beta = 0.76$ ), taxi applications ( $\beta = 0.76$ ), leaving home early ( $\beta = 0.85$ ), and detours ( $\beta = 0.85$ ) positively impact the factors related to traffic congestion. Although there were four exogenous variables that positively impacted behavior towards traffic congestion, the result revealed the purchasing of personal vehicles causes problems in the model resulting in its removal. Additionally, the results also present that the health and quality of life, financial aspect and increased opportunities are measures of factors related to productivity with beta values of  $\beta = 0.89$  and  $0.93$  respectively. The result of the statistical modeling revealed that endogenous variables impact each other as well. The factors related to traffic congestion positively impact behavior towards traffic congestion ( $\beta = 0.70$ ). The behavior towards traffic congestion positively impacts factors related to productivity ( $\beta = 0.85$ ).

The Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability of the measures used for each variable. The results of the test showed that the internal consistency of the factors related to traffic congestion, behavior towards traffic congestion, and factors associated with productivity have a Cronbach's Alpha value that ranges from 0.800 to 0.910 and it revealed high internal consistency. Therefore, the values are considered acceptable, indicating a strong correlation among the items within each factor.

The Model Fit Indices results showed remarkable results. All of the suggested model fit indices by Kang and Ahn (2021) were all satisfied. The chi-square/df has a result of 2.62 with an acceptable value of less than 5. The GFI of the model is 0.90 with an acceptable value of greater than or equal to 0.90. The AGFI of the model is 0.85 with a cut-off value that is greater than 0.80. The RMR score is 0.05 with an acceptable value of less than 0.1. The TLI (NNFI) and CFI score of the model is both 0.93 with both measures having an acceptable value that is greater than or equal to 0.90. The NFI score of the model is 0.90 with an acceptable value that is equal or

greater than 0.90. Lastly, the RMSEA score is 0.06 with an acceptable value that is less than 0.1. The results of the model fit indices were all within the cut-off limit.

This study developed several suggestions and recommendations considering the results and conclusions. Results of the study showed that there is a strong possibility that acting can improve how a person experiences traffic congestion. Be it buying a personal vehicle or relocating to a place that is near to work, there is a big chance that current conditions will improve. Although research shows that there is a strong possibility that conditions can be improved, it is still not proper that people will spend more just to combat the effects of traffic congestion. All the activities that the research created are focused on the workers. Results indicate that acting can have a favorable impact on the perceived causes associated with traffic congestion. It is necessary to take action to prevent the issues associated with traffic congestion, which include lost opportunities, health, and quality of life, as well as financial loss.

## Discussion

After conducting the factor analysis, the data was then tested to see if the data would fit the hypothetical model. The results revealed that time wasted ( $\beta = 0.51$ ) and confusing distance ( $\beta = 0.39$ ) positively affect traffic congestion. In the study of Balabanian (2020), students spend more time in traffic which results in time wasted, and the perceived distance traveled by students is also distorted. On the other hand, the study results showed employees experience the same factors experienced by students. The study of Kamruzzaman and Rumpa (2019) revealed that employees in Dhaka, Bangladesh also experienced the results of the study. Employees in the region strongly agree that productivity is highly affected by traffic congestion. Variables of time wasted, and confusing distance were observed to be factors of traffic congestion. Results also revealed that factors related to traffic congestion have a significant effect on behaviors toward traffic congestion ( $\beta = 0.70$ ). This means that there is a high chance that employees who experience traffic congestion will have an action or behavior that will combat the effects of traffic congestion. The result of the study validates the literature that emphasizes time wasted and confusing distance are factors related to traffic congestion. The result implies that in the Philippines, there is a lot of time loss and slow-moving traffic that causes productivity loss among employees.

Results also show variables such as relocating ( $\beta = 0.76$ ), taxi applications ( $\beta = 0.76$ ), leaving home early ( $\beta = 0.85$ ), and detouring ( $\beta = 0.85$ ) positively impacts behavior towards traffic congestion. The study by Xue et al. (2020) suggests that people in China will likely relocate to shorten commute time and travel distance. The findings also suggest relocation as an effective option to combat the effects of traffic congestion. The study of Chalermpong et al. (2023) also revealed that booking applications, specifically motorcycle taxis, are becoming more popular in Southeast Asian countries. The study revealed that there is an increase in the usage of motor taxis. The study of Hickman et al. (2018) also suggests that people in Metro Manila in the Philippines travel outside of rush hours to avoid being stuck in traffic and cramped transportation. Participants of the study reported that people traveling in Metro Manila travel outside of rush hours because of the ineffective

transportation system in the area. Gumasing et al. (2023) also revealed that there is a high acceptance of using navigation applications for drivers within Metro Manila. This application allows users to detour on less congested roads. Additionally, SEM results showed that behavior toward traffic congestion has a significant impact on productivity ( $\beta = 0.85$ ). This means that employees who act to mitigate traffic congestion will likely be more productive and will have a better overall outlook in life. Excessive expenses and missed opportunities can be minimized by acting. Other than that, health problems and degradation of quality of life can be avoided. This result effectively adds to the literature about the effect of taking actions to mitigate the effects of traffic congestion.

In terms of the perceived factors related to productivity, results show that it is positively impacted by health and quality of life loss ( $\beta = 0.89$ ), financial aspect, and increased opportunities ( $\beta = 0.93$ ). The study by Ghazali et al. (2019) mentioned that due to traffic congestion, quality of life and health are being experienced by the people in Seri Kembangan, Malaysia. Moreover, economic and opportunity loss was also observed in the area. The residents reported that people in the area are being affected by traffic congestion in terms of economic, opportunity, health, and quality of life loss. The people were spending more on petrol due to the traffic. Moreover, residents reported that they were spending a lot of time in traffic congestion which affects their health, opportunity, and quality of life.

According to the study of Lwesya et al. (2021), the same phenomenon occurs in Tanzania wherein business owners encounter opportunity and monetary losses due to traffic congestion. Business owners were consuming more fuel, which means more money was spent, and were also missing opportunities due to the delay caused by traffic congestion. The result of the study shows that employees in the Philippines are experiencing loss of money and opportunities, and a decline in health and quality of life. This adds to the existing literature about the productivity loss being experienced by employees in the Philippines.

The implication of the research results revealed that traffic congestion acts as a stimulus, in which employees experience productivity loss that affects behavior to mitigate the effects of traffic congestion. The research adheres to the stimulus-response (SR) theory created by Edward Thorndike in the 1900 in which a stimulus activates and triggers a response (Barua et al., 2020). The contribution of the research extended the idea of the SR theory by identifying if the responses positively impact the productivity of employees. The study contributes to existing literature by proving that actions to mitigate traffic congestion alleviates the effect of productivity loss.

The results reveal that the movement of people and the intention to use taxi applications is highly affected by traffic congestion. The work of Lomibao (2023) suggested that the movement of people within the area is highly due to employment. The reason behind the case is to improve the economic position of employees. In contrast, Zadobrischi et al. (2020) mentioned that due to the continual intermigration of people in the area, traffic congestion worsens. Although there are measures that employees take to combat the effect of traffic congestion, there is no certainty as to the duration of the effectivity. Existing actions can be effective right now, but there is

a void that slowly consumes the effectiveness of actions due to the continual intermigration of people.

To minimize the impact of traffic congestion on daily life, the community should give priority to infrastructure improvements in residential areas. This includes improving access to public transportation, involving the community in decision-making processes, and promoting green spaces and walkable neighborhoods. Articles cited in the research showed how the government of the country fails to understand how transportation can be improved. Policies of the country about fighting the effects of traffic congestion are car-centric instead of a people-centric approach. The current policies prioritize the increasing volume of private vehicles within the region instead of giving people better access to public transportation. In addition, it is important to encourage a more environmentally friendly method of reducing traffic congestion as opposed to one that is car centric.

Future works of the study are advised to consider specific demographics to further deepen the understanding of how different types of people are being affected by traffic and how respondents will deal with the subject matter. Factor analysis revealed that the total variance explained by the variables is 72%, and the remaining 28% may be found upon integrating demographics. Additionally, qualitative research can also be used to further understand the subject. Interviews and narratives from subject matter experts can also be helpful in enlightening researchers and readers about the current conditions of how traffic affects an employed individual. The impact of policy making in the Philippines can also be studied to further understand what kind of policies the government must impose to better the situation. Other than that, simulations can also be done to further understand the movement of different demographic groups. This way, researchers can better understand where to place business centers and commercial areas.

## Conclusion

Humanity has lived with traffic congestion for years. It is a frustrating fact of life that slows us down and tries people's patience. However, the study has shown a much deeper reality, traffic congestion affects our lives in various ways, making it more than just a minor inconvenience. The study shows the complex relationship between traffic problems, behavior, and commuters' productivity. The study was carefully carried out using SPSS and AMOS software through the application of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Structural equation modeling (SEM) for a more robust approach, resulting in a reliable model.

The factor analysis conducted on the dataset identified 12 key factors associated with traffic congestion, such as time wasted, confusing distance, general physical health, stress, punctuality, personal vehicle ownership, relocation, taxi applications, early departure from home, detouring, health and quality of life, and financial aspects with increased opportunities. The hypothetical model shows significant positive effects of factors such as time wasted, confusing distance, general physical health, stress, and punctuality on traffic congestion, However, findings from this study were found to align with prior research such as Balabanian (2020) and Kamruzzaman and Rumpa (2019), indicates that both students and employees experience similar factors



contributing to traffic congestion. The study also emphasizes how traffic congestion affects the perceived travel distance of commuters and how traffic congestion consumes the valuable time that commuters can spend in other meaningful activities as suggested by Ghazali et al. (2019), linking traffic congestion to the deterioration of quality of life, increased expense, and missed opportunities.

Behavioral responses to traffic congestion were found to be positively influenced by variables such as relocating, using taxi applications, leaving home early, and detouring. The study highlights the significant impact of proactive behavior towards traffic congestion on productivity and emphasizes that individuals who take measures to lessen congestion tend to exhibit higher productivity and quality of life. This also reveals that addressing traffic-related challenges can minimize excessive expenses, missed opportunities, health problems, and degradation of quality of life.

With regards to factors influencing productivity, the study identifies health and quality of life loss, and financial aspects with increased opportunities as key determinants. Similar findings were observed in the study conducted in Malaysia (Ghazali et al., 2019) and Tanzania (Lwesya et al., 2021), discussing the broader impact of traffic congestion on individuals, and businesses, leading to health-related issues and economic losses.

In general, the study provides a comprehensive approach to the multiple impacts of traffic congestion, showing its relationship with various factors, behavioral responses, and consequences on productivity, health, and economic aspects. This paper also highlights the importance of proactive measures in mitigating the adverse effects and suggests potential ways to address the challenges posed by traffic congestion.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

The study provides theoretical contributions to the existing literature by identifying and validating 12 distinct factors associated with traffic congestion, behavior, and productivity. The examination of the hypothetical model contributed to the validation of the model in connection with identified factors of traffic congestion. The empirical validation enhances existing models and theories related to transportation studies, which significantly contribute to factors of traffic congestion. This study also established a connection between proactive behavior toward traffic congestion and productivity.

### *Practical Implication*

The study offers practical insights for engineers, managers, policymakers, urban planners, and other stakeholders on the strategies that can be created to address specific factors like confusing distance, stress, and punctuality to enhance the overall traffic management system in the National Capital Region. In addition, it also identifies the positive impact of factors such as purchasing personal vehicles, using taxi applications, and detouring on behavior towards congestion in promoting alternative transportation methods. Organizations can implement practical measures to address health-related consequences of traffic congestion which might involve

employee well-being programs, flexible work arrangements, or support services to help mitigate the stress and health issues associated with commuters. In addition, Businesses can make strategic decisions based on the study's insights. By acknowledging the impact of congestion on productivity, companies may consider flexible working hours, remote work options, or even choosing office locations strategically to minimize the burden of commuters.

## Recommendations

### Sustainable People-centric Approach

Prioritizing comprehensive infrastructure improvements and improving public transportation that are suited for the NCR is crucial for policymakers to effectively handle the various difficulties presented by traffic congestion. The work of Zadobrischi et al. (2020) suggests that the increase in population density is a major factor of traffic congestion. Additionally, Lomibao et al. (2023) suggests that there is an increase in intermigration in the NCR. The reason behind the event is to improve the financial position of employees. This intermigration worsens the traffic congestion which causes employees to lose productivity. In addition to the intermigration, there is also the car-centric approach employed by the government (Suzara et al., 2021).

Both literature and the result of the study proves that there is something wrong in how policy makers address the problem. The research recommends to policy makers to address the problems in a different way that ensures sustainability of the transport sector. Some ways to approach the problem with traffic congestion is to implement laws that ensure a people-centric approach (Suzara et al., 2021). People-centric approach includes creation of bike lanes, safe and walkable pathways, and improving public transportation. The proposed people-centric approach also allows a decrease in the number of private vehicles on the road. This can be done by improving public transportation, collaborating and giving incentives to transport groups, and increasing the tax for private vehicles. The solution also promotes the decrease of pollution which is in accordance with the Republic Act of 8749 or the Clean Air Act. Not only does it improve the current scenario but also improves pollution control as well.

### *Decentralization of the Economy*

The study of Lomibao (2023) suggests that many people are traveling within the NCR due to its many opportunities to improve a person's financial position, but the implication of it worsens the flow of traffic in the area which leads to productivity loss. The problem is that many business districts and commercial establishment is centralized in the area, resulting to the increase of population density. The work of Zadobrischi et al. (2020) suggests improving the distribution of infrastructure and business centers so that population density among the districts will equalize. This allows a better traffic in districts which lessens the probability of traffic congestion. The government can propose policies that will limit the sale of vacant spaces to developers that will build commercial centers and business districts. Instead of centralizing business and trade in a single area, the industry

must be dispersed strategically and evenly.

### *Smart Mobility*

According to Business Mirror (2022) in the Philippines, that there is a lack in monitoring the traffic. This calls for intervention that allows authorities to properly monitor the daily situation to have a better data driven solutions. Smart mobility allows authorities to interconnect the different infrastructures available to have a better understanding on how the traffic works. This can include the interconnection of traffic lights, transportation vehicles, and smart applications that will help people navigate within the area. Other than that, authorities will be able to real time data that is accurate and reliable that can be used in decision making. Example of existing smart mobility is the attempt of the city of Taipei to connect 160,000 traffic lights to solve traffic congestion. The project includes the use of internet of all things (IoT), traffic lights system, and edge computing to monitor traffic and air pollution. The same can be implemented in the Philippines, especially on severely congested road.

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## Using English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Medical Higher Education in Libya: Teachers & Students' Perspectives

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**Abstract:** With a global trend towards adopting English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) to enhance internationalization and academic competitiveness, many countries, including Libya, have undergone significant reforms in their higher education systems. The present study aims to explore the status quo and challenges associated with the implementation of English as the medium of instruction in medical higher education institutions in Libya by investigating the classroom participants' attitudes and analyzing the overall landscape of English-medium instruction in Libyan medical higher education. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys and interviews to gather the data. The results revealed that both teachers and students believe in the significance of adopting EMI in medical higher education in the Libyan context. However, they reported some challenges related to the appropriateness of using EMI, the classroom participants' Proficiency in English, and the impact on the content subject comprehension. The findings contribute to the existing literature on implementing EMI in higher education and offer practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and administrators in Libya and other similar contexts.

**Keywords:** English as medium of instruction; medical higher education; teachers' perspectives; students' perspectives, Libya.

**Citation:** Adriosh, M. (2024). Using English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Medical Higher Education in Libya: Teachers & Students' Perspectives. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1505-1518), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, English has emerged as a global lingua franca, serving as a medium of communication across cultures, professions, and academic disciplines. As a result, many educational institutions around the globe adopted English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) to prepare students for success in an internationalized society. However, implementing EMI in higher education effectively requires a nuanced understanding of various theoretical fundamentals that underpin language learning, pedagogy, and educational policy (Macaro, 2018).

Many challenges have been recently observed that were associated with implementing English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Libyan higher education institutions. Therefore, there is a pressing need to understand the



status quo of EMI implementation in Libyan medical higher education institutions in particular. With many countries, including Libya, undergoing significant reforms in their higher education systems to align with this global trend, it becomes imperative to assess the extent to which EMI has been integrated into the educational landscape and the prevailing attitudes towards its adoption among classroom participants, namely teachers and students.

The present study attempts to uncover the challenges faced in implementing EMI in Libyan medical higher education. While there is recognition of the importance of adopting EMI, both teachers and students have reported obstacles such as concerns regarding the appropriateness of using EMI, the proficiency levels of classroom participants in English, and the impact of EMI on subject matter comprehension. These challenges emphasize the complexity of transitioning to EMI and the need for targeted interventions and strategies to address them effectively (Walkinshaw et al., 2017).

#### *Aims of the Study*

The primary objectives of the present study are to uncover the status quo and identify the challenges and difficulties associated with EMI, explore the attitudes of teachers and students towards EMI, and analyze the overall landscape of English-medium instruction in Libyan medical higher education. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing surveys and interviews to gather data. The findings are expected to highlight the perceived significance of EMI adoption while identifying challenges such as appropriateness, English proficiency, and impact on content comprehension. In general, the study aims to contribute to the literature on EMI implementation and provide practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and administrators in Libya and similar contexts.

#### *Significance of the Study*

As countries constantly tend to adopt English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) to enhance internationalization and academic competitiveness, understanding the status quo and challenges associated with this transition in Libya becomes important. Medical education, in particular, demands precise language comprehension and communication due to its academic and technical nature, making the investigation of attitudes towards EMI and its implementation crucial for ensuring effective learning outcomes. By delving into the perceptions of both teachers and students regarding EMI adoption, this study sheds light on the nuanced dynamics taking place within Libyan medical higher education sector, offering valuable insights that can inform decision-making processes and pedagogical strategies.

#### *Research Questions*

Based on its main objectives, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What is the status quo of implementing English as a medium of instruction in Medical Higher

Education in Libyan universities?

- What are the students' attitudes towards the implementation of EMI in Medical Higher Education in Libyan universities?
- What are the teachers' perspectives on challenges and obstacles of implementing EMI in Medical Higher Education in Libyan universities?

## Review of Literature

English Medium Instruction (EMI) has emerged as a controversial issue in the field of education, getting considerable attention in scholarly discourse (Arkin, 2013; Macaro, 2017). Despite its controversial nature, EMI has witnessed increasing adoption, particularly in non-native English speaking countries like Libya. As evidenced by existing literature, many studies investigated the implementation of EMI in higher education settings worldwide. Dearden (2014) characterizes EMI as a "growing global phenomenon"(p.2) in education. According to Jiang and Zhang (2017), effective implementation of EMI "can minimize the linguistic barrier to the internationalization of higher education" (p.174).

## Theoretical Background

In today's interconnected world, the adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in educational institutions has become increasingly prevalent, reflecting the global dominance of English as a lingua franca. This phenomenon necessitates a thorough exploration of the theoretical underpinnings that inform effective EMI implementation. Language acquisition theories such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism provide valuable insights into the cognitive and social processes involved in learning English as a second language (ESL). For instance, behaviorism emphasizes the role of reinforcement and practice in language acquisition, cognitivism focuses on mental processes such as memory and problem-solving, while constructivism highlights the importance of active engagement and social interaction in knowledge construction. By integrating these theories into EMI pedagogy, educators can prepare instructional strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles and facilitate English language proficiency development among students (Mitchell et al., 2019).

According to Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach plays an important role for effective EMI practices, prioritizing meaningful interaction and authentic language use rather than memorization of grammar rules. CLT emphasizes the importance of communication skills in real-world contexts, encouraging students to engage in tasks and conversations that reflect authentic language use. By adopting CLT principles, educators can create dynamic and interactive EMI classrooms where students are empowered to communicate effectively in English, thereby enhancing their language proficiency and communicative competence.

Sociocultural theory, as proposed by Vygotsky, emphasizes the significance of social interaction and cultural

context in language learning. In EMI settings, sociocultural theory emphasizes the creation of a supportive sociocultural environment where students can engage in collaborative learning activities and construct knowledge collectively. By fostering a socioculturally rich learning environment, teachers can promote language development and academic achievement among students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, effective mapping of language policy and planning integration of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approaches, and adoption of translanguaging practices further contribute to the holistic and inclusive implementation of EMI in educational settings (Lantolf, 2000).

### *Historical Overview on Teaching English Language in Libya*

The history of English language teaching in Libya has been shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, and educational factors. Initially introduced during the colonial era under Italian and later British rule, English teaching primarily served elite groups for administrative and diplomatic purposes. Following Libya's independence in 1951, English instruction began to expand more broadly within the education system, although its prominence fluctuated over the decades, influenced by political shifts such as Muammar Gaddafi's rise to power in 1969. Gaddafi's regime emphasized Arabization and limited foreign language teaching, including English, in Libyan schools and universities, leading to a decline in the prominence of English language education during this period (Mohsen, 2014).

Aloreibi and Carey (2017) argue that despite challenges, English language teaching persisted, particularly in private language institutes and higher education institutions, where it was taught as a foreign language. Following the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, Libya embarked on educational reforms aimed at revitalizing its education system, including efforts to modernize and internationalize English language instruction. However, challenges such as limited resources, teacher training, and infrastructure have continued to affect the quality and accessibility of English language education in Libya, highlighting the ongoing need for investment and support in this critical area of education.

### *Previous Studies*

Many studies were conducted on different contexts of implementing EMI in higher education in general and medical higher education in particular (Eg.: Ali et al., 2021; Chou, 2018; Macaro et al. 2017; Yang et al., 2019; Yuan, 2019; Zuaro, 2023). The research aspects included: classroom participants' attitudes, challenges and difficulties associated with implementing the EMI in higher education in different geographical and institutional contexts.

Different studies investigated the impact of English Medium Instruction (EMI) on students' English language skills and content acquisition. Macaro et al. (2017) conducted a systematic review of higher education studies on EMI, revealing that teaching academic subjects in English as a second language can foster students' English proficiency without negatively affecting content comprehension. Likewise, Chou (2018) emphasized the

necessity for students to possess adequate English proficiency to pass EMI courses and programs in universities.

Other studies investigated students' perceptions and attitudes towards English Medium Instruction (EMI). Al-Shboul (2022), for instance, examined students' perspectives on Arabic and English as mediums of instruction in Jordan, highlighting EMI's perceived efficacy in enhancing competitiveness and internationalization in education. Similarly, Badiozaman et al. (2019) sought to elucidate the connection between students' perceptions of English and their academic self-efficacy in higher education settings where English serves as the medium of instruction.

Many studies examined the effectiveness of English Medium Instruction (EMI) on teaching processes in the classroom, particularly emphasizing the significance of teachers' proficiency in English. Wang (2021) shed light on the correlation between teachers' English proficiency and their teaching self-efficacy within an EMI context. The study highlighted the crucial significance of English as a medium of classroom instruction in enhancing overall teaching effectiveness, emphasizing the importance of teachers' language competence in facilitating successful EMI implementation. These findings revealed the relationship between teachers' proficiency in English language and their efficacy in delivering instructions effectively in EMI settings, thus emphasizing their need to have adequate language skills enhance EMI practices.

In considering the broader effectiveness of EMI in classroom teaching, it is evident that many factors contribute to its success or challenges. These include students' English language proficiency levels, the efficacy of implementation strategies, and the perceptions and attitudes of both students and teachers towards EMI. Ensuring that both students and teachers possess sufficient English proficiency is essential to adopt successful EMI practices. Moreover, thorough assessments of the impact of EMI on students' English language skills and content learning is substantial to guarantee its effectiveness across diverse educational settings. By carefully evaluating these factors, educators and policymakers can better understand the nuances of EMI implementation and adopt strategies to optimize its outcomes in various educational contexts.

## **Methodology**

The mixed approach is adopted to answer the research questions of the study. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used for data collection processes. Questionnaire is used to uncover the students' attitudes towards implementing EMI in the medical undergraduate classrooms in Libyan universities. Likewise, teachers were interviewed to investigate their perspectives on the challenges and issues related to the adoption of EMI.

According to Şahin and Öztürk (2019), mixed-method research advocates for the utilization of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies when addressing complex research problems. This approach propose that combining these methods offers more comprehensive insights into research inquiries compared to

employing a single method. This innovative paradigm requires new perspectives towards science and scientific knowledge.

### **The Context of the Study**

In Libya, a predominantly monolingual country with Arabic as the national language, Arabic language traditionally served as the Medium of Instruction (MOI) in education. However, English is commonly regarded as a foreign language. In higher education, particularly in the medical field, English serves as the medium of instruction. The growing internationalization of education and students' aspirations to study abroad have contributed to a rising demand for English Medium Instruction (EMI) in medical higher education across the country. Given this evolving educational landscape, the current study was conducted in three Libyan universities to explore the status quo and identify the potential challenges and educational implications in this concern.

### *Research Design*

The present study utilized a mixed approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the implementation of English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) in medical higher education institutions in Libya. This approach incorporates surveys and interviews to gather data on classroom participants' attitudes and perceptions towards EMI. In addition, it analyzes the overall landscape of English-medium instruction in Libyan medical higher education. The surveys provide quantitative data, offering insights into the students' attitudes and perceptions on using EMI in the medical undergraduate classrooms. Interviews, on the other hand, offer qualitative analysis, allowing for a deeper exploration of the challenges associated with EMI implementation. This comprehensive approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the status quo and challenges of EMI in Libyan medical higher education

### *Data Collection*

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 40 medical undergraduate students from three different universities in westren region of Libya for data collection purposes. Bbased on the mixed approach design of the study, a questionnaire served as the primary research instrument to gather data from the students, aligning with the study's objectives. The questionnaire utilized in the study was adapted from previous research works investigating the perceptions of students on the use of EMI in higher education (Aldawsari, 2022; Azhari et al. , 2024). Comprising twenty statements, the questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to assess participants' perspectives. Data collection involved distributing the questionnaire to the selected students. Prior to participation, written consent forms were obtained from the participants, providing them with information about the study's purpose and their rights.

For qualitative data collection, eight teachers were purposivly selected. The selected teachers had an adequately enough experience in using EMI in teaching medical subjects to the undergraduate medical students in Libyan

context. The semi-instructed interviews were designed to elicit the teachers' perceptions on the actual practices of using EMI in the classroom arising the most common challenges and difficulties associated to the implementation of EMI in medical education context. Semi-instructed interviews allows the the interviewees to elaborate on Their ideas and express their thoughts in more details guided with the interviewer's follow up questions.

According to Talmy and Richards (2010), interviews are used to collect comprehensive ideas on different phenomena in different areas of qualitative research including educational contexts. Talmy and Richards, however, argue that the interview tends to be rather under-theorised. The use of interviews is common in applied linguistics studies due to its effective use for participant investigation. This usage aims to identify participants' identities, experiences, beliefs, and perceptions on different phenomena. Generally speaking, adopting interviews for data collection yeild to a consensus understanding about its role in generating data for the research.

#### *Data Analysis*

To achieve the study objectives, data analysis was carried out utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Correlation analysis and multiple comparisons were also employed as analytical tools. Additionally, the interviews were analyzed based on Thematic Analysis Approach to sort out different them concerning the challenges and factors that lead to rise of obstacles in implementing the EMI in medical undergraduate classes. These qualitative insights were sought to derive educational implications aimed at enhancing EMI programs. Overall, the study employs a comprehensive approach to investigate various facets of students' and teachers' perceptions of EMI, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to understand patterns, correlations, and potential areas for improvement in EMI instructional practices.

## **Results & Discussions**

The study sought to explore the students and teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) within the medical higher education in Libyan context. The following sections report in detail the findings and analyses derived from this investigation along with interrelated discussions .

### **Findings of Quantitative Analysis**

#### *Statistical Procedures*

A reliability assessment was carried out by using Cronbach's Alpha equation for students' questionnaire, which comprise 20 items. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient obtained for the students' questionnaire was 0.94. This indicate a high level of reliability for the questionnaire, suggesting that the instruments consistently measured the intended constructs accurately.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Survey	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Students' Questionnaire	20	0.94

*Statistical Results*

The statistical analysis shows that the students hold positive beliefs, perspectives, and attitudes regarding the utilization of English Medium Instruction (EMI) within the context of medical higher education in Libya. Table (2) depicts the mean values, standard deviations, and corresponding significance levels pertaining to the 20 items included in the questionnaire, reflecting the students' perceptions towards the implementation of EMI.

Table 2. Students' Perception of EMI

Questionnaire Items	Mean	St. Deviation	Mean Difference	T	Sig. (2- Tailed)	Level
1.	3.98	1.08	0.58	5.28	0.000	High
2.	3.84	1.00	0.44	4.36	0.000	High
3.	3.86	1.06	0.46	4.28	0.000	High
4.	3.65	1.29	0.25	1.87	0.065	High
5.	3.85	1.08	0.45	4.14	0.000	High
6.	3.85	1.02	0.45	4.38	0.000	High
7.	3.73	0.96	0.33	3.37	0.001	High
8.	3.95	1.30	0.55	4.13	0.000	High
9.	3,96	1.38	0.56	3.98	0.000	High
10.	3,84	1.10	-0.56	-4.96	0.000	Moderate
11.	2.97	1.24	-0.04	-3.40	0.001	Moderate
12.	4.02	1.58	0.62	3.86	0.000	High
13.	4.01	1.41	0.61	4.24	0.000	High
14.	4.00	1/48	0.60	3.97	0.000	High
15.	3,91	1.62	0.51	3.06	0.003	High
16.	3.69	1.76	0.29	1.61	0.112	High
17.	3.64	1.84	0.24	1.25	0.213	High
18.	3.86	1.86	0.46	2.45	0.016	High
19.	3.97	1.87	1.57	2.99	0.004	High
20.	4.54	1.74	1.14	6.43	0.000	Very High
Total	3.81	0.73	0.41	5.43	0.000	High

As presented in Table 2 (Students' Perception of EMI), the overall mean score of 3.81 indicates a high level of agreement among students regarding their perceptions of English Medium Instruction (EMI), which is



statistically significant with a p-value of 0.00. This suggests that students generally hold positive views towards EMI implementation in the context of medical higher education in Libya. However, certain inconsistencies emerge within the results of the student survey, with specific items showing varying levels of statistical significance. Notably, items 4, 16, and 17 lack statistical significance, indicating some divergence in students' perceptions on these aspects of EMI.

Additionally, items 10 and 11 exhibit moderate levels of agreement towards EMI use. Conversely, item 20 gets the highest mean score of 4.54 and is statistically significant, followed by item 12 with a mean score of 4.02, indicating strong agreement among students regarding these aspects of EMI. Conversely, items 10 and 11 record the lowest mean scores of 2.84 and 2.97, respectively, suggesting a moderate level of agreement among students on these particular issues.

The findings can be linked with various theoretical frameworks in language acquisition and educational pedagogy, shedding light on the factors influencing students' views and experiences within EMI contexts.

First, the high overall mean score and statistical significance observed in students' perception of EMI align with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). The CLT approach prioritizes meaningful interaction and authentic language use, which likely contribute to the positive perceptions students hold towards EMI. Students may appreciate the opportunities for communication and engagement provided by EMI classrooms, reflecting the emphasis on real-world language use advocated by CLT (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999).

Second, the discrepancies in students' perceptions across different items suggest the influence of various language acquisition theories. For instance, items with lower mean scores, such as items 10 and 11, which indicate moderate agreement, may reflect challenges or inconsistencies in the implementation of EMI practices. This can be understood through the lens of sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in language learning. In EMI settings, discrepancies in students' perceptions may arise from differences in cultural and linguistic backgrounds, highlighting the need for a supportive sociocultural environment to foster language development and academic achievement (Vygotsky, 1978).

Third, the highest mean scores observed in certain items, such as item 20, could be attributed to effective integration of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approaches. CLIL encourages the simultaneous learning of subject matter and language skills, promoting deeper understanding and engagement among students. The success of these aspects of EMI aligns with theories such as constructivism, which underscores the importance of active engagement and knowledge construction in learning (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2019).

To conclude, the findings can be correlated to theoretical frameworks such as communicative language teaching, sociocultural theory, and constructivism. These frameworks provide valuable insights into the cognitive, social, and instructional processes that shape students' experiences in EMI contexts, offering guidance for the effective design and implementation of EMI programs in educational settings.

### *Findings of Qualitative Analysis*

The findings of the interviews conducted with teachers revealed valuable qualitative insights into their perspectives and experiences for implementing English Medium Instruction (EMI) in medical higher education in Libyan context. Generally speaking, teachers expressed a range of perceptions and observations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with EMI implementation.

### *The Role of EMI in Enhancing Students' Proficiency*

One recurring theme that emerged from the interviews was the perceived importance of EMI in enhancing students' language proficiency and preparing them for global academic and professional contexts. Teachers highlighted the value of exposing students to English as the medium of instruction, particularly in fields where English is commonly used, such as medical sciences. They emphasized the role of EMI in promoting students' language skills and facilitating their integration into international academic and professional communities.

Some teachers, for instance, expressed strong support for implementing English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) in medical higher education, emphasizing its role in enhance the students' linguistic competence and academic preparedness for international settings.

T(5): *"Amm...I firmly believe that EMI is essential in medical education, especially considering the global nature of the field. By exposing our students to English as the medium of instruction, we are not only improving their language proficiency but also equipping them with the necessary skills to communicate effectively in diverse medical contexts worldwide."*

T(1): *" Yes, proficiency in English is necessary for medical professionals to collaborate with colleagues, access global research, and provide quality care to patients from diverse linguistic backgrounds. EMI opens doors for our students to pursue international opportunities and contribute to global healthcare advancements."*

The qualitative findings regarding the implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in medical higher education in Libya resonate with existing literature on the subject, which revealed both the importance and challenges associated with EMI adoption in higher education settings.

The importance of EMI in enhancing students' language proficiency and preparing them for global academic and professional contexts, as highlighted by the teachers in the qualitative analysis, aligns with previous research. Many studies have emphasized the role of EMI in promoting students' linguistic competence and facilitating their integration into international academic and professional communities (Macaro, 2018; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021). Additionally, the recognition of English proficiency as an essential factor for accessing cutting-edge research, collaborating with colleagues globally, and contributing to advancements in

various fields is consistent with the findings of previous literature (Williams, 2015).

### *Challenges & Concerns of EMI Implementation*

Teachers, however, acknowledged some challenges associated with EMI implementation. One prominent issue cited in the interviews was the disparity in students' English language proficiency levels, which posed difficulties in transmitting knowledge of content subjects effectively and ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students. Additionally, teachers expressed concerns about the adequacy of support and resources available for EMI, including professional development opportunities for teachers and access to instructional materials designed for EMI settings.

T(2) explained: *"Amm...While I see the value of EMI in enhancing students' language skills and preparing them for global medical practice, I foresee several challenges that we may encounter along the way. One major concern is the difference in students' English language proficiency levels"*

T(5): *"But, one challenge we may face is the availability of instructional materials and resources available for EMI. Medical education relies heavily on specialized textbooks, journals, and multimedia materials, and ensuring that these resources are accessible in English may require significant investment and support."*

T(1) : *"faculty members may need training and professional development opportunities to effectively deliver content in English and address the diverse needs of students from varying language proficiency levels."*

The above extracts indicate the teachers' anticipation of challenges such as language proficiency disparities among students and the need for adequate resources and faculty support to facilitate effective EMI implementation in medical higher education. These predictions reflect the complexities inherent in transitioning to EMI and highlight the importance of proactive measures to address potential obstacles and ensure the success of EMI initiatives in medical education.

To sum up, the interviews with teachers provided rich qualitative data illuminating both the perceived benefits and challenges of EMI implementation in medical higher education in Libya. These insights offer valuable considerations for policymakers, educators, and administrators seeking to optimize EMI practices and support the diverse needs of students and faculty members.

The challenges and concerns identified by the teachers in the qualitative analysis also emphasized some aspects that observed in previous literature on EMI implementation. Deficiency in students' English language proficiency levels, cited as a prominent issue by the teachers, have been widely documented in the literature as a challenge for EMI programs (Snow, 2005; De Graaff et al., 2007)). These challenges not only affect the teaching of content matter effectively but also poses concerns regarding equal learning opportunities for all students.

Furthermore, the teachers' concerns about the adequacy of support and resources for EMI implementation align with previous studies highlighting the importance of institutional support and resources in ensuring the success of EMI initiatives (Airey & Linder, 2006; Doiz et al., 2014). Issues such as the availability of instructional materials in English, professional development opportunities for faculty members, and support for addressing the diverse needs of students from varying linguistic backgrounds have been identified as crucial factors influencing the effectiveness of EMI programs.

To conclude, the qualitative findings regarding the importance and challenges of EMI implementation in medical higher education in Libya provide valuable insights that complement and reinforce previous literature on the subject. By acknowledging both the potential benefits and obstacles associated with EMI adoption, policymakers, educators, and administrators can make informed decisions and implement strategies to optimize EMI practices while effectively addressing the diverse needs of students and faculty members.

## **Conclusion**

The comprehensive analysis of the students' perceptions and teachers' perspectives on English Medium Instruction (EMI) in medical higher education in Libya illuminates both the positive aspects and challenges intrinsic in its implementation. Students generally hold favorable views towards EMI, as indicated by the high overall mean score and statistical significance in their perception. The alignment of these perceptions with theoretical frameworks such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) ensures the effectiveness of EMI in promoting meaningful interaction and authentic language use. However, discrepancies in students' perceptions across certain items highlight potential areas for improvement, particularly regarding challenges in implementation and the need for a supportive sociocultural environment.

## **Recommendations & Implications**

The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and administrators involved in EMI implementation. Recognizing the importance of EMI in enhancing students' language proficiency and preparing them for global academic and professional contexts, stakeholders should prioritize strategies that address challenges such as language proficiency disparities among students. Adequate support and resources, including professional development opportunities for faculty and instructional materials prepared for EMI settings, are essential for the successful implementation of EMI. By proactively addressing these challenges and leveraging the identified benefits of EMI, institutions can optimize EMI practices to meet the diverse needs of students and faculty members, ultimately fostering a conducive learning environment in medical higher education in Libya.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the teachers and students who participated in this study. I also

acknowledge the invaluable support provided by the educational institutions and authorities in facilitating the data collection process.

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# **Antecedents of TikTok and Social Media Marketing on Impulsive Purchase Behavior and Consumers' Perception in the National Capital Region, Philippines: An Exploratory Research**

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**Abstract:** In recent years, businesses have continuously sought and developed unique ways to promote products and services by researching various social media marketing strategies. This study is conducted in the National Capital Region of the Philippines, where TikTok is continuously gaining prominence and online shopping is growing. Due to this, the study aims to comprehensively study the correlation between TikTok features and Social Media Marketing Strategies influencing the Purchase Behavior of TikTok Users in the Philippines. This paper provides valuable insights into how businesses can effectively utilize TikTok's unique features to boost their profits by exploring the connections between TikTok features, social media marketing strategies, and purchasing behavior. A mixed-method approach utilizing qualitative and quantitative research methodologies was used in data gathering, with the developed online survey questionnaire. The data was treated using Exploratory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and AMOS 22. The study's findings suggest a strong positive



association between TikTok features and the implementation of social media marketing strategies. Furthermore, the study highlights the considerable impact of these strategies on buying mechanism tendencies among TikTok users. Future research directions include replicating the study on different shopping platforms to understand broader factors influencing consumer behavior.

**Keywords:** Exploratory Factor Analysis, Impulsive Purchasing Behavior, NCR, Social Media Marketing Strategies, Structural Equation Modeling, TikTok features

**Citation:** Fabian, N., M., M., Abad, K., M., S., Inocencio, C., M., G., Orozco, N., A., E., Caido, R., S., Navarro, M., M. & Tenerife, J., T. (2024). Antecedents of TikTok and Social Media Marketing on Impulsive Purchase Behavior and Consumers' Perception in the National Capital Region, Philippines: An Exploratory Research. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1519-1556), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In the modern digital era, there have been continuous changes and transformations in how social media platforms work and interact. One of the most prominent social media platforms is TikTok, also known as Douyin in China, a mobile application created in 2016 by the Chinese tech company ByteDance. According to a study by Zhao and Wagner (2022), this application has been recognized and achieved great success recently, luring millions of users through its captivating challenges, dance clips, and viral trends and reaching a large and diverse audience. This success has significantly impacted online marketing companies, showing them how to promote and attract consumers to purchase products online effectively.

The TikTok application has a user-friendly interface with filters and effects, enabling everyone to make creative and entertaining videos to express themselves uniquely. Anyone with digital gadgets can easily convey their stories and talents by creating short videos. Additionally, the platform offers music integration, allowing users to incorporate music into their video content, enhancing creativity. The application also provides user-friendly editing tools, enabling anyone to customize their content easily. Furthermore, it features a "Discover Page" that helps users personalize feeds based on their interests, interactions, and behavior. The platform also encourages engagement within the community through trends and challenges, inspiring users to create content based on specific themes or trends.

In recent years, businesses have continuously sought and developed unique ways to promote products and services by researching various social media marketing strategies. The results of a study by Guarda et al. (2021) indicate that many companies are adopting digital marketing strategies. This trend has drawn more attention from brands because digital marketing offers a platform for presenting the company, establishing its image, and fostering consumer connections. Digital marketing goes beyond video creation and editing; it also enables

collaboration with other users, which is particularly beneficial for new businesses aiming to develop their products and services.

The paper highlights significant gaps in the knowledge of TikTok users' intent to purchase behaviors in the Philippines. While similar behaviors have been studied on platforms like Instagram, the specific impact of TikTok on spontaneous buying behavior still needs to be explored within the Philippine context. These gaps illustrate a need for more emphasized research on TikTok's impact on the intent buying behaviors of users, which helps the study by using exploratory research rather than confirmatory methods. Existing literature mostly overlooks TikTok, and there is a scarcity of studies that use mixed-methods methodologies. Figure 2 visually outlines these identified gaps, providing a structured overview to guide future research efforts to address these areas effectively. The study does not assume users have actually made purchases; rather, it examines how these platforms influence their perceptions. This approach helps shed light on how digital media shapes consumer behavior beyond direct buying actions.

The study aims to investigate the in-depth exploration of the correlation between the various factors that influence TikTok features and the impulsive purchase behavior of its users. The study uses quantitative and qualitative techniques to understand the consumer's psychology behind their impulsive behavior, with the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to perform multivariate methods such as Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Specifically it aims to describe the profile of TikTok users in the NCR, identify the antecedents of TikTok Features, Social Media Marketing Strategies, and Impulsive Purchases using factor analysis, determine the relationship between TikTok Features, Social Media Marketing Strategies, and Consumer Purchases, determine the relationship of Demographic Profile and TikTok Features, Social Media Marketing Strategies, and Impulsive Purchase Behavior, and determine the effect of TikTok Features on Social Media Marketing Strategies and Intention to Purchase in general.

Moreover, this paper seeks to assess factors that positively influence the Impulsive Purchase behavior of Tiktok users. Employing a robust methodology, the study utilizes both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and structural Equation Modeling (SEM). In the initial phase of the study, EFA is employed to reduce numerous variables into a more manageable set of latent variables. This approach aids in finding the important structure of the data, which identifies the correlation of the latent variables.

Once identified through EFA, these latent variables become the foundation for SEM analysis, enabling the testing and refinement of theoretical models that express the relationship between factors and observed variables. The results derived from EFA, inform the development of the measurement model in the SEM, describing the latent factors and their respective indicators. Furthermore, SEM goes beyond EFA by incorporating both observed and latent variables into a structural model. Employing this integrated approach, this study offers a comprehensive study of the factors influencing the Impulsive Purchase Behavior of Tiktok User in the Philippines.

**Hypothetical Research Model**

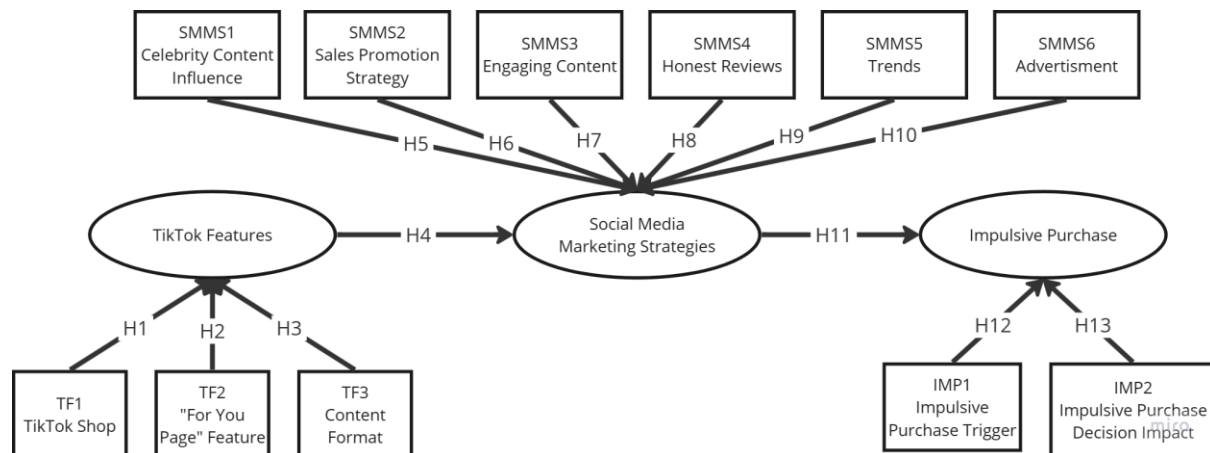


Figure 1. Hypothetical Research Model

Figure 1 shows the Hypothetical Research Model of the study. Hawkins Stern's impulse buying theory (1962) is the theory considered in this study (Agarwal and Chetty, 2022) The theory provided a fresh perspective on consumer spending habits compared to typical modern buyer behavior. The theory indicates that marketers may influence customers to spend more money than planned. Practitioners can analyze and comprehend the mechanics behind impulsive purchase behavior using Stern's impulse buying theory as a lens. It emphasizes the significance of psychological and environmental influences on customer behavior and illustrates how entrepreneurs can use this information to influence consumer behavior and generate sales.

*Hypothesis 1: Tiktok Shop positively influences Tiktok Features*

TikTok is a social media platform that provides features for online shopping known as TikTok Shop. Through this feature, business owners may promote and market their goods (Zotara, 2022). The inclusion of TikTok Shop on the platform improves TikTok's overall features, potentially increasing user engagement and involvement with the app's retail industry functionality.

*Hypothesis 2: For You Page Feature positively influences TikTok Features*

TikTok's For You Page feature uses advanced algorithms to present personalized content, increasing user enjoyment and engagement on the platform through specific recommendations. TikTok's For You Page improves the platform's functionality by offering users with content that matches their areas of interest and preferences, hence maximizing user experience and encouraging additional involvement. One of the most important features on TikTok is the "For You" tab, which uses artificial intelligence to quickly adjust to user preferences and encourage longer usage. Features that further encourage addiction include "Likes," personalized content, and continuous scrolling (Montag, et al. 2021).

*Hypothesis 3: Content Format positively influence Tiktok Features*

The variety and appeal of TikTok's content formats enhance the platform's capabilities, increasing the overall user experience through multiple media utilization alternatives. Content Format has features such as duet, stitch, picture-in-picture, auto-scroll, and TikTok visual effects. Cheng and Li's (2024) study demonstrates how content format beneficially impacts TikTok features. Previous content analysis has shown that TikTok videos integrate a wide range of visual elements, such as split screens, visual filters, and special effects.

*Hypothesis 4: Tiktok Features positively influence Social Media Marketing Strategies*

TikTok's features impact social media strategies, potentially increasing reach, engagement, and success rates for companies and marketers that utilize the platform. According to Yang et al. (2022), e-commerce customers exhibit impulse-buying tendencies, influenced by factors like live streaming price discounts and visual appeal.

*Hypothesis 5: Celebrity Content Influence positively influence Social Media Marketing Strategies*

The availability of celebrity content on TikTok has a favorable impact on social media marketing strategies, potentially enhancing brand awareness, credibility, and engagement with audiences through influencer involvement. A powerful marketing tactic that grabs consumers' attention and raises brand awareness is celebrity endorsement. In this sense, celebrity credibility serves as a reliable source that increases consumers' desire to buy. (Liu, 2022).

*Hypothesis 6: Promotion Strategy positively influences Social Media Marketing Strategies*

The effectiveness of TikTok promotion strategies has a positive effect on social media marketing strategies, potentially increasing brand exposure, engagement, and sales through intended promotional activities. According to Fernanda (2019), Offering short-term incentives like reduced prices, cash backs, flash sales, and free shipping options combined with sales campaigns can encourage customers to make unexpected purchases or make more purchases overall.

*Hypothesis 7: Engaging Content positively influences Social Media Marketing Strategies*

According to Thomas (2020), In the modern marketplace, building consumer trust is a persistent objective for firms, and it depends on numerous approaches that go beyond just product quality or price. The way a business communicates with its clients is one of the key components of developing trust. Engaging content on TikTok benefits social media marketing strategies by attracting interest from viewers, developing brand loyalty, and driving user involvement and promotion.

*Hypothesis 8: Honest reviews positively influence Social Media Marketing Strategies*

The widespread use of honest reviews on TikTok has positive effects on social media marketing strategies, potentially increasing brand trust, credibility, and consumer trust through actual feedback from customers. Consumers are looking for honest reviews and experiences written by customers after availing the products or services from the advertised store (Regina et al., 2021).

*Hypothesis 9: Trends positively influence Social Media Marketing Strategies*

As demonstrated in the study by Roth et al. (2021), participants' satisfaction and positive emotions throughout challenges or trends can have a big influence on social media marketing strategies. When consumers love participating in these challenges, they are more inclined to share, comment, and connect with related information, resulting in greater exposure and potential reach for companies or marketers who include these trends in their campaigns. Thus, following these trends can help increase brand visibility and interaction on social media platforms.

*Hypothesis 10: Advertisements Positively Influence Social Media Marketing Strategies*

Improving audience engagement, brand awareness, and more exposure to ads on social media platforms has a favorable impact on social media marketing efforts which results in higher familiarity with the brand and loyalty from consumers. The results of the study conducted by Yousef et al. (2021) concluded that advertisements on social media platforms play a significant role in shaping marketing strategies. With this, the study may provide and create more effective social media advertising campaigns to have better online engagement as well as implement comprehensive marketing strategies, not just to engage but also to achieve the desired behaviors from consumers. Additionally, the majority of businesses employ digital marketing tactics such as social media advertising, and user-generated management to cultivate brand recognition among consumers (Wang and Kim, 2017).

*Hypothesis 11: Social Media Marketing strategies positively influence Impulsive Purchase*

Utilizing what's trending and popular on social media to connect with and engage your audience is what it means to include trends in your social media marketing strategy. This entails producing content that is relevant to the current issues, problems, or hashtags that are trending. By doing this, you may maintain your prominence, interact with your target market, and increase the social media visibility and relevance of your business (Newberry, 2023). Implementing effective social media marketing strategies has beneficial effects on impulsive purchase behavior, possibly boosting impulsive purchasing decisions among TikTok users who are exposed to engaging marketing campaigns.

*Hypothesis 12: Impulsive purchase trigger positively influences Impulsive Purchase*

Impulsive purchase triggers that are effectively incorporated into TikTok content have a beneficial impact on impulsive purchase behavior and could even lead to audiences who are drawn in by attractive promotional incentives to make impulsive purchases. Burton et al. (2018) claim that sudden, powerful emotional desires that result from reactive conduct with little cognitive restraint lead to impulse purchases.

*Hypothesis 13: Impulsive purchase decisions positively influence Impulsive Purchase*

Impulsive purchase triggers that are effectively included in TikTok content have a beneficial impact on impulsive purchase behavior and could even lead to audiences who are drawn in by attractive promotional incentives to make impulsive purchases. This propensity for impulsive and thoughtless purchases can be explained by the buyer's immediate sense of satisfaction (Pradhan et al., 2018).

## Method

### Research Gap Analysis

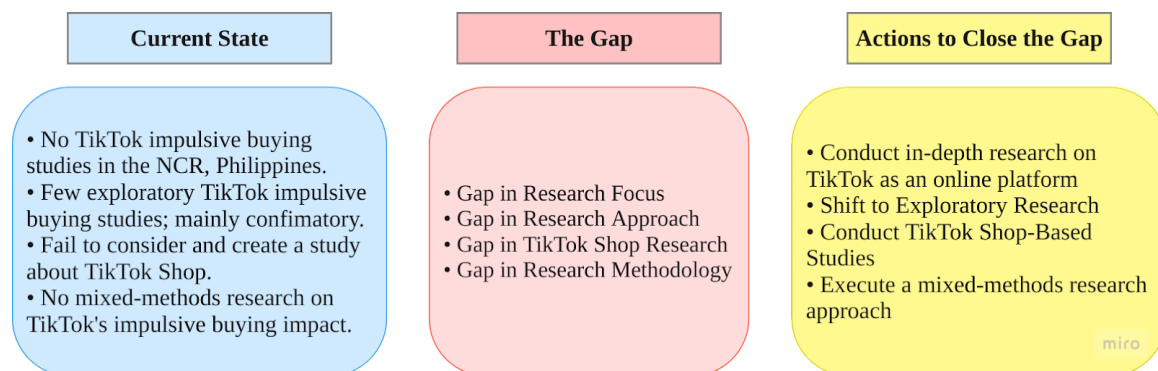


Figure 2. Research Gap Analysis

### Gap in Research Focus

According to Wylie (2021), prior to beginning any research, it is critical for researchers to identify the gaps. Research gaps are unexplored topics in one's field of study that are not addressed by existing research. Given this, the study aims to conduct research on a topic that has not yet been explored and to focus on aspects different from those examined in previous studies. There are few studies on the impulsive buying habits of TikTok users in the Philippines, particularly in the National Capital Region (NCR). TikTok's effect on impulsive purchasing behavior remains unexplored, notably in the NCR. There are studies regarding this matter in foreign studies, "The Influence of Hedonic Shopping Motivation, Promotion and Product Quality on Impulsive Online Purchase of Fashion Products".

Teo et al. (2023) conducted research in Malaysia to determine how TikTok affects consumers' impulse purchasing behavior. They employed the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model to examine product

appearance, product feasibility, perceived enjoyment, perceived utility, and impulsive purchasing intention. They gathered information from 169 people via online surveys and evaluated it with SPSS and Smart PLS. According to their outcomes, visual attractiveness and product practicality positively affect how much individuals enjoy and find TikTok beneficial for purchasing.

Another study conducted in the United Kingdom by Kristi and Aruan (2023) discovered that factors such as product usefulness, purchase convenience, and product price have a beneficial and essential effect on how individuals perceive the usefulness of purchasing fashion products online via platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. They collected data through online surveys and analyzed it using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The research gap here is that no specific study on TikTok's influence on impulsive purchasing behavior has been conducted in the Philippines. To address this gap, extensive research must be conducted on how TikTok, as an online platform, influences impulsive purchasing behavior among its users in the Philippines.

#### *Gap in Research Approach*

Most studies on impulsive buying have used a confirmatory research technique, attempting to confirm existing theories and models, but there is a lack of exploratory studies targeting TikTok specifically. The overwhelming usage of confirmatory research in impulsive buying may not be ideal for TikTok due to its specific features and dynamics, necessitating additional exploratory research to discover new insights. This existing study conducted by Lee and Chen (2021) used Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) where it was used to verify the concept validity and reliability of the measurement model used in this investigation. The importance of the path coefficients was tested using structural model analysis, which also served to support the research hypothesis. This study aims to use an exploratory research approach when examining TikTok's impulsive purchasing patterns. This strategy can assist in finding new patterns, behaviors, and characteristics that confirmatory research approaches may have overlooked.

#### *Gap in TikTok Shop Research*

Existing research has primarily concentrated on impulsive purchasing behavior on traditional e-commerce and well-known social media platforms, disregarding the significance of TikTok Shop. Timothy (2017) discovered that 30% of students shop online using social media, while 70% do not, using SPSS software and Microsoft Excel 2010. The most popular social networks for students were Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Google+. Students stated that using social media for purchasing allows them to obtain details about the product quickly, decreases the stress of in-person negotiating, increases customer satisfaction, and promotes interaction between buyers and sellers.

Azizah et al. (2022) studied how the Information System Technology Acceptance Model influences app usage and impulsive purchases on Shopee E-Commerce, a popular platform in Indonesia. Sudden promotions and reduced prices fuel Shopee's impulsive purchases compared to other marketplaces. However, there is an absence



of research on the role of TikTok Shop in impulsive purchasing behavior. TikTok Shop deserves a study due to its distinctive attributes. Studies focusing primarily on TikTok Shop and its influence on impulsive shopping behavior are essential to address this gap and better understand customer behavior in developing social commerce platforms.

### *Gap in Research Methodology*

Few studies have used a mixed-methods approach to investigate TikTok's influence on impulsive purchasing. Many studies focus primarily on quantitative or qualitative methods, ignoring the comprehensive perspective afforded by mixed-methods approaches. There are existing studies that use a quantitative approach. The study conducted by Qin et al. (2022) uses the quantitative diagram for the purposes of gathering and analyzing the data. A thorough analysis of earlier research allowed for the extraction of the measuring scale that was used to create a self-report survey form.

An example of a research paper that focuses on a qualitative approach entitled: “The Phenomenon of Impulsive Buying at TikTok Shop,” conducted by Edwy (2023) states that by conducting open-ended surveys, data is gathered through a qualitative approach. The findings indicated that the majority of respondents had used the TikTok Shop program to make impulsive purchases, and they did so frequently. This study aims to execute a mixed-methods research approach to understand the TikTok online platform thoroughly.

### *Data Collection*

The study will begin with an initial sample of 100 participants, determined using the Raosoft sample calculator, a software tool primarily used to calculate and generate sample sizes. The required number of respondents will also be determined through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) calculation. The survey to be conducted will include a diverse demographic of both male and females. The age range of participants spans from 18 years old and above, with all of them currently residing in cities within the National Capital Region (NCR). The participants must have an active presence on various social media platforms, with a particular engagement on the TikTok application, and be classified as online consumers.

Given that the study aims to explore the relationship of antecedents of TikTok and social media marketing strategies on impulsive purchasing of consumers, this demographic profile will serve as the foundation of the study. It will support the analysis of the preferences and behaviors of diverse consumers within the TikTok application, specifically in relation to its TikTok Shop.

Table 1. Demographics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Response information N=262</i>
Gender	Male	105	40.07%

	Female	155	59.16%
	Prefer not to say	2	0.76%
Age	18-20	99	37.80%
	21-25	147	56.10%
	26-30	10	3.80%
	31-35	2	0.80%
	40 and above	3	1.10%
Generation Cohort	Baby Boomer (1946-1964)	2	0.8%
	Generation X (1965-1979)	1	0.4%
	Generation Y (1980-1994)	8	3.1%
	Generation Z (1995-2009)	251	95.8%
Location	Caloocan	19	7.30%
	Las Pinas	1	0.40%
	Makati	8	3.10%
	Malabon	2	0.80%
	Mandaluyong	7	2.70%
	Manila	34	13%
	Marikina	51	19.50%
	Navotas	1	0.40%
	Paranaque	6	2.3%
	Pasay	2	0.8%
	Pasig	28	10.70%
	Pateros	1	0.4%
	Quezon City	91	34.70%
	San Juan	3	1.1%
	Taguig	7	2.7%
<b>Educational</b>			
Attainment	Primary School	0	0%
	High School	36	13.70%
	College	139	53.10%
	Undergraduate (Bachelor's Degree)	82	31.30%
	Postgraduate (Master's Degree)	3	1.10%
	Doctorate	2	0.80%
	Employment Status	Full-time Employee	25
Part-time Employee		12	4.60%
Self-employed		4	1.50%

	Unemployed	6	2.30%	
	Student	211	80.50%	
	Retired	3	1.10%	
	Housewife	1	0.40%	
Profession	Not Applicable	116	44.30%	
	Architecture and Engineering Field	68	26%	
	Medical Field	16	6.10%	
	Education Field	8	3.10%	
	Entrepreneurial Field	9	3.40%	
	Business Process Outsourcing Field	16	6.10%	
	Legal Field	4	1.50%	
	Information Technology	4	1.50%	
	Aviation Field	2	0.80%	
	Others			
	Civil Status	Single	250	95.40%
		Married	8	3.10%
Widowed		3	1.10%	
Legally Separated		1	0.40%	
Monthly Income (Php)	Less than ₱10,957	65	24.80%	
	₱10,957 - ₱21,194	52	19.80%	
	₱24,165 - ₱43,828	65	24.80%	
	₱43,829 - ₱76,669	47	17.90%	
	₱76,670 - ₱131,484	19	7.30%	
	₱134,485 - ₱219,140	8	3.10%	
	More than ₱219,141	6	2.30%	

The demographic composition of the study shows a total of 262 respondents, reflecting a diverse representation across various categories. In terms of gender, the majority identified as females, making up 59.16% of the data, while males accounted for 40.07%. A small portion (0.76%) chose not to disclose their gender. The age distribution predominantly comprises young adults, with 56.10% falling within the 21-25 age group. Participants aged 18-30 constitute 37.80%, followed by smaller percentages in the 26-30, 31-35, and over 40 age brackets. Regarding educational attainment, a significant majority (53.10%) held a Bachelor's degree, with 31.30% having completed high school and 13.70% holding a Master's degree.

In terms of employment status, the majority identified as students (80.50%), followed by full-time employees

(9.50%), part-time employees (4.60%), unemployed (2.30%), and self-employed individuals (1.50%). Retirement status was less common, with 1.10% of participants retired. In terms of civil status, the majority were single (95.40%), followed by married individuals (3.10%), widowed (1.10%), and legally separated (0.40%). Lastly, participants' monthly income distribution varied, with the largest portion falling within the Php 24,164 - Php 48,323 income range, followed by those earning less than Php 10,957 and Php 10,957 - Php 21,194. Income brackets ranging from Php 43,829 to Php 219,140 had varying representations, with the highest income bracket (more than Php 219,141) constituting 2.30% of the population.

### *Measures*

An online survey questionnaire, in general, is a digital instrument used to collect data and information about respondents across the Internet. This strategy entails asking people or groups of respondents a series of questions or prompts to obtain particular responses or insights. According to Nayak and Narayan (2019), internet surveys can be conducted at a minimal cost and in a short period, and a survey can be started, put on hold, and reopened at any moment. Furthermore, it can send reminders to the participant if questions are skipped and when the response is finished.

Lastly, it provides numerous benefits such as scalability, convenience of setup, and the capacity to reach a broad range of geographical regions. Hutchinson and Chyung (2023) emphasize the significance of employing a five-point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree) in research surveys, cautioning against inconsistent efforts to modify it for improved statistical analysis due to a lack of conclusive evidence. In this study, participants were requested to assess their perceived level of agreement regarding the statements formulated in the survey questionnaire using the previously indicated five-point Likert scale.

One of the questions included in the questionnaire primarily focuses on TikTok features: "Have you ever made a purchase directly from TikTok Shop based on a video or recommendation you saw on the platform?" This question highlights how the videos and recommendations from content creators featured on TikTok can influence individuals' purchasing decisions. It suggests that the content users encounter on TikTok has a significant impact on their engagement and purchasing behavior, as they are influenced by what they see on the platform. Another latent variable in this study is the Social Media Marketing Strategies. The questionnaire included questions such as, "I believe that the popularity of a celebrity or content creator impacts their ability to influence my preferences and decisions." This question aims to understand how strategies like celebrity endorsements influence users' preferences and decisions to purchase products. It acknowledges that the popularity of celebrities or content creators can significantly influence users' choices regarding what products to buy. Another question stated, "I find discount codes or coupons used as a type of sales promotion on social media appealing." This question addresses a common social media marketing strategy, which is also prevalent in TikTok Shop. It acknowledges that offering discounts or coupons can attract users to purchase products on the TikTok app, as such promotions serve as incentives for users to make purchases.

The study employs different research approaches to evaluate impulsive purchasing behavior among TikTok users in the Philippines' National Capital Region (NCR). Taderhoost (2022) claims that mixed methods can support each technique through analysis and reinforce the questionnaire data. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches guarantees that the study is well-rounded. Descriptive analysis of unprocessed social media data sets are best employed with a mixed-method technique (Rodriguez and Storer, 2020). In addition, to confirm the validity and reliability of the study's findings, through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test for Sampling Adequacy, which, according to the research of Harry et al. (2021), the variables' viability and eligibility for subsequent tests demonstrate proof of the authenticity of the KMO of sampling adequacy test result that will be used.

Furthermore, an antecedent's research design model is developed to help discover significant elements driving impulsive purchasing. As a part of the quantitative method, an exploratory factor study is utilized to reveal and explore underlying patterns and connections in the information being studied. This multifaceted technique offers an extensive analysis of impulsive purchasing behavior among TikTok users in the NCR.

#### *Data Gathering*

The method used in the data-gathering procedure was online convenience sampling. The limits caused by the size of the population and the lack of a thorough sample frame led Vasiliu et al. (2023) to choose convenience sampling. Based on the study, Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that was selected to make it easier to select participants based on their availability and ready accessibility. The participants in the research process are frequently ready and willing to participate. The sampling technique aims to obtain a representative sample from the users of TikTok within NCR that are impacted by impulsive buying.

According to Etikan and Babtope (2019), convenience sampling is a straightforward method for choosing samples because they are readily obtainable and easily accessible. It is frequently used as a preliminary study to gather information before proceeding with a more extensive research study. This approach is well-known for its flexibility, ease of use, efficiency, simplicity, and cost-efficiency. Another study by Stratton (2021) confirms convenience sampling's effectiveness because of its low cost, time-efficient nature, and simplicity.

According to a study, proponents employ another sampling method known as snowball sampling, one of the most frequently utilized methods of getting data from difficult-to-reach populations, particularly in circumstances with limited data available. Snowball sampling can enhance connections among possible respondents by using platforms such as Facebook and other social media platforms, which may assist in reducing some of its inherent restrictions by gathering background data on individuals. (Dosek, 2021).

According to Ball (2019), online surveys necessitate an in-depth understanding of how survey research might be adapted to web-based platforms to minimize bias and improve robustness. Online surveys have various advantages over traditional pen-and-paper approaches. According to Chaturvedi et al. (2021), using internet

platforms like Google to distribute survey questions is an ideal solution for providing reliable and statistically valid findings while resolving ethical concerns.

### *Sample Size*

Table 2. Sample parameters and size

Population Size	Confidence Interval	Margin of Error	Result
13,484,462	90%	10%	68

The target respondents of this study are the people residing in the National Capital Region (NCR), which consists of 1 municipality and 16 cities. Raosoft Sample Size Calculator was utilized to determine the required number of respondents. With a population size of 13,484,462 and a confidence interval of 90%, the recommended sample size would be 68. In table 2, the proponents have gathered a total of 262 respondents. According to Bullen et al. (2022), a sample size of at least 100 is required to obtain any significant result. This research, with responses from 262 people, surpasses the range of these recommended measures, strengthening the reliability of the SEM results.

### *Applications Used for Study*

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Movement Structure (AMOS) were used to get the necessary information. The SPSS is a program that analyzes scientific data, and it is a fast-visual model. According to Noels (2018), the SPSS is an excellent tool for understanding changes in product demand. The AMOS was used to create the structural equation model. Thakkar (2020) stated that AMOS is known for its unique graphical user interface, and it is also a well-regarded program for solving structural equation modeling problems.

### *Reliability Testing*

Cronbach's alpha is a valuable tool for assessing the reliability of a composite score in fields like psychology, social sciences, health, and education (Zakariya, 2022). It assesses whether a scale effectively measures its intended variable. The resulting alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) is a crucial indicator. An alpha score of 0.7 or higher signifies good internal consistency. In contrast, a score of 0.5 or below suggests the need to revise or replace questions and, in some cases, redesign the scale (Taber, 2017).

### *Exploratory Factor Analysis*

According to Shrestha (2021), exploratory factor analysis is used to examine complexity and is frequently

employed in the initial stages of studies to identify the connections among a group of variables. The goal of the research is to investigate factor analysis of an online survey to identify important variables when evaluating the relationships between each of these variables. The decision to employ factor analysis for the dataset is evaluated using determinant score limits Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The outcomes of this study imply that factor analysis is an effective method for identifying significant factors that explain the most significant variation within the assessed group.

### *Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis*

This study utilized path analysis to understand the relationship between antecedents affecting impulsive purchasing behavior on TikTok among users in the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines. Path analysis is an expansion of multiple linear regression analysis, according to Ali and Harahap (2020). Path analysis uses regression analysis to determine causal relationships between variables. Its primary purpose is to ascertain whether a group of independent variables directly or indirectly impacts associated variables. This aims to identify how features on TikTok, marketing strategies on social media, and personal characteristics influence impulsive purchases in industries such as fashion, electronics, beauty, home, food, and health. Using tools such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and factor analysis, this study could quantify how TikTok features directly and indirectly influence marketing strategies and overall buying intentions. With this approach, this study could thoroughly explore the relationships between the antecedents and provide a result of what affects consumer behavior on TikTok.

### *Model Fit*

In this study, the model fit will be assessed using a combination of quantitative approaches, specifically SEM and factor analysis, which will be implemented and utilized through SPSS. SEM will be used to analyze how well the proposed theoretical model aligns with the observed data, considering the relationships between TikTok features, social media marketing strategies, and impulsive purchase behavior. The factor analysis will help to identify and validate the latent variables affecting these variables. The study will analyze thoroughly the fit of the model through statistical measures, such as the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). According to the paper of Shi et al. (2020), this will ensure the strength and validity of the model. This thorough analysis aims to ensure the reliability and validity of the research model and formulate credible conclusions about the factors influencing impulsive purchase behavior among TikTok users in the National Capital Region, Philippines.

## **Results**

### **Reliability Testing**

Table 3 shows the result of a reliability analysis conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the internal



consistency of Celebrity Content Influence, TikTok Shop, Promotion Strategy, "For You Page" Feature, IP Trigger, Content Format, Content Features, Engaging Content, and Honest Reviews. Cronbach's alpha indicates how closely related the survey items are to each other, measuring the extent to which they collectively capture a single underlying concept.

The analysis shows high internal consistency with factors ranging from Honest Reviews to Celebrity Content Influence, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.831 to 0.952. These values are indicated as good to excellent, indicating that there is a strong correlation among the items within each item. Meanwhile, IP Decision Impact has a value of 0.707, indicating that the items are moderately well-correlated or acceptable for exploratory research (Olaniyi, 2019).

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cut-off</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Celebrity Content Influence	0.952	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
TikTok Shop	0.958	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Promotion Strategy	0.945	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
"For You Page" Feature	0.940	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
IP Trigger	0.927	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Content Format	0.929	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Content Features	0.932	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Engaging Content	0.912	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
Honest Reviews	0.813	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable
IP Decision Impact	0.707	$\geq 0.7$	Acceptable

To assess the correlation in the study, the formula and corresponding indicators were utilized. The assigned values were as follows: Moderate correlation was defined when the correlation coefficient (r) reached .50, Low correlation was characterized by values below .50, and High correlation was attributed to coefficients equal to or exceeding .80. To quantify the strength of the correlation, the study utilized the formula " $=r^2 \times 100$ ," emphasizing the squared correlation coefficient multiplied by 100.

Table 4. Correlation

	Age	Generation Cohort	Gender	Civil Status	Location	Educational Attainment	Employment Status	Household Income	Profession	Celebrity Content Influence	TikTok Shop	Promotion Strategy	FYP Feature	Impulsive Purchase Trigger	Content Format	Content Features	Engaging Content	Honest Reviews	Impulsive Purchase Decision Impact	
Age																				
Generation Cohort	-0.645**																			
Gender		-0.268**																		
Civil Status										-0.204**										
Location										-0.176**										
Educational Attainment										-0.182**										
Employment Status										-0.193**										
Household Income										-0.182**										
Profession										-0.242**										
Celebrity Content Influence										-0.257**										
TikTok Shop										-0.325**										
Promotion Strategy										-0.219**										
FYP Feature										-0.331**										
Impulsive Purchase Trigger										-0.248**										
Content Format										-0.179**										
Content Features										-0.185**										
Engaging Content																				
Honest Reviews																				
Impulsive Purchase Decision Impact																				

\*Note: \*\* = There is a correlation between the factors

Structural Equation Modeling

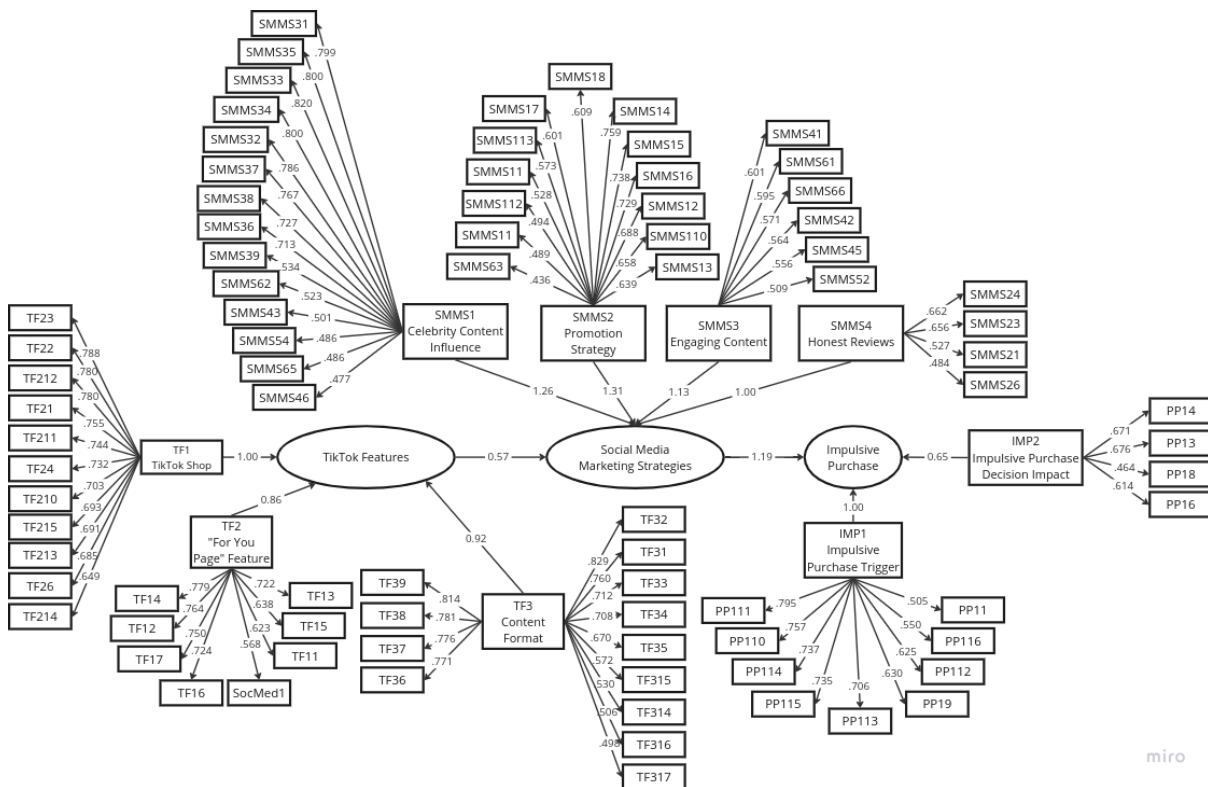


Figure 3. Initial Structural Equation Model for Antecedents of TikTok and Social Media Marketing Strategy on Impulsive Purchases

Figure 3 illustrates the initial hypothetical model in the diagram. The three latent variables include factors associated with TikTok features denoted as "TFeatures," social media marketing strategies represented by "SMMSStrat," and factors linked to impulsive purchasing behavior indicated as "IMP." Observed variables are critical for evaluating latent variables that impact impulsive purchasing behavior, which include TikTok features and social media marketing strategies. This approach aligns with findings from a study conducted by Savci et al. (2019), supporting the relevance and purpose of the hypothetical model in understanding the interplay between TFeatures, SMMSStrat, and IMP. Each latent variable was investigated using measurement models before being considered in the structural model.

### *Exploratory Factor Analysis Results*

The factor loadings help analyze a variable's relationship to a factor. The closer the value is to one, the stronger its relationship with the variable. It is essential in interpreting the result of the data. Correlations, also called factor loadings, help in measuring a factor. This step removes the cross-loadings or the factor with two or more values in a row. According to SPSS Factor Analysis, it is ideal that the component should accurately be measured by every input variable because not doing so complicates factor interpretation. Table 5 shows the Treated Factor Loadings that measures a single factor. The factors within each component indicate a high degree of similarity. The proponents ran the SPSS to eliminate the cross-loadings 14 times. It is required to eliminate variables, as only one value in the component per variable should exist. In component 1, the SPSS results indicate that variables SMMS33, SMMS35, SMMS34, SMMS31, SMMS32, SMMS37, SMMS38, SMMS36, SMMS39, SMMS62, SMMS43, SMMS65, SMMS54, and SMMS46 are grouped together. Similarly, the results suggest that variables TF23 up to TF214 in component 2 should be grouped. This grouping pattern should be applied to the remaining variables in each component. Variables that greatly impact a particular aspect of the data should be considered together since they are likely related or similar. Once the new set of components is labeled, it can be used to determine Cronbach's Alpha, which is helpful in testing reliability.

Table 5. Treated Factor Loadings

CODE	1	Questions
SMMS33	.820	I try products or services that has been endorsed or recommended by a celebrity or content creator on social media.
SMMS35	.800	I trust the recommendations made by celebrities and content creators on social media.
SMMS34	.800	I believe that celebrities and content creators genuinely use the products or services they endorse on social media.
SMMS31	.799	I am influenced by celebrities and content creators on my purchasing decisions.

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SMMS32	.786	I follow or engage with content posted by celebrities and content creators on social media platforms.
SMMS37	.767	I share products or services recommended by celebrities and content creators with my friends or followers.
SMMS38	.727	I believe that celebrities and content creators prioritize legitimacy in their social media endorsements.
SMMS36	.713	I believe that the popularity of a celebrity or content creator impacts their ability to influence my preferences and decisions.
SMMS39	.534	I believe that the age or gender of a celebrity or content creators matter to trust their recommendations on social media platforms.
SMMS62	.523	I believe that advertisements on social media influence my purchasing decisions.
SMMS43	.501	I purchase a product after seeing an engaging selling content.
SMMS65	.486	I share products or services that I discover through social media advertisements on my own social media platforms.
SMMS54	.486	I think that the use of trends in social media marketing strategies influences my online purchasing decisions.
SMMS46	.477	I often engage with content creators who value their followers and respond to their comments and messages.

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**CODE      2**

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TF23	.788	I am satisfied with my overall experience with the TikTok Shop feature.
TF22	.780	I am satisfied with the products available on TikTok Shop.
TF212	.780	I have made a purchase directly from TikTok Shop based on a video or recommendation you saw on the platform.
TF21	.755	I frequently make purchases through the TikTok app.
TF211	.744	I engage with the Yellow Basket in TikTok Videos.

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TF24	.732	I buy Fashion and Clothing products on TikTok.
TF210	.703	I trust product recommendations and reviews on TikTok Shop.
TF215	.693	I share or recommend products you discover on TikTok Shop with friends or followers on TikTok or other social media platforms.
TF213	.691	I find the TikTok Shop interface user-friendly.
TF26	.685	I buy Beauty and Cosmetics products on TikTok.
TF214	.649	I compare the pricing of products on TikTok Shop to other online shopping platforms.

---

**CODE 3**

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SMMS14	.759	I find discount codes or coupons used as a type of sales promotion on social media appealing.
SMMS15	.738	I find 'buy one, get one free' (BOGO) offers as a type of sales promotion on social media appealing.
SMMS16	.729	I find limited-time flash sales offers, as a type of sales promotion on social media, appealing.
SMMS12	.688	I frequently participate in or take advantage of a sales promotion or special offer on social media.
SMMS110	.658	I believe that sales promotions on social media are an effective way for brands to increase sales and engagement.
SMMS13	.639	I agree that social media sales promotions influence my shopping decisions more than traditional advertising strategies (e.g., billboards, tarpaulins, etc.).
SMMS18	.609	I find loyalty rewards program offers as a type of sales promotion on social media appealing.
SMMS17	.601	I find free shipping offers as a type of sales promotion on social media appealing.
SMMS113	.573	I agree that social media sales promotions influence my shopping decisions more than traditional advertising strategies (e.g., billboards, tarpaulins, etc.).
SMMS111	.528	I seek out sales promotions on social media when making purchasing decisions.

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SMMS112	.494	I follow or subscribe to brands' or businesses' social media accounts to remain up to date on their sales promos and offers.
SMMS11	.489	I am familiar with the concept of Sales Promotion as a marketing strategy on social media platforms.
SMMS63	.436	I often explore products or services advertised on social media platforms.

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**CODE 4**

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TF14	.779	I feel that the content on my 'For You Page' aligns with my interests and preferences.
TF12	.764	I am satisfied with TikTok's recommendations on your 'For You Page'.
TF17	.750	I am satisfied with the overall experience of using the 'For You Page' on TikTok.
TF16	.724	I believe that the 'For You Page' algorithm contributes to the variety of content I see on TikTok.
TF13	.722	I frequently find new and engaging content on your 'For You Page'.
TF15	.638	I actively engage with the content on my 'For You Page'.
TF11	.623	I understand TikTok's "For You Page" algorithm.
SocMed1	.568	I often use TikTok.

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**CODE 5**

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PP111	.795	Boredom or idle time tend to trigger my impulsive purchases.
PP110	.757	Stress or emotional tendencies trigger my impulsive purchases.
PP114	.737	Happiness tend to trigger my impulsive purchases.
PP115	.735	Excitement tend to trigger my impulsive purchases.
PP113	.706	Retail therapy tend to trigger my impulsive purchases.
PP19	.630	The recommendations from friends and family tend to trigger my impulsive purchases.
PP112	.625	Peer pressure tend to trigger my impulsive purchases.

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PP116 .550 Cravings tend to trigger my impulsive purchases.

PP11 .505 I find myself making impulsive purchases.

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**CODE 6**

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TF32 .829 I am aware of the "Stitch" TikTok Content Format.

TF31 .760 I am aware of the "Duet" TikTok Content Format.

TF33 .712 I am aware of the "Auto-Scroll" TikTok Content Format.

TF34 .708 I am aware of the "Picture-in-Picture" TikTok Content Format.

TF35 .670 I am aware of the "TikTok Visual Effects (TikTok Filters and Effects)" TikTok Content Format.

TF315 .572 I think that the Stitch feature on TikTok improves collaboration between users.

TF314 .530 I think that the Duet feature on TikTok improves collaboration between users.

TF316 .506 I think that the Auto-Scroll feature will improve my entire TikTok viewing user experience.

TF317 .498 I think that the Picture-in-Picture feature will improve my entire TikTok viewing user experience.

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**CODE 7**

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TF39 .814 I frequently use the "Picture-in-Picture" TikTok Content Format.

TF38 .781 I frequently use the "Auto-Scroll" TikTok Content Format.

TF37 .776 I frequently use the "Stitch" TikTok Content Format.

TF36 .771 I frequently use the "Duet" TikTok Content Format.

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**CODE 8**

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SMMS41 .601 I find social media content to be visually appealing and engaging.

SMMS61 .595 I often notice advertisements on social media platforms.

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SMMS66	.571	I believe that advertisements on social media platforms are effective in influencing consumer behavior.
SMMS42	.564	I think that short videos on social media platforms is an effective strategy for content to be engaging.
SMMS45	.556	I find content that delivers its message briefly, engaging.
SMMS52	.509	I believe that brands effectively utilize trends in their social media marketing strategies to capture my attention.

**CODE**

SMMS24	.662	I purchase a product after seeing an honest review.
SMMS23	.656	I do trust honest reviews when deciding to buy something.
SMMS21	.527	I agree that the algorithm of various social medias suggests genuine reviews that align with my preferences.
SMMS26	.484	I believe content creators are motivated by personal enthusiasm and genuine interest when creating honest review content.

**CODE      10**

PP13	.676	It takes time for me to decide before proceeding with my purchase on the app.
PP14	.671	The products I purchase through the app fall into the category of necessities or needs.
PP16	.614	I spend small amount of money in purchasing when using the app's online shopping feature.
PP18	.464	I feel that impulsive purchases have a negative impact on my overall financial well-being.

*Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin*

Table 5. KMO Test of Adequacy

KMO Test of Adequacy	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.948

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is a statistical test that measures the correlation between two variables. It helps to determine the reliability of data analysis by evaluating the significance of each variable and removing the variables that are not significant. According to Stephanie (2021), the KMO value would be closer to one if more variables are associated. A KMO value more relative to one indicates that the model is more reliable and acceptable, validating the data the proponents collected. Table 1 shows that the adequacy of the KMO test is acceptable since the result is 0.948, which is close to one.

Table 6. Hypothetical Model- Loadings of Measurement

Latent Variables	Observed Variables	Code	Standardized Regression Estimates	P-Value
TikTok Features	TikTok Shop	TF1	0.758	***
	"For You Page" Feature	TF2	0.844	-
	Content Format	TF3	0.804	***
	Content Features	TF4	0.588	***
Social Media Marketing Strategies	Celebrity Content Influence	SMMS1	0.788	***
	Promotion Strategy	SMMS2	0.885	***
	Engaging Content	SMMS3	0.847	***
	Honest Reviews	SMMS4	0.763	-
Impulsive Purchase	Impulsive Purchase Trigger	IMP1	0.659	-
	Impulsive Purchase Decision Impact	IMP2	0.535	***

\*Note: \*\*\* = Significant

The results in Table 6 illustrate that all the observable variables correlate strongly and positively with their respective latent variables. Additionally, the derived p-values, which represent the relationships' statistically significant aspect, support these connections' significance.

Table 7. Estimates of Structural Model- Hypothetical Model

Endogenous Variable	Exploratory Variables	Unstandardized Estimate	Standardized Regression Estimates	P-Value

Social Media	TikTok	0.557	0.831	***
Marketing Strategies	Features		(83.1%)	
Impulsive Purchase	Social Media	1.216	1.068	***
	Marketing Strategies			

\*Note: \*\*\* = Significant

Table 7 displays standard regression estimates between latent variables. According to the findings, when participants experience TikTok Features, there is an 83.1% chance that they will utilize social media marketing strategies. Subsequently, if social media marketing strategies are implemented, there is a 106.8% chance that impulsive purchase factors will be augmented.

Based on the results, it interprets a robust positive correlation between TikTok Features and the implementation of social media marketing strategies and, further, an impact of social media marketing strategies on increasing impulsive purchase factors. These results emphasize the potential influence of TikTok Features on marketing strategies and the impact on consumer behavior, providing valuable considerations for marketing and business strategies.

Table 8. Model Fit Indices - Hypothetical Model

Model Fit	Value	Cut-Off	Remarks
TLI (NNFI)	0.901	≥ 0.90	Acceptable
CFI	0.930	≥ 0.90	Acceptable
NFI	0.912	≥ 0.90	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.115	≤ 0.10	Failed

\*Note: TLI = Tucker Lewis Coefficient; NNFI = Non-normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Table 8 displays the model fit indices of the hypothetical model. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI or NNFI) has a score value of 0.901, which almost meets the acceptable cut-off of greater than or equal to 0.90, which is a reasonably good fit. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) has a total value of 0.930, which also exceeds the required cut-off of greater than or equal to 0.90, which is also considered acceptable. However, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) exceeds the recommended 0.10 cut-off, registering a value of 0.115, indicating a failure to meet the standard. The cutoff values correspond with Shi and Maydeu-Olivares's criteria

(2020). Although the model accurately depicts latent variable relationships, multiple fit indices emphasize the importance of thorough analysis, averting against relying entirely on a single indicator.

Structural Equation Modeling Results

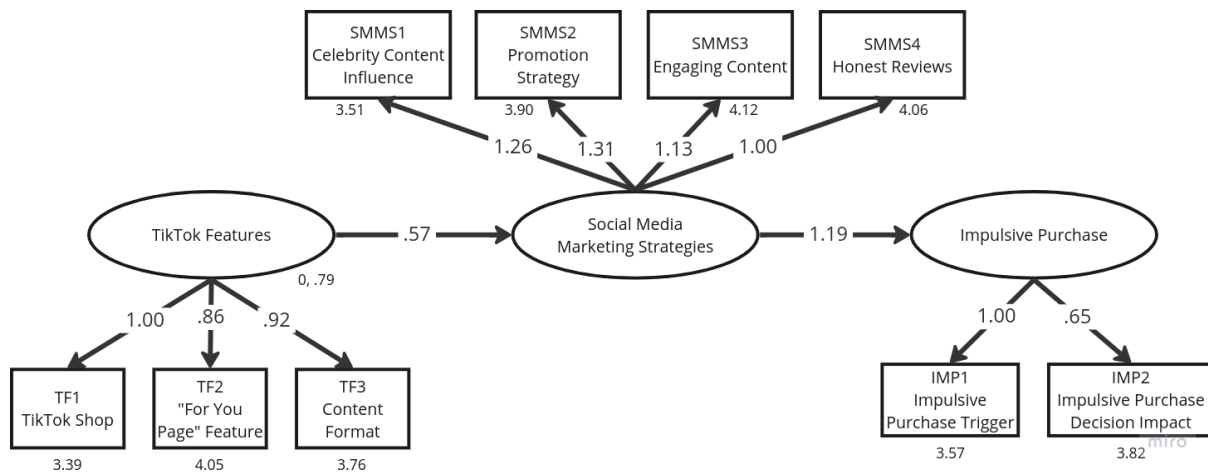


Figure 4. Final Model on Antecedents of TikTok and Social Media Marketing Strategy on Impulsive Purchases

Figure 4 depicts the modified model after modifying the hypothetical model. When the changes to the indices were reviewed, it was discovered that the Content Features variable (TF4) was removed. This conclusion was driven by Content Features failing to adhere to the rule of thumb, which states that most standardized residuals in the correct model should be less than two in absolute value. Shi and Maydeu-Olivares (2020) emphasize that the population values of cross-loadings or residual correlations should preferably be in the range of .20 or .40. A higher score suggests the model is misspecified more substantially.

This modification is supported by the findings of Hasanah et al. (2022), who underline that particular social media persona and content generate higher engagement, resulting in many followers. Cuevas et al. (2020) observe that some business contents display minimal interaction and engagement between the organization and users, justifying the elimination of Content Features from the model. Furthermore, the lack of a correlation is noticeable in the hypothetical and modified models, where only e2 and e4 had previously correlated. However, under the modified model, e4 lacks value in engaging material, strengthening the justification for its removal.

Table 9. Modified Model - Loadings of Measurement

Latent Variables	Observed Variables	Code	Standardized Regression Estimates	P-Value
	TikTok Shop	TF1	0.766	-
TikTok Features	"For You Page"	TF2	0.840	***

		Feature		
Social Media Marketing Strategies	Content Format	TF3	0.781	***
	Celebrity Content Influence	SMMS1	0.779	***
	Promotion Strategy	SMMS2	0.889	***
	Engaging Content	SMMS3	0.854	***
	Honest Reviews	SMMS4	0.765	***
Impulsive Purchase	Impulsive Purchase Trigger	IMP1	0.657	-
	Impulsive Purchase Decision Impact	IMP2	0.537	***

\*Note: \*\*\* = Significant

Compared to the hypothetical model, the two versions present a consistent positive connection between the observable and latent variables. Furthermore, the latest model in Table 9 maintains the significance of these correlations. Moreover, the statistical significance of the relationships between the observable variables and their associated latent variables remains the same, strengthening the reliability and relevance of these relations in the modified model.

Table 10. Estimates of Structural Model - Modified Model

Endogenous Variable	Exploratory Variables	Unstandardized Estimate	Standardized Regression Estimates	P-Value
Social Media Marketing Strategies	TikTok Features	0.566	0.851	***
Impulsive Purchase	Social Media Marketing Strategies	1.195	1.057	***

The re-evaluated estimations for the modified structural model are shown in Table 10. The differences identified in the modified model are minimal compared to the hypothetical model. Notably, the standardized regression estimates for the hypothetical and modified models remain consistent, demonstrating that the associations

between each latent variable are still significant. As stated in the table, The improved model complies with an additional detailed set of model fit indices that correspond to this alignment in estimates. The findings, specifically the Estimates of the Structural Model for the Modified Model table, highlight the strength of the correlations between latent variables, confirmed by the model's fulfillment of a broader range of fit indices.

According to the recomputed results, users who experience TikTok Features are 85.1% more likely to use social media for advertising. As a result, there is a 105.7% possibility that impulsive purchase characteristics will be a good fit if social media marketing methods are applied. According to the outcomes, there is a substantial positive association between TikTok features and the application of social media marketing strategies and the effect of social media advertising strategies on improving impulsive buying characteristics. The results of this study highlight the possible impact of TikTok features on marketing techniques and customer habits, providing significant considerations for marketing and business actions.

Table 11. Model Fit Indices - Modified Model

Model Fit	Value	Cut-Off	Remarks
TLI (NNFI)	0.933	$\geq 0.90$	Acceptable
CFI	0.954	$\geq 0.90$	Acceptable
NFI	0.938	$\geq 0.90$	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.101	$\leq 0.10$	Acceptable

\*Note: TLI = Tucker Lewis Coefficient; NNFI = Non-normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

The model fit indices of the recalculated modified model are shown in Table 11, displaying positive findings across multiple metrics. The TLI achieves a value of 0.933, exceeding the suggested cutoff of 0.90 and showing a good fit. Similarly, the CFI displays a value of 0.954, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.90 and satisfying the acceptance criteria. Furthermore, the RMSEA is 0.101, within the accepted range of 0.10.

The results indicate the modified model's ability to accurately depict the underlying relationships between latent variables. Furthermore, the comprehensive assessment of various fit indices highlights the structural equation model's reliability, highlighting the value of multiple criteria for assessing the model instead of depending on just one metric. The following cutoffs were based on Shi and Maydeu-Olivares's (2020) study.

## Discussion

The study's findings on the relationship between TikTok features, social media marketing strategies, and their

impact on purchasing power provide insights into existing customer behavior and marketing strategies. To begin with, the strong correlation between TikTok feature engagement and the probability of using social media for marketing highlights the expanding relevance of platforms like TikTok in digital marketing. With a large user base and innovative features like TikTok Shop and the "For You Page," companies can successfully attain and engage with potential customers. This demonstrates the changing environment of social media as an effective platform for advertising, company promotion, and communication. Secondly, the study's findings on the correlation of impulsive purchase characteristics with social media marketing techniques indicate a dynamic relationship between consumer behavior and marketing strategies on platforms such as TikTok. Celebrity content influence, promotion strategies, captivating content, and honest reviews effectively appeal to customers' impulsive purchasing behaviors, which could lead to more significant sales and brand loyalty.

Since the study focuses on TikTok users specifically in the Philippines, this study was able to fill the gap in the lack of studies on the impulsive purchasing intention of TikTok users in the country, particularly in the National Capital Region (NCR). By carrying out research with this demographic group, this gap was filled. Given that the previous studies commonly employed confirmatory research techniques, this study was able to explore and examine the application's distinct characteristics and dynamics of the impact on the impulsive buying intention of the users with the utilization of an exploratory research method. This method was able to uncover new perspectives and trends that are more conventional compared to the confirmatory research which unfortunately has been missed. Jacobucci (2022) asserts that in essence, psychology research is increasingly integrating aspects that could be labeled exploratory. After identifying the previous studies that have mostly focused on impulsive purchasing intention on well-known social media platforms and other traditional e-commerce platforms, the study was able to fill the gap in conducting in favor of the significance of TikTok Shop. With this, the study was able to close this knowledge gap, comprehend consumer behavior on new social commerce platforms, and prove the essential importance of its impact on the impulsive shopping intention of the consumers.

Lastly, this paper was conducted with a new approach by utilizing mixed methods to provide a broad perspective, which previous researchers have not been able to achieve as they primarily concentrated either on quantitative or qualitative methods. Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) state that the fundamental purpose of mixing both quantitative and qualitative components in mixed-methods studies is to strengthen and enhance study findings. They believe that research problems should always be answered using a combination of approaches, which increases validity and knowledge. Through the integration of qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the study has gained a deeper understanding of TikTok's impact on impulsive purchasing intention.

Furthermore, the significant positive correlation between TikTok features and the application of social media marketing strategies highlights the importance of businesses adjusting to and efficiently utilizing developing digital platforms. As customer preferences change and attention spans shorten, marketers must constantly innovate and use platforms like TikTok to remain relevant and competitive. Notably, the study's focus on the impact of these strategies on increasing impulsive purchasing preferences emphasizes social media marketing's



potential influence on customer behavior. This shows businesses should purposefully apply TikTok features and specialized marketing strategies to generate engagement and encourage viewers to make purchases.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the dynamic interplay between TikTok features, social media marketing strategies, and consumer behavior, providing valuable insights for businesses and entrepreneurs seeking to control and benefit from the ever-changing digital landscape. Companies can improve their marketing in an increasingly competitive market by effectively identifying and utilizing these relationships.

Individuals who engage with TikTok features (TikTok Shop, "For You Page" Feature, and Content Format) are significantly more likely (85.1%) to use social media as a platform for advertising. Additionally, there is a substantial possibility (105.7%) that impulsive purchase characteristics align well with the application of social media marketing methods (Celebrity Content Influence, Promotion Strategy, Engaging Content, and Honest Reviews). The study's outcomes suggest a strong positive association between TikTok features and the implementation of social media marketing strategies. Furthermore, the study highlights these strategies' considerable impact on enhancing users' impulsive buying tendencies. Overall, these results provide valuable insights for businesses and marketers, emphasizing the potential influence of TikTok features on marketing techniques and consumer behavior.

Ten factors are included in the dataset, according to the findings of the factor analysis. These criteria were discovered to be present after looking over the collection of questions. Tiktok Shop, "For You Page" Features, Content Format, Content Features, Celebrity Content Influence, Promotion Strategy, Engaging Content, Honest Review, Impulsive Purchase Trigger, Impulsive Purchase Decision Impact.

After factor analysis had concluded, the dataset was verified to determine whether or not it worked the hypothesis model. The results revealed that TikTok Shop ( $\beta = 1.00$ ), "For You Page" Features ( $\beta = 0.86$ ), Content Format ( $\beta = 0.92$ ), positively affect TikTok Features. Results also show variables such as Celebrity Content influence ( $\beta = 1.26$ ), Promotion Strategy ( $\beta = 1.31$ ), Engaging Content ( $\beta = 1.13$ ), Honest Review ( $\beta = 1.00$ ). In terms of Impulsive Purchase, result shows that Impulse Purchase Trigger ( $\beta = 1.00$ ), Impulsive Purchase Decision Impact ( $\beta = 0.65$ ) According to Sharabati et al. (2022) Customers are impacted in many different ways by TikTok's varied features, which include the captivating For You Page algorithm, influencer marketing, user-generated content, and e-commerce integration. These effects include entertainment, buying decisions, brand perceptions, and cultural trends. The findings show that TikTok features present chances for effective control and advantages, as well as useful insights for companies and entrepreneurs dealing with the ever-changing digital landscape. By effectively identifying and utilizing these connections, businesses can improve their marketing strategies in a market that is becoming more and more competitive.

According to Kusumawati et al. (2021), Understanding the elements influencing impulsive buying is critical for brands and businesses, especially in the quickly expanding industry, as TikTok continues to shape consumer behavior. This study offers insightful information that can improve marketing plans and the success of TikTok

social media campaigns. Furthermore, the strong correlation that exists between TikTok features and the application of social media marketing strategies highlights how important it is for companies to adjust to and effectively use new digital platforms. To stay relevant and competitive, marketers must constantly innovate and make use of platforms like TikTok in response to shifting consumer preferences and shorter attention spans. The study's focus on how these tactics can increase the likelihood that consumers will make impulsive purchases highlights the potential influence of social media marketing on consumer behavior. It also highlights the necessity for businesses to intentionally use TikTok features along with customized marketing tactics to increase viewer engagement and encourage purchases.

The study's findings were derived using SPSS factor analysis, a method employed to refine the questionnaire by eliminating irrelevant variables and overlapping factors. The resulting components, Celebrity Content Influence, TikTok Shop, Promotion Strategy, "For You Page" Feature, IP Trigger, Content Format, Content Features, Engaging Content, Honest Reviews, and IP Decision Impact, underwent reliability testing. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to assess how closely these components were related, measuring the extent to which they collectively captured a single underlying concept. Notably, the results indicated correlations of 0.707 to 0.952 ranging from acceptable to excellent, underscoring the reliability of the refined questionnaire in capturing the interconnectedness of the surveyed variables.

The correlations between the Demographics profile and various factors in the context of TikTok, social media marketing strategies, and consumer purchasing behavior have also been assessed. A significant positive low correlation of .202 (4.08%) exists between Household Income and Engaging Content, indicating that as household income increases, engagement with content considered engaging also tends to rise. The study considers a customer persona, which is Alex, Taylor, John, and Sarah, to represent demographic profiles on different income statuses. For instance, comparing Alex, with a higher income falling between Php 131,485 to Php 219,140, and Taylor, whose income is less than Php 10,957, the positive correlation implies that Alex may, on average, exhibit a slightly higher level of engagement with engaging content compared to Taylor. Conversely, there is a significant negative low correlation of -.163 (2.66%) between Employment Status and TikTok Shop, revealing that engagement with TikTok Shop tends to decrease as employment status increases. Moreover, the analysis suggests that, on average, John, who is employed part-time, may demonstrate slightly lower engagement with TikTok Shop than Sarah, a student.

The hypothetical model examined the relationships between latent variables—TikTok features ("TFeatures"), social media marketing strategies ("SMMStrat"), and impulsive purchasing behavior ("IMP"). The model is supported by a study conducted by Savci et al. (2019), and before testing, measurement models were applied to assess the suitability of latent variables using observed variables. Satisfactory index values were obtained for all scales. The fit of the proposed model was then evaluated using the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), with accepted fit indices and their respective limits detailed in an unspecified table.

The modified model resulted from adjustments to the original hypothetical model, removing the Content Features variable (TF4). This decision was based on examining indices, revealing that Content Features did not adhere to the standardized residuals' rule of thumb, and its residual covariance with Engaging Content lacked significance. The elimination of Content Features was justified by its apparent lack of importance in making TikTok videos engaging. Additionally, observations that some business contents display minimal interaction justified this removal. The lack of correlation, particularly with e4 regarding engaging material, further supported the modification, aligning with insights from both the hypothetical and modified models.

The model's relationship to the actual result from SPSS and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) depicts the research design model, which intends to investigate the relationship between TikTok features and Social Media Marketing Strategies (SMMS) regarding their influence on Purchase Power. The method involves transferring computed findings from SPSS to SEM and assessing the study's findings' closeness to reality. The study seeks to determine whether the results are closely related to actuality, meaning that most of the data are relevant in assessing the interconnection of these three variables and their impact on customers' purchasing behavior or purchasing power.

#### *Theoretical Contribution*

The study focuses on identifying and validating factors associated with social media marketing strategies, impulsive buying, and TikTok features. It contributes to the existing literature by investigating the theoretical model and improving current theories and models about the TikTok platform and other social media platform studies. This has a major impact on the factors that precede impulsive purchases on TikTok. The study also establishes a connection between positive behavior toward the TikTok platform's antecedents and the tendency of customers to make purchases, which is affected by the value they believe the platform provides.

#### *Practical Implication*

This study has practical implications for stakeholders, such as for business owners as it provides a valuable reference for identifying marketing strategies appropriate for their business needs. By understanding the approaches outlined in this study, business owners can boost their marketing strategies and enhance the overall status of their business. Additionally, this study can inform business owners about the latest marketing trends and best practices, empowering them to make knowledgeable decisions that can positively impact their business growth.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **For Future Researchers**

The proponents recommend that future researchers conduct the same methodology and utilize SPSS to identify the correlation between a different shopping platform and another. By replicating this study with various

shopping platforms, researchers could also explore the factors influencing consumer behavior and preferences regarding online shopping. Such insights could help businesses tailor their online shopping experiences to meet the needs and expectations of their target audience, leading to increased customer satisfaction and sales.

#### *Comparison Across the Age Groups*

In order to gain a better understanding of how TikTok's features and marketing strategies influence impulsive buying behavior, it is recommended that future researchers expand their studies beyond the age range of Gen Z and Gen Y. By broadening the scope of the study, the researchers can better comprehend the platform's impact on the purchasing decisions of individuals of all age groups and identify any potential differences or similarities in behavior across different age ranges. Such information is invaluable to businesses and marketers to target and connect with their audience on TikTok efficiently. It could also help develop more effective and customized marketing strategies for different age groups.

#### *Cross-Cultural Analysis*

The proponents recommend conducting a comparative study across different cultures or countries to examine if the factors influencing TikTok features and impulsive purchase behavior vary across diverse cultural contexts. Exploring the factors influencing impulsive purchase behavior and TikTok features in different cultural contexts can help companies tailor their marketing efforts to specific target audiences. Furthermore, this study can contribute to a better understanding of the impact of social media on consumer behavior and give an idea of how different cultures interact with technology and social media platforms.

#### *Longitudinal Study*

The proponents recommend conducting a longitudinal study to observe changes in TikTok usage patterns and impulsive purchasing behavior over an extended period. This will provide insights into trends and potential shifts. By tracking these trends over time, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of what drives consumers to make impulsive purchases and how social media platforms like TikTok play a role in this behavior.

#### *Qualitative Exploration of User Experiences*

Conducting qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, can be incredibly valuable. By engaging with users directly, future researchers can gather detailed information about the factors that drive impulsive purchases on the platform, as well as the emotional and psychological impact of these purchases.

#### *Exploration of Privacy Concerns*

The proponents suggest to examine the role of privacy concerns in TikTok usage and impulsive purchasing

behavior, considering how users' perceptions of data security may influence their online shopping decisions. Privacy concerns play a significant role in TikTok usage and online shopping behavior. As such, companies and app developers need to take data security seriously and ensure that users' personal information is protected. Doing so can help build trust with their users and encourage more confident and secure online shopping behavior.

#### *Study on Trust and Credibility*

The proponents recommend conducting a study on the trustworthiness and credibility of information presented on TikTok, exploring how these factors influence consumer trust and subsequent impulsive purchasing decisions. Such a study would examine the factors influencing consumer trust in the information being presented and how this trust ultimately impacts impulsive purchasing decisions.

#### *Comparison with Other Social Media Platforms*

Expanding the study by comparing the impact of TikTok's features and marketing strategies on impulsive buying behavior with other leading social media platforms would be beneficial. Researchers can conduct a thorough analysis of these variables to gain a better understanding of the influence of various social media platforms on impulsive buying behavior. This study can help identify potential strategies for marketers to leverage these trends. Furthermore, examining the differences between TikTok and other platforms could provide valuable insights into the unique features that set TikTok apart from other social media platforms and why it has become such a hit among younger generations.

#### *Analysis of User Engagement Metrics*

The proponents recommend exploring the correlation between user engagement metrics on TikTok (likes, comments, shares) and impulsive purchasing behavior, examining how these interactions contribute to consumer decision-making.

#### *Comparative Analysis with Traditional Marketing*

The proponents recommend exploring how TikTok features and social media marketing strategies compare to traditional marketing channels in influencing consumer behavior and impulsive purchases.

#### *For Business Owners*

This study is recommended for business owners as they can use this study as it provides a useful reference for identifying marketing strategies that are appropriate for their business needs. By implementing the approaches outlined in this study, business owners can improve their marketing strategies and enhance the overall status of

their business. Additionally, this study can keep business owners informed about the latest marketing trends and best practices, empowering them to make informed decisions that can positively impact their business growth.

### *Effect of Influencers*

The proponents suggest investigating the impact of influencers on TikTok in shaping user behavior, particularly in terms of impulsive purchases, and comparing the effectiveness of various influencer marketing strategies. Analyzing this impact can help businesses make informed decisions about their influencer marketing strategies and improve their effectiveness.

### *Impact on Brand Loyalty*

It is important to investigate the long-term impact of TikTok features and social media marketing strategies on brand loyalty. Specifically, the proponents recommend assessing whether impulsive purchases lead to sustained customer loyalty. One area of interest is understanding how different features and social media marketing strategies impact brand loyalty over time.

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## UTAUT2 Questionnaire to Access Perception and Acceptance Degree Among Primary School Mathematics Teachers on The Integration Programming in Mathematics Instruction

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**Abstract:** Integrating programming into education is perceived to provide students with a distinct perspective on learning. In addition to enhancing the appeal of studying, it provides students to delve into many educational subjects. Therefore, this research aims to examine the perceptions among mathematics educators at the elementary level regarding the incorporation of programming into mathematics instruction. A comprehensive questionnaire had been used incorporating survey methodologies. The UTAUT2 questionnaire underwent translation, validation, and reliability testing. This survey involved the participation of 101 teachers from national schools, national type schools (Chinese), and national type schools (Tamil). The outcome of the research revealed that performance expectations, effort expectations, social influence, facility conditions, hedonic motivation, and behavioural intention significantly impacted the inclination of primary school mathematics teachers in Malaysia to incorporate programming into their mathematics instruction. The survey indicates that 79.2 per cent of mathematics teachers possess proficient and satisfactory abilities in using technology. Approximately 89.1 per cent of individuals possess the capability to incorporate STEM principles into the process of learning mathematics at a moderate to high competency level. Therefore, math educators in academic establishments possess grown technological skills and maintain a positive perspective regarding programming for mathematics education implementation.

**Keywords:** mathematics education, programming, primary school, UTAUT2 questionnaire.

**Citation:** Md Zuber, M. & Mansor, M. A. (2024). UTAUT2 Questionnaire to Access Perception and Acceptance Degree Among Primary School Mathematics Teachers on The Integration Programming in Mathematics Instruction. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1557-1575), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4.4 is to enhance the skills of young people and adults in areas that pertain to employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship by 2030 (UNESCO Statistics, 2021). Today's young generation must possess skills and competence in various sectors through ICT skills or computer-related

activities. One of the ICT skills assessed is proficiency in writing programming languages to create a programme. The UNESCO report is concerned about the rapid advancement of technology, which brings both benefits and challenges. Several developing nations, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, are lacking fundamental infrastructure and amenities necessary for a good learning environment, such as internet connectivity, computers, and electrical access. Thus, that situation leads to the standard of learning instruction not evolving at the same rate as technology. On the same bargain, the percentage of Malaysian youth and adults who possess information and communication technology (ICT) proficiency between 2017 and 2019 is notably low in the areas of writing and utilising programming languages compared to other ICT skills (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). In contrast to their proficiency in operating and configuring software, which stands at 47.4 per cent, a mere 12.4 per cent of Malaysian youth and adults possess the ability to construct programming code. This indicates that programming code creation proficiency among Malaysians is extremely poor. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Malaysian youth and adults are predominantly consumers of software and programming, as opposed to inventors. This circumstance necessitates an immediate action plan to improve the current state of affairs to nurture more inventors while accomplishing the SDGs' target.

## **Theoretical Background**

### *Programming as Educational Tools*

Programming is considered a versatile educational tool. Programming has been incorporated into the curriculum of numerous academic disciplines, including music (Gazzano, 2023), science (Metcalf et al., 2019), English (Kazahaya, 2021), and mathematics (Ahmed et al., 2020). The incorporation occurs not just in higher education institutions but also in secondary, primary, and preschools. These integration endeavours are conducted to demonstrate the value of programming in empowering students' learning comprehension (Sáez-López et al., 2019), cognitive development, bolstering motivation (Minamide & Takemata, 2019), and enhancing students' self-efficacy (Coskunserce, 2023). Cognitive growth involves student problem-solving (Shinkai & Hayase, 2019), meta-cognitive (Daher et al., 2020), computational thinking (Minamide et al., 2020), logical thinking, and creative thinking (Bae & Jun, 2018). Programming-based learning teaches students to solve problems by decomposing complex issues into more manageable components (Scherer et al., 2019). Students must also examine the problem, and the pattern of possible solutions, and select the most practicable planning to solve the issue. Indirectly, this process of profound thought teaches students to reason and think critically. These opportunities foster students' imagination and enable them to generate innovative thoughts. Students who possess digital skills will result from the continuous development of these abilities, which will also foster a level of cognitive thinking maturity that can be leveraged as a career asset. Sjoberg et al. (2020) suggest that students' comprehension of a given concept can also be enhanced when cognitive development is evaluated through the lens of analytical thinking. By utilising programming as an educational instrument, one can effectively illustrate a concept. For instance, students can manipulate robots by applying precise mathematical equations. The coding creation will influence the robot's movement and provide a unique learning experience for students to investigate the cause and effect of certain configurations based on the problem.

Besides, students who participate in programming-based learning are perceived as being more engaged and actively involved (Pinto-Llorente et al., 2017). They gain opportunities to engage with learning materials in a tangible, visual, and conceptual sense through programming-based learning activities. Students could comprehend, retain, and develop a new concept through this opportunity. An in-depth comprehension of a particular concept will inspire and pique one's interest in further investigating related concepts. Programming-based learning is positively received by both high achievers and ordinary learners (Kong & Lin, 2022; Topali & Mikropoulos, 2023). Students consider learning through programming to be not only beneficial and easy but also spark an interest in learning. In addition, collaborative strategies for activity implementation are frequently combined with programming-based learning (Papapvlasopoulou et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2021; Zakaria et al., 2022). Discussion can be facilitated among students through collaborative activities to either analyse the project or propose a feasible work plan. Both modes of discourse have the potential to enhance student engagement and facilitate a deeper understanding. Unplugged programming, visual programming, and textual programming have the potential to enhance kids' self-potential in learning, depending on the student's needs and the school's context. Unplugged programming is considered a favourable choice for educators and learners who face limitations in terms of infrastructure resources and technology (Humble et al., 2019). Visual programming serves as an effective tool for bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application of programming languages, particularly for novice students in the field of programming (Panskyi et al., 2019). While textual programming may provide a challenge for young learners, mastering it provides an enhanced educational advantage (Rastovac et al., 2021).

### *Programming in Mathematical Learning*

The potential for youth and adults to cultivate programming skills is viewed as extremely promising. This is due to the diligent efforts of the Malaysian Ministry of Education to ensure that every primary and secondary education possesses access to electricity, the internet, and computers. Moreover, computer facilities intended for educational objectives have been supplied to 88.8% of educational institutions (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The ministry is making every effort to equip primary and secondary school students with programming skills. Indeed, this endeavour commenced with the revision of primary and secondary school curricula. The curriculum of Design and Technology (RBT) in primary schools in Malaysia has been amended to include programming in Basic Computer Science (ASK) for secondary students beginning in 2020. The inclusion of the programming module in the primary school curriculum enables students to develop new programmes through the utilisation of programming features (DSKP RBT Year 5, 2019 ). Like Malaysia, several developing nations like England, Finland, and Hong Kong have opted to include programming in specific disciplines. However, Sweden decided to incorporate programming into mathematics lessons in basic and secondary schools (Skolverkat, 2022). In level one, the basics of programming are indirectly applied through well-structured and sequentially followed lessons on algebra. Then, in level 2, the construction of programming algorithms using visual programming was introduced. This integration intends to enhance mathematics understanding concepts by developing skills in using digital tools and programming. Programming not only enhances programming proficiency but also facilitates the application of fundamental mathematical

principles in dealing with problems (Kaufmann & Stenseth, 2021). Students who learn mathematics through programming activities demonstrate an apparent boost in their mathematical abilities when compared to those who engage in alternative learning activities (García-Perales & Palomares-Ruiz, 2020). Organising educational activities via programming, nevertheless, requires greater caution since this does not transpire automatically. The inability of educators to effectively address technical challenges, inadequate guidance, excessive focus on programming language exploration rather than mathematical concepts and working memory limitations will all hinder the potential of programming as an educational tool that promotes mathematical learning (Laurent et al., 2022).

### *Problem Statement*

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide assessment that examines educational achievements across participating countries. Recently OECD report (2023) found that 41% of 15-year-old pupils in Malaysia demonstrated a minimum competency level of 2 in mathematics. To gain level 2, students must possess a proficient problem-solving approach for simple scenarios, the ability to extract basic information from data management or two-dimensional representation, and comprehension of functional relationships. Hence, the findings of this evaluation indirectly indicate that 59% of Malaysian students struggle to mathematically analyse and recognise a basic problematic situation without any guidance. This discovery proposes that Malaysian students struggle with complex daily problems, lack imaginative thinking and creativity, and have not mastered fundamental arithmetic skills. Meanwhile, the research conducted by Ling & Mahmud (2023) encompasses several limitations that students strive to solve mathematical problems involving sentences. These constraints emphasised inadequate language proficiency, which hinders students from comprehending the situation and failing to fully interpret the question's intent, as well as mathematical ignorance, which causes errors in selecting the appropriate strategy. Thus, critical thinking and problem-solving fundamentals are vital and must be developed in children from an early age (Ismail et al., 2023). Failure to adequately acquire this skill during schooling will impede the student's ability to realise his complete potential in life.

Additionally, students' fundamental knowledge, attitude, interest, and the instruction provided by their teachers are all contributing elements to the problem of low mathematics achievement (Abu & Leong, 2017; Jamian & Taha, 2020). A study conducted by Abd Karim et al. (2023) reveals that 35.5% of upper secondary school pupils in Malaysia experience mathematics insecurity. Other studies conducted by Kashefi et al. (2022) and Alias et al. (2023) demonstrated a correlation between students' problem-solving abilities and mathematics anxiety. Mathematics anxiety also hinders the development of students' problem-solving abilities. Ultimately, it is necessary to assist students in overcoming student anxiety and developing problem-solving abilities to prevent its recurrence. It is recommended that this initiative be initiated in primary schools. It is believed that the investigation of programming in mathematics education can enhance rational thought, problem-solving, and mathematical reasoning (Husain et al., 2017).



### *Research Objectives*

Examining the practicality of incorporating programming into mathematics classrooms to foster CT and student motivation is the focus of this research. This will be accomplished by Scratch programming, which is one of the most user-friendly block-based language platforms available. The objective of the study is as follows.

- i. To measure the level of technology used among primary school mathematics teachers in their instruction.
- ii. To assess primary school teachers' level of programming knowledge and skills.
- iii. To evaluate primary school teachers' level of acceptability of using programming in mathematics instruction.

The research questions are conducted to answer the research objectives based on the three phases. Therefore, the study will answer the following research questions.

- i. How frequent is technology utilisation among primary school mathematics teachers in their instruction?
- ii. What level of programming expertise do primary school mathematics teachers have?
- iii. How do primary school mathematics teachers embrace the integration of programming in mathematics instruction?

### **Method**

A needs analysis is the objective of this study. The objective of this need analysis is to determine the significance of developing instructional modules that incorporate programming to facilitate effective change. Using this constructive intervention, challenges will be identified, and initiatives can be coordinated to construct modules that cater to the requirements of the target audience. Identifying challenges or issues in every situation and validating the proposed solution is an essential procedure (McKillip, 2011). Therefore, after ascertaining the core needs, a suitable evaluation must assess the substantial concerns and select the most effective improvement. This study adopted McArdle (1991) needs analysis model, which outlines surveillance, investigation, analysis, and reporting as the main procedure. This method of analysis is appropriate for identifying the training requirements of teachers in schools. A comprehensive assessment of the teachers' instructional practices can be obtained from the final report of the need analysis. This report provides an overview of the current situation and identifies the specific training requirements. It also includes recommendations for intervention training and a well-structured plan for implementing and evaluating the training programme. The process of needs analysis commenced with surveillance of relevant papers to assess the key challenges in the acquisition of mathematical knowledge among primary school students. Subsequently, the optimal instruments have been determined for gathering data on teachers' acceptance to incorporating programming into mathematics instruction. Once the UTAUT2 questionnaire is chosen, it is subjected to a validation process conducted by field experts. Once authorised by the authorities, the questionnaire was disseminated to all research participants via their local district education offices. The acquired data was subjected to descriptive analysis and subsequently reported. Figure 1 illustrated the study procedure.



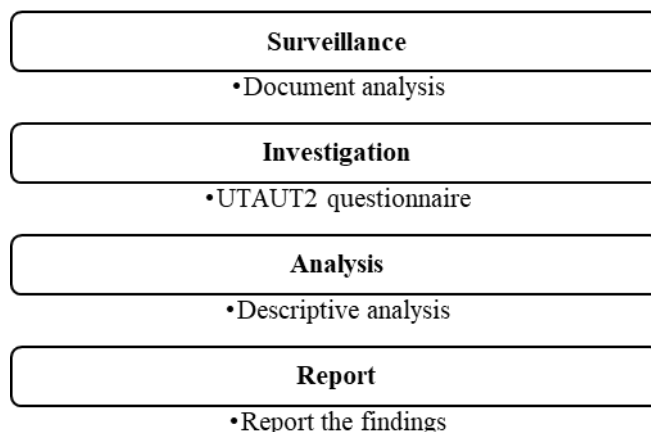


Figure 1. The Procedure of the Study

For the pilot test, this study utilised 30 mathematics primary school teachers to answer the questionnaire as Hertzog indicated that the sample size for the pilot study is between 10 and 40 individuals, which is enough to give a reliable estimation of the pilot study's objectives (Hertzog, 2008). Meanwhile, more than 100 mathematics primary school teachers needed to answer the questionnaire as proposed by Borg & Gall in survey research requires no fewer than 100 cases of sample size in each major sub-group and twenty to fifty in each minor sub-group (Borg & Gall, 1996). This study employed cluster sampling as a sampling technique. This technique is deemed more practical for obtaining a sample of mathematics primary school teachers because teachers throughout Malaysia have similar characteristics. They have received training in mathematics education at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG) or the Public Institute of Higher Education and underwent the requirements established by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Therefore, generalisations can be made even though the study sample was drawn solely from mathematics teachers in primary schools in the northern zone.

### Data Collection Tools

The UTAUT2 Questionnaire was employed in this study to assess the degree of acceptability of the research sample towards a specific technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This questionnaire utilises the UTAUT2 questionnaire, which has been translated into Malay by Md Zuber & Mansor (2023). This question consists of two components: part A, which pertains to demographic information, and part B, which pertains to the UTAUT2 questionnaire. The demographic question includes eight inquiries about gender, age, teaching experience in mathematics, frequency of technology use in mathematics instruction, confidence level in using technology for mathematics instruction, proficiency and knowledge in programming, ability to integrate STEM in mathematics instruction, and challenges encountered by teachers when utilising technology in the classroom. Performance expectations (4 items), effort expectations (4 items), social influence (3 items), facility conditions (4 items), hedonic motivation (2 items), and behavioural intention (2 items) are the six constructs assessed by the UTAUT2 questionnaire. The 7-point Likert scale had been used to measure items with a rating scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. To ensure that samples have the same knowledge of the terms,

definitions were provided for each term used. This questionnaire employed the term programming, which refers exclusively to unplugged programming and visual programming. The questionnaire was subsequently subjected to a process of validation and reliability.

### *Analysis*

#### *Demographic*

The questionnaire was commenced by collecting demographic data, including gender, age, educational background, school category, and teaching experience. A total of 101 primary school mathematics teachers responded to this questionnaire, with 16.8 per cent being male teachers and 83.2 per cent being female teachers. Regarding age distribution, 45.5 per cent of teachers fall within the age range of 36-45 years, 38.6 per cent are 46 years old or over, 13.9 per cent are aged between 31-35 years, and a mere 2 per cent are below the age of 30. Most teachers, specifically 73.3 per cent, are from national schools, while 21.8 per cent are from Chinese national-type schools (SJKC), and only 5 per cent are from Tamil national-type schools (SJKT). Regarding teaching experience, 42.6 per cent of teachers have a tenure of over 20 years, 37.6 per cent have 11 to 20 years of experience, and 19.3 per cent have less than 10 years of experience.

#### *Frequency in using technology.*

Most teachers (31.7%) utilise technology in their teaching 2 or 3 times a week. This is followed by 22.8% who use it once a week, 16.8% who use it every day, 11.9% who use it once a month, 8.9% who use it 2 or 3 times a month, and just 7.9% who have never included technology into their educational activities.

#### *Confidence in using technology.*

Approximately 64.4% of the participants in the survey reported having a moderate to high level of confidence in using technology. Only 29.7% of individuals hold a moderate level of confidence in using technology, while an additional 6% possess low confidence.

#### *Ability to integrate STEM in mathematics instruction.*

42% of teachers are capable of effective STEM integration in the classroom. Even though 10% of the study sample lacks confidence or demonstrates a low level of ability in integrating STEM into learning, nearly half are at a moderate level.

#### *Skill and knowledge in programming.*

Regarding technological proficiency, a mere 2 per cent acknowledged possessing highly proficient skills. Most of the study sample reported possessing moderate technological proficiency (42.6%), followed by good

proficiency at 36.6%. A minority of participants showed low or very low proficiency at 15.9%, while only 3% lacked confidence in utilising programming.

*Challenges encountered by teachers when utilising technology in the classroom.*

A significant proportion of teachers (64.8%) concurred that the primary limitations they faced were time management concerns about teacher functions and the distribution of instructional time for mathematical subjects. The subsequent factors cited include inadequate facilities, technicians, and training, which affects 57.7%, inadequate personal ICT tools for teachers (45.1%), students lacking basic computer proficiency (39.4%), teachers' inadequate knowledge of technology (31%), students being easily distracted while using technological tools (23.9%), and a lack of interest in technology usage among only 2.8% of students.

*UTAUT2 Questionnaire*

As part of the validation procedure, eight experts have endorsed each item in this questionnaire. During the reliability procedure, an internal consistency test was conducted on this questionnaire.

*Performance expectancy.*

The Cronbach's alpha value for performance expectancy is 0.975. This demonstrates a high reliability rate exceeding 0.90 as reported by Hopkins (1998), Konting (2005), Pallant (2010), and Sekaran & Bougle (2016). Table 1 exhibits a descriptive analysis of this construct.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis of Performance Expectancy

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
PE1	4.51	1.246	0.76	-.685
PE2	4.52	1.316	.133	-.583
PE3	4.47	1.331	-.054	.155
PE4	4.53	1.246	-.033	.169

Typically, this means near scale 5, which represents "moderately agree". The analytical results indicate that the mean values for PE1, PE2, PE3, and PE4 are 4.51, 4.52, 4.47, and 4.53, respectively. Typically, this refers to a rating of around 5 on the scale, which indicates a "moderately agree" response. Further, distribution kurtosis and skewness are approximately normal when they fall within the range of -1 to +1 (Mishra et al., 2019). Consequently, this data can be characterised as having a normal distribution.

*Effort expectancy.*

A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.863 was calculated for the four effort expectation items. The items

comprising this construct are deemed satisfactory and acceptable, as indicated by this value (Ahmann & Glock, 1980; Sekaran & Bougle, 2016). The descriptive analysis for the effort expectancy construct is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Effort Expectancy

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
EE1	4.26	1.383	-.083	-.412
EE2	4.27	1.288	-.172	.044
EE3	4.27	1.370	.049	-.224
EE4	4.27	1.252	.064	.240

Usually, this indicates roughly on the fourth scale, indicating a "neutral" stance. The skewness and kurtosis values of the data fall within the range of -1 to +1, indicating that the data follows a normal distribution.

#### *Social influence.*

The obtained Cronbach's alpha value for social influence is 0.921. A descriptive analysis for each social influence item is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Social Influence

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
SI1	4.07	1.336	-.309	.073
SI2	4.28	1.350	-.198	-.015
SI3	4.35	1.389	-.464	.040

This generally signifies a value close to scale 4, which signifies "neutral". The data exhibit skewness and kurtosis values between -1 and +1, indicating that they follow a normal distribution.

#### *Facilitating conditions.*

The Cronbach's alpha value for the facilitating conditions is 0.913. Table 4 displays a descriptive analysis of all facilitating condition items.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis of Facilitating Conditions

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
FC1	4.08	1.419	.029	-.264
FC2	4.11	1.333	-.100	-.242
FC3	4.21	1.306	-.093	.203

FC4	4.47	1.375	-.350	.169
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This tends to indicate a value in proximity to scale 4, which is associated with the term "neutral". Despite FC1 and FC2 exhibiting a leptokurtic kurtosis graph and FC3 and FC4 displaying a platykurtic kurtosis graph, the data remains within the range of a normally distributed dataset.

*Hedonic motivation.*

A hedonic motivation Cronbach's alpha value of 0.883 was obtained. All facility condition items are described in detail in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis of Hedonic Motivation

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
HM1	4.59	1.343	-.003	-.184
HM2	4.76	1.350	-.119	-.897

Usually, this refers to roughly level 5 on the scale, which signifies "moderately agree". Both the HM1 and HM2 data exhibit a minor left skewness in their distribution. Whilst the kurtosis graph indicates a slightly platykurtic distribution. However, it is important to note that the dataset still follows a normal distribution.

*Behavioural intention.*

A behavioural intention value of 0.956 for Cronbach's alpha was achieved. Each item pertaining to behavioural intention is elaborately described in Table 6.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis of Behavioral Intention

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
BI1	4.62	1.363	.109	-.515
BI2	4.63	1.347	.022	-.244

This typically corresponds to an impression of "moderately agree" at almost level 5. The skewness and kurtosis of BI1 and BI2 data generally shown normally distribution.

The Spearman Rho correlation coefficient is employed to define the association between the behavioural intention variable and all ordinal-scaled variables (Chua, 2022) in the UTAUT2 questionnaire. The correlation between each construct and the behavioural intention construct is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Spearman Rho correlation coefficient

Construct
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<b>Performance Expectancy</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
<b>Effort Expectancy</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.759**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
<b>Social Influence</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.722**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
<b>Facilitating Condition</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.700**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
<b>Hedonic Motivation</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.617**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

In general, the correlation coefficient, denoted as  $r$ , exhibits a positive sign in the association between all variables and the behavioural intention variable. According to the results of the intercorrelation analysis, behavioural intention is strongly correlated with effort expectancy ( $r = .759$ ), performance expectancy ( $r = .864$ ), and social influence ( $r = .722$ ). The strength of the correlation between hedonic motivation ( $r = .617$ ) and facilitating condition ( $r = .700$ ) is moderate.

## Discussion

ICT was introduced into the curriculum in Malaysia, leading to the widespread use of technology in teaching among primary school mathematics teachers. 92.1 per cent of the survey sample have utilised technology in teaching in the classroom, while only 7.9 per cent have not used it at all. Indeed, 71.3 per cent utilise it often, both daily and weekly. Yao & Zhao (2022) demonstrated a comparable trend where 70% of Chinese mathematics teachers in Tianjia utilised technology for class preparation. This development is positive, and there are increased attempts to promote the adoption of this technology among mathematics teachers. Mathematics teachers have included technology in their lessons. Additionally, a notable correlation has been observed between the proficiency of teachers in technology and their implementation of technological tools in mathematics instruction (Bahador et al., 2017). Seven identified factors promote the utilisation of technology in the classroom. Perceived utility, perceived effect on student motivation, anxiety, enjoyment, self-efficacy, context dependence, and subjective nomenclature were enumerated by Wijnen et al. (2023) as elements that promote the implementation of technology in the classroom. In conjunction with the intrinsic motivation to utilise technology in the classroom, administration support significantly influences the attitude of primary school mathematics teachers towards technology integration in the classroom ( $r = .0995$ ) (Ravendran & Daud, 2019).

Regarding their level of confidence in utilising technology in the classroom, 64.4% of the study participants reported feeling confident in doing so. An additional benefit amid adversity is that the COVID-19 pandemic has

significantly increased the number of mathematics teachers who are positive about incorporating technology into their lessons. Slightly lower in the mean confidence level when it comes to utilising technology in instruction compared to secondary school mathematics teachers, primary school mathematics teachers still exhibit a commendable level of confidence in this regard (Marpa, 2020). Erkin (2023) also discovered that mathematics teachers in Turkey possess a satisfactory level of confidence regarding the proficient utilisation of technology in the classroom and are capable of handling challenges of moderate intricacy. The findings demonstrate with high confidence teachers ought to remain diligent in addressing any challenges encountered.

Technology use is frequently linked with STEM. Aligned with the Malaysian curriculum's focus on enhancing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education for students at all levels of schooling, teachers in Malaysia have started incorporating STEM into their teaching practices. 42% of the study participants demonstrated proficiency in incorporating STEM concepts effectively into their mathematics classes. The study by Lau & Rosli (2020) revealed that while some mathematics teachers demonstrate moderate knowledge of using STEM in mathematics instruction, some of them still lack sufficient knowledge of mathematics software and other related software. In the same manner, findings of twenty empirical studies compiled by Abd Ghani et al. (2023) stated teachers have insufficient expertise in STEM education and require training programmes to enhance their skills and understanding of STEM.

Using technology for teaching in the classroom presents its obstacles. Participants identified time management, insufficient facilities, technicians, training, and personal technological devices as the primary problems they faced when using technology in the classroom. Perienen (2020b) found similar results. The highest average accuracy was achieved in the areas of technical support requirements, preloading learning software on computers, and providing a school timetable for integrating technology. Both findings indicate that teachers require specific time to organise learning activities and need technical support to incorporate technology in mathematics education. Besides, the research shows that even though teachers have a strong understanding of the subject matter and good ways of teaching, they still have challenges when it comes to utilising and integrating technology tools in the classroom (Patalinghug & Arnado, 2022).

Teachers serve as the primary cornerstone in the execution of an educational programme. Thus, gratifying and empowering the teacher to employ an instructional strategy will promote learning effectiveness. The overall proficiency of teachers in programming is deemed satisfactory, as indicated by the fact that 38.6% of teachers acknowledge possessing excellent or very good programming skills and knowledge. In contrast to the degree of teacher receptiveness regarding the implementation of programming in mathematics instruction, the average level of agreement among the study participants was moderate regarding behavioural intention, hedonic motivation, and performance expectation. Nevertheless, when considering effort expectation, social influence, and facilitating conditions, the data indicates a neutral stance regarding the implementation of programming in mathematics education.

This study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the existing body of research on the adoption of



programming in primary school mathematics instructional materials. According to the findings of this research, performance expectation is the most influential factor in determining behavioural intention regarding the use of programming in mathematics education. Participants in the study opt to incorporate programming into mathematics instruction if doing so can enhance and optimise the learning process. Subsequently, social influence and effort expectancy all serve as catalysts for behavioural intention when programming is implemented in mathematics education. Likewise, the study by Russo et al. (2020) demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between teacher enjoyment with the teacher's attitude towards any challenge and willingness to devote additional time to the subject. In the face of any difficulties, teachers who possess an abundance of enthusiasm will exhibit a more optimistic manner. Even without successful fulfilment of a need or support from the administration, teachers will be motivated to persist in their pursuit of self-directed professional development (Koay, 2023). This illustrates that if programming in mathematics education is easily accessible, has significant benefits for enhancing teaching quality, and receives adequate emotional support, teachers are willing to incorporate programming into their mathematics instruction.

Nevertheless, the impact of facility condition and hedonic motivation on the research sample's tendency to utilise programming is very slight. Meanwhile, both construct it is not the primary barrier to learning through this programming. This is because every school is now furnished with computers. This computer is functional and comes with suitable programming applications like mBlock and Scratch. Plus, students can utilise this programme at home as it is provided free of charge. Hence, the primary obstacle encountered by these educators pertains to their proficiency in programming for mathematics instruction. To aid them in this endeavour, a comprehensive manual is required, supplemented by practical exercises and technical assistance (Szabo et al., 2019).

## **Conclusion**

It is believed that incorporating programming into mathematics lessons helps students master the subject. Still, it is undeniable that mathematics education necessitates exceptional skills in lesson planning. Further, teachers are finding it more and more challenging to incorporate programming into mathematics lessons. Not only mathematical content knowledge is essential, but good programming abilities are also required of teachers for the implementation. Thus, teachers are more likely to be enthusiastic about incorporating programming into mathematics lessons when they find that it is assessable, effective in boosting productivity, has positive reinforcement from the community, has sufficient facilities, and is enjoyable to explore. Consequently, there is an immediate demand for optimal support that enables mathematics teachers to proficiently incorporate programming into their pedagogy.

These findings also suggest that even teachers are moderate level of programming expertise, they are prepared to include programming into their teaching. Hence, a mechanism must be established to facilitate these teachers with programming within the framework of mathematics education. This is because the programming typically

implemented in Malaysia is more focused on extracurricular education, engineering, Design and Technology subject for primary school, and Computer Science for secondary school. As a result, the application of programming in mathematics education necessitates a comprehensive module that serves as both an instructional aid for the instructor and an exploration platform for the students.

## Recommendations

The present research was administered via an online platform to mathematics educators employed in urban public schools. Even though the teaching participants in this study were situated in a remarkably comparable environment, it was unfeasible to control for every variable associated with various schools or districts. Even certain educators may experience increased visibility because of adopting a more constructivist pedagogical approach in their classrooms. The perspectives of these educators may not be representative of educators in rural regions, where access to programming, facilities, and collaboration with technological distributors may be limited. One potential improvement for the study is to increase the number of participants and ensure that they are representative of a wider range of settings, including suburban and rural elementary school mathematics teachers. This is because students in diverse settings are better served by the holistic impact that is produced by the perspectives of educators who are diverse in nature. Teachers should also be provided with an extensive programming training module that can be tailored to cover a variety of topics. Assessing programming necessitates an extensive investment of time and considerable technical expertise. These teachers' enthusiasm to incorporate programming into the mathematics curriculum at the elementary school level must be rewarded with ongoing and extensive professional development. In addition to offering ongoing training, it is imperative to furnish teachers with a sharing platform and technical assistance resources to guarantee they consistently receive the support required to maintain this aspiration. All of this will encourage these elementary school mathematics teachers to explore and experiment as they attempt to develop an outstanding lesson.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Institute of Postgraduate Students (IPS) Universiti Sains Malaysia, Bahagian Tajaan (KPM), Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD), Malaysia Ministry of Education, Penang State Department of Education, Seberang Perai Tengah District Education Office, Seberang Perai Selatan District Education Office, Seberang Perai Utara District Education Office, Timur Laut District Education Office, Barat Daya District Education Office, and primary school mathematics teachers in the state of Penang.

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## Synergistic Removal of Pharmaceuticals by Polymeric Membranes

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**Abstract:** In recent decades, contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) have attracted significant attention worldwide. The CECs include fertilizers, medical substances, personal care products, and others that negatively

affect living organisms. Our recent research revealed that pharmaceuticals cannot be fully removed by municipal wastewater treatment plants. This leads to the release of the pharmaceuticals into the environment and its contamination. Since water shortage is a current global issue, finding efficient technologies for water reclamation is of high importance. Hence, membrane separation processes are known as the most efficient treatment methods, this work was dedicated to investigation of Aspirin (ASP), Carbamazepine (CBZ), and Sulfamethoxazole (SMX) removal by polymeric membranes. Individual and complex (two- and three-component) feed solutions were filtered through porous material, and removal capabilities were studied. The initial concentration of contaminants used in this study was equal to 3 mg/L, and HPLC was utilized to determine the concentration of the pharmaceuticals before and after filtration. The data obtained showed that interactions between the pharmaceuticals, i.e. synergistic effect, influence their retention by the membranes, and the efficiency of the treatment may reach 100%.

**Keywords:** Aspirin, Carbamazepine, Sulfamethoxazole, Membrane filtration, Synergistic effect

**Citation:** Kamal, A., Nygmetova, D., Yergeldinov, B., Satayeva, A., Kim, J., Pouloupoulos, S. & Arkhangelsky, E. (2024). Synergistic Removal of Pharmaceuticals by Polymeric Membranes. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1576-1585), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The increasing presence of harmful contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) in water resources and the limitations of conventional wastewater treatment plants in removing them have become a global environmental concern (Carrera et al., 2019). The CECs are different toxic compounds and chemicals including personal care products, plasticizers, fertilizers, medical substances, different nanomaterials, and others that negatively affect living organisms (García-Fernández et al., 2021). The CECs have adverse health and environmental effects even at very small concentrations and could enter and accumulate inside the living organisms (Ahmad et al., 2018; García-Fernández et al., 2021).

Such materials or chemical compounds that are not regulated by law and could pose harm to the environment and human health; therefore, a technology used for water reclamation should be efficient and reliable while at the same time preventing the release of CECs into the environment. Pharmaceuticals are constantly consumed by humans and animals and can enter the environment via different pathways. For example, the improper disposal of pharmaceutical waste by households and hospitals leads to the release of the medical compounds into the water or soil systems (Kadam et al., 2016; Bound and Voulvoulis, 2005). Moreover, veterinary pharmaceuticals or supplements could enter the soil medium or surface waters through the excretion of animal urine and/or feces (Delgado et al., 2023). Environmental pollution with pharmaceuticals is a challenging concern as they have persistent characteristics and are not easily degraded naturally (Miarov, Tal, and Avisar,

2020).

Our recent research discovered that many of the medical substances cannot be completely removed by municipal wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) (Kamal et al., 2024). As a result, pharmaceuticals escape in WWTP effluents consequently entering the receiving environmental systems through different pathways and contaminating the environment. Many research investigations have indicated that medical drugs, their byproducts, and/or metabolites are detected in various water bodies globally including surface water, groundwater, tap water, and drinking water (Madikizela, Ncube, and Chimuka, 2020; Niemi et al., 2020; Pater et al., 2020; Perin et al., 2021). The persistent nature and small particle size of CECs discombobulate the efficiency of current treatment methods and higher contaminant retention is achieved by high pressure membrane treatment systems. Currently, the membrane separation techniques (MSTs) are recognized as one of the most efficient treatment technologies. Conventional polymeric membranes are widely utilized in MSTs and are a powerful tool for desalination, water treatment, reclamation of municipal and industrial wastewaters, etc. According to the literature, Aspirin (ASP), Carbamazepine (CBZ), and Sulfamethoxazole (SMX) are considered top-priority medical substances in many different countries based on ecotoxicological risk-based research investigation of their occurrence in influents and effluents of WWTPs and surface waters (Aubakirova, Beisenova, and Boxall, 2017). SMX is an antibiotic which is generally prescribed to treatment or prevention of infections and falls under the classification of drugs that are either non-biodegradable or challenging to break down and has high persistence in the environment (Xia et al., 2022). CBZ is categorized as an anticonvulsant medication and is also classified as a persistent compound with low water solubility (Hai et al., 2018). ASP, on the contrary, is a water soluble and biodegradable compound which is mainly used as analgesic and anti-inflammatory medication (Lotfy and Eiseb, 2010; Feng et al., 2013). ASP is commonly detected in water bodies and WWTPs in many countries (Agunbiade and Moodley, 2016; Satayeva et al., 2022).

This work focuses on the application of the different polymeric membranes - polycarbonate track etch (PCTE) and polyethersulfone (PES) membranes in removal of target pharmaceuticals via MST process. Individual and mixture of ASP, CBZ, and SMX solutions were selected as target pollutants.

## Materials and Methods

### Chemicals and materials

ASP standard (MW=180.16 gmol<sup>-1</sup>, analytical grade) was purchased from Merck, USA. CBZ (MW= 236.27 gmol<sup>-1</sup>, ≥98% purity) and SMX (MW=253.28 gmol<sup>-1</sup>, ≥98% purity) of analytical grades were supplied by Sigma-Aldrich, USA. Acetonitrile (ACN) (high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) grade) was supplied by Fisher Scientific, USA. Aqueous solutions of target pollutants were prepared by using ultrapure water (UPW) from Millipore MilliQ Integral 5 purification system, USA.

Flat sheet PCTE with 10 nm pore size and PES with 200 kDa molecular weight cut-off (MWCO) membranes

were obtained from Sterlitech, USA.

*Equipment*

The Dionex UHPLC System (Thermo Scientific, USA) with an RS diode array detector (DAD) was utilized for the determination of pharmaceuticals in solutions. Chromatographic separations were performed on a Hypersil Gold C8 column with 150×2.1 mm dimensions. UPW was used in a mobile phase A and ACN was used in a mobile phase B. The column temperature was set to 25 °C on both left and right sides and the injection volume was set to 1 µL. All samples were filtered with Chromatofil cellulose acetate (CA) syringe filters with 0.2 µm pore size prior to the analysis.

SurPASS electrokinetic analyser (Anton Paar GmbH, Austria) was used to assess membranes’ zeta potential.

The membranes’ contact angle was measured using OCA 25 (DataPhysics Instruments GmbH, Germany) by standard sessile drop protocol.

Membrane filtration experiments were conducted using CF016 stainless steel cell with an active filtration area of 4 × 4 cm<sup>2</sup> supplied by Sterlitech, USA.

*Filtration experiments*

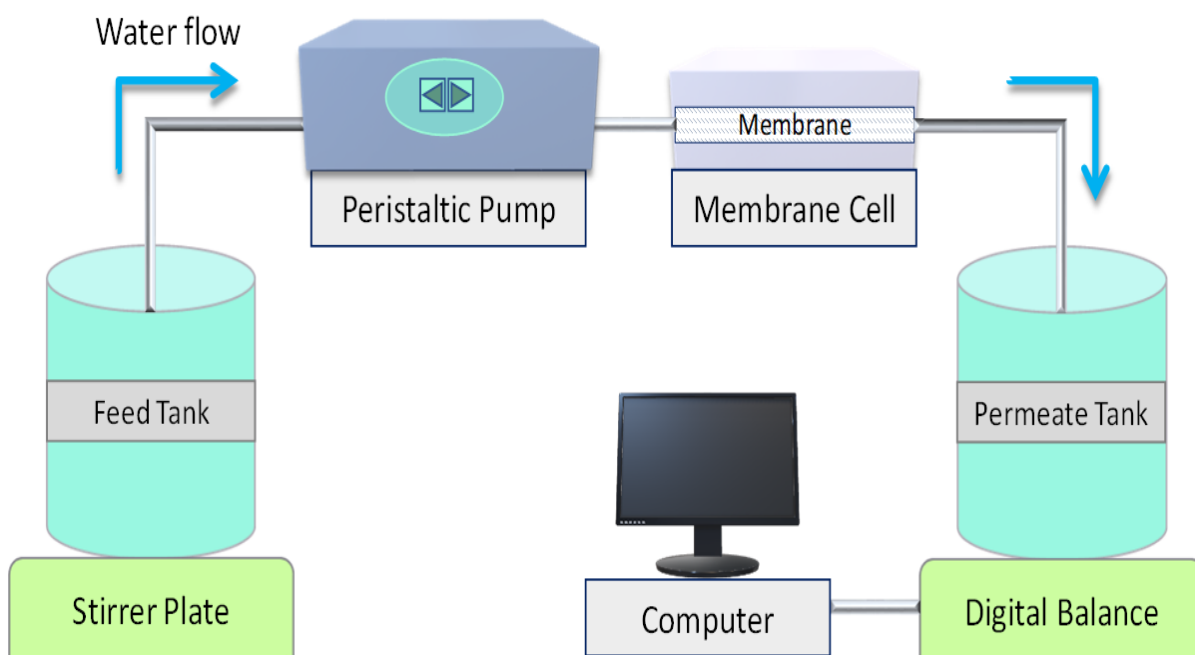


Figure 1. The lab-scale filtration set-up.

The feed solutions of ASP, CBZ and SMX were prepared by adding 3 mg of the individual medication to 1 L of UPW. Also, following combination of pharmaceuticals was prepared with 3 ppm of each drug concentration in 1L of UPW: ASP+CBZ; ASP+SMX; CBZ+SMX; and ASP+CBZ+SMX. The prepared feed solution was set on the stirrer plate allowing the continuous mixing and homogeneous solution throughout the process. The permeate tank was placed on the digital scale (OHAUS, USA) and data of the filtrate volume was collected every minute. The feed solution was pumped into the membrane cell with MasterFlex pump (Cole-Parmer L/S, USA). The lab-scale filtration set-up is illustrated in Figure 1.

Duration of the membrane filtration was 6 hours in all experiments and filtration was conducted with dead-end mode. The samples from feed and permeate solutions were collected for further analysis.

The removal of the pharmaceuticals was calculated with Equation [1]:

$$\text{Removal (in \%)} = (C_{\text{feed}} / C_{\text{perm}}) / C_{\text{feed}} \times 100\% \quad \text{Eq. [1]}$$

where  $C_{\text{perm}}$  is the drug concentration in permeate (ppm or mg/L) and  $C_{\text{feed}}$  is the pharmaceutical concentration in feed solution (ppm or mg/L).

## Results and Discussion

The collected samples of permeate were analysed with the HPLC equipment for presence of the studied pharmaceuticals. The detailed results of ASP removal are presented in Figure 2.

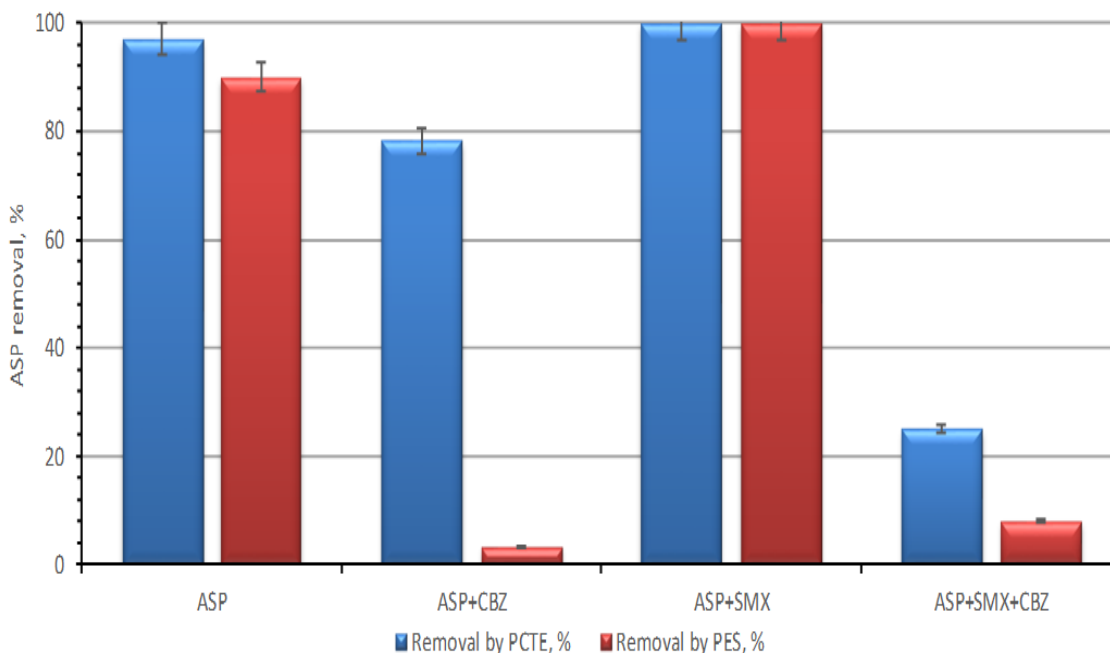


Figure 2. Removal of ASP by PCTE and PES polymeric membranes.

The results analysis shows that PCTE membranes overall demonstrate higher removal values of pharmaceutical substances compared to PES membranes. The absolute elimination of ASP drug was achieved in ASP+SMX combination for both polymeric membranes. Also, filtration of individual ASP in UPW demonstrated excellent results with 97.15% and 89.98% drug removal values for PCTE and PES membranes, respectively. While the lowest ASP removal was in ASP+CBZ drugs combination for PES membrane filtration with only 3.23% drug removal result. The average removal values of ASP with PCTE membrane were 75.12% and with PES membrane removal value dropped to 50.31%.

The results of CBZ removal are presented in Figure 3.

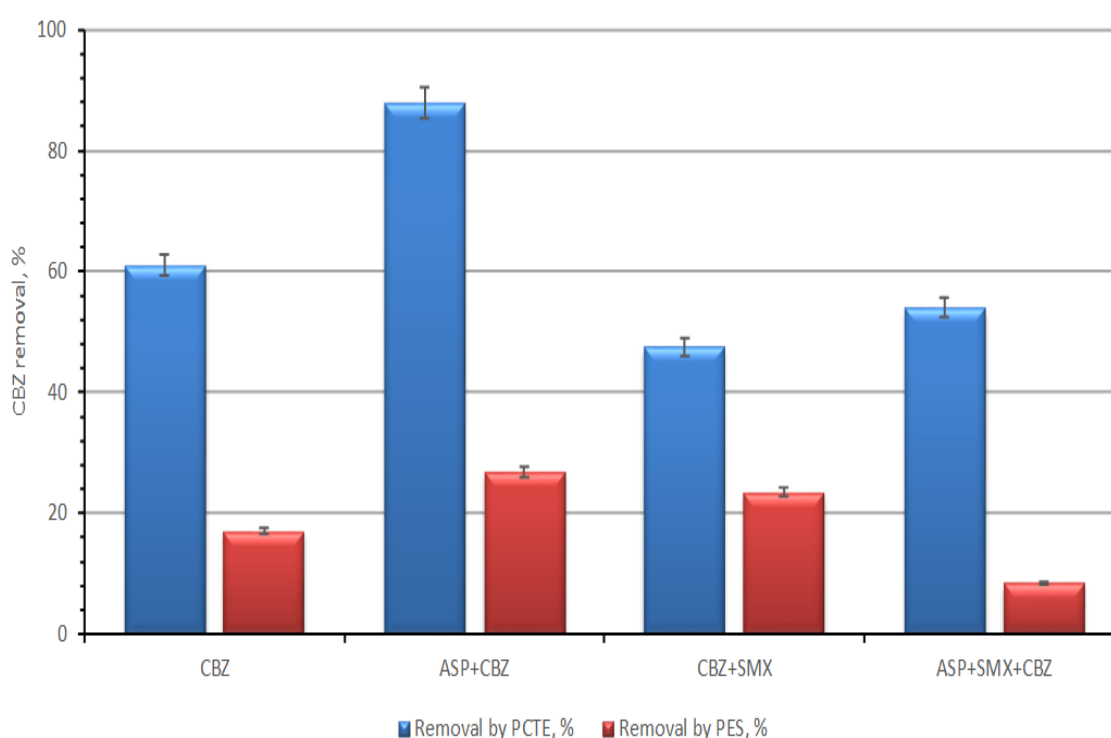


Figure 3. Removal of CBZ by PCTE and PES polymeric membranes.

For CBZ individual pharmaceutical removal, the results were 61.08% and 17.01% for PCTE and PES membranes, respectively. The highest CBZ removal of 87.97% was acquired with PCTE membrane in ASP+CBZ drug combination and the lowest removal – 8.51% was obtained in the mixture of all three drugs by PES membrane. The average removal values of CBZ with PCTE membrane were 62.63% and with removal by PES was 18.96%.

SMX removal results are demonstrated in Figure 4. The SMX removal in combination with ASP showed very contrasted results, with 100% removal with PCTE membrane and no removal with PES membrane. Moreover, PES membrane demonstrated very poor removal of SMX in all individual and drug combinations within 0–32.51% range. The lowest SMX removal with PCTE membrane was individual drug in UPW with 39.06%

removal. The average removal values of SMX with PES and PCTE membranes were 13.28% and 55.71%, respectively.

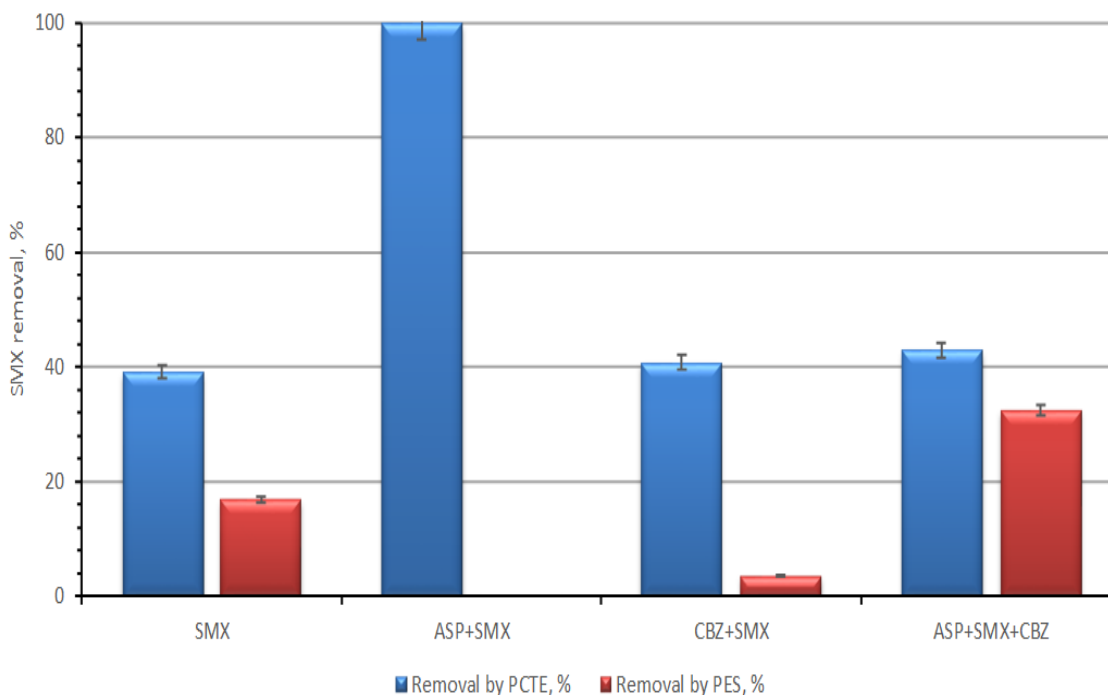


Figure 4. Removal of SMX by PCTE and PES polymeric membranes.

Hydrophobicity/philicity of the membranes was assessed via the contact angle tests. For instance, contact angle measured for PCTE and PES membranes consisted 75 ° and 90 °, respectively. Membranes' charge as function of pH was studied for both membranes. The zeta potential experiments showed that at neutral pH (pH of the feed solutions) the membranes are possessing the similar zeta potential values, i.e. around - 20 - (- 30) mV.

From Figure 2-4 it can be seen that the average observed for ASP (by both membranes) and SMX (by PCTE) when the feed contained ASP+SMX. In comparison to ASP and SMX, 100% removal of CBZ was not achieved in all the experiments. Zero retention was observed for SMX by PES membrane. The rejection lower than 10% was found for ASP (ASP+CBZ, ASP+SMX+CBZ), SMX (CBZ+SMX) and CBZ (ASP+SMX+CBZ).retention values of ASP and CBZ were higher than for SMX. For example, the average removal for ASP by PCTE and PES membranes was 75.12% and 50.31%, respectively. The average retention of CBZ consisted 62.63% and 18.96% (by PCTE and PES filter). On the other hand, the capability of both polymeric membranes in SMX removal was the lowest based on the average values of the pharmaceutical removal (55.71% by PCTE and 13.28% by PES membranes). 100% rejection was

Each experiment performed demonstrated its unique rejection value, which indicates that the removal of the drugs was affected by the presence of second and/or third pharmaceutical in the feed. PCTE demonstrated



higher removal values than PES membrane for all three pharmaceuticals. Also, average retention values observed for ASP and CBZ were higher than for SMX. To understand removal mechanisms of the pharmaceuticals, the size exclusion, charge and hydrophilic interactions were considered.

All pollutants used in this study have a molecular weight lower than the pore size of both membranes, i.e. 10 nm and 200 kDa. Assuming interactions between the drugs and simply summing their molecular weights, we can see the calculated values do not exceed 10 nm and 200 kDa. Also, it should be indicated that the membrane with the smaller pore size (PCTE) exhibited better retention for all three drugs.

The zeta potential experiments illustrated that both filters have similar negative charge (around  $-25$  mV at neutral pH). According to Levakov et al., ASP and SMX are negatively charged at neutral pH, while CBZ is neutral (2022). Keeping it in mind, it can be speculated that negative drug/s are possibly interacting with the neutral one and this influences the rejection.

The contact angle measured for PCTE and PES membranes ( $75^\circ$  vs  $90^\circ$ ) indicated higher hydrophobic nature of PES filter. On the other hand, Das et al., reported the following hydrophobic order for the studied medicines: CBZ (most hydrophobic), ASP, SMX (2017). Comparing hydrophobicity/phility results with the data presented in Figures 2-4 it can be seen that the hydrophilic filter demonstrated improved retentions. Along with that, presence of most hydrophilic drug, SMX, led to reduced removal values in majority of experiments. These findings can be explained by the stronger attraction of hydrophobic drugs to the porous materials made of polymer (Verliefde et al., 2009).

## Conclusion

The experiments performed in the frame of this study showed synergistic removal (equal to 100%) of ASP and SMX when both pharmaceuticals are present in the feed (ASP+SMX). Better CBZ removal was observed for ASP+CBZ (88%) in comparison to the feed that contained CBZ only (61%). In all other cases the rejection of the individual pharmaceutical was higher or equal to rejection of the complex feed solution. From the data obtained it is also obvious that the presence of the second and/or third medicine in the feed may improve or reduce retention capability of the membranes. Based on the explanations provided in this paper, it is believed that all three mechanisms (size exclusion, charge and hydrophobic interactions) are involved while the complex feed solutions are applied to PES and PCTE membranes. Possible interactions between membrane and drugs, and between pharmaceuticals require further investigation, while PES and PCTE membranes demonstrated a potential in the removal of medicinal substances.

## Acknowledgement

This research was funded by Ministry of Education and Science, Kazakhstan, grant number MOH PK

AP14870633.

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## *Authentizotic Organisations*

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper, through a literature review, is to discuss the heuristic potential of the concept of *authentizotic* organisation as a healthy organisation that balances personal and professional life, which provides a positive meaning for the actors involved in organisations, enabling the fostering of trust in the psychological contract. This results in a motivating organisational climate for the members of the organisation due to this positive sense of belonging and, consequently, the tendency for their performance to improve. To achieve this goal, the leadership must design its trust action in a decisive way, considering the internal and external characteristics of the organisation in question. However, the ideal authentic organisation does not exist at any given time and/or space. It is a process in constant (re)construction, whose dynamic cannot be the pure happiness of the organisation's members without considering the need to constantly adapt to the internal and external context, thus enabling its sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Authentic organisation, Trust, Organisation, Authentic climates, Sense of belonging

**Citation:** Ferraz, J., Serpa, S., Ferreira, C. M. & Costa, A. (2024). *Authentizotic organisations*. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1586-1598), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES Organisation.

## **Introduction**

The social object organisation, at first glance, refers to formalised and hierarchical human groups aiming to

ensure the cooperation and coordination of its members in the fulfilment of certain goals (Friedberg, 1992). We can understand the organisation as being

[...] a complex collective unit with a formal dimension and an informal dimension in which there is interaction between (individual and collective) actors with at least a minimum of coordination and reciprocal expectations that employ more or less different roles in the pursuit of goals set internally (not necessarily with the same degree of internal sharing) and generally recognised externally (which are not necessarily the internal goals) influencing and being influenced by the environment, producing for it, over time, characteristics that are both specific and dynamic (Serpa, 2016, p. 3258).

Therefore, an organisation/company is not just an economically rational organisation, a legal entity that creates products and services with the aim of making a profit; it also includes the social, political and cultural aspects related to its activity. In addition to its capacity for action, a company also has the capacity to create its own identity. The company cannot just be seen as a place for producing goods and services but can also be seen as a place for social and cultural production, identity and the integration of individuals and groups (Sainsaulieu, 1987). The worker is no longer seen merely as an instrument of production but as an actor, in other words, an active being with the capacity to intervene (Sainsaulieu, 1987). This perspective focuses on analysing the relationship between companies and society as a whole, defining them simultaneously as a place of production, an organisation and an institution, respectively in three dimensions: the economic, the social and the symbolic (Thuderoz, 1997). These dimensions cannot be dissociated or hierarchised (Parente, 2005).

Given the high relevance of organisations/companies in modern societies, Kets de Vries (2001) wonders which are the best companies to work for. The author believes that these companies are those in which employees trust the people they work for, take pride in what they do and enjoy working with others. Kets de Vries (2001) classifies these types of companies as authentic organisations. *Authentizotic* is a neologism resulting from the combination of two Greek terms: *authentikos* and *zotikos*. The first means that the organisation is authentic and trustworthy. The second means that it is “vital to people’s lives”, giving them a sense of balance, personal fulfilment, competence, autonomy and initiative, providing meaning to their lives (Kets de Vries, 2001). The author bases authentic organisations as healthy organisations on the following assumption: “Work, however, does not necessarily need to be stressful. On the contrary, work can be an anchor of psychological well-being, a way of establishing identity and maintaining self-esteem” (Kets de Vries, 2001, p. 101), in a certain comparison and even reconciliation between the health of the healthy individual and this type of organisation (Nenevé et al., 2018) (Table 1).

Table 1. Healthier people characteristics

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1.	Stable sense of identity
2.	Good at reality testing
3.	Take responsibility for own actions
4.	Strong sense of self-efficacy

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5. Motivated to self-reflect
  6. Creative, with a sense of playfulness
  7. Positive outlook
  8. Passionate about what they do
  9. Manage anxiety well
  10. Able to deal with dependency & separation issues
  11. Can cope with setbacks & disappointments
  12. See people in a balanced way
  13. Sense of belonging & community
  14. Keen to establish & cultivate relationships
- 

Source: Table based on Kets de Vries, 2011.

The aim of this paper, through a literature review, is to discuss the heuristic potential of the *authentizotic* organisation construct, as a model of a healthy coordinated collective unit that balances personal and professional life, which provides a positive meaning for the actors involved in organisations, making it possible to foster trust in the psychological contract. This results in a motivating organisational climate for the members of the organisation due to this positive feeling of belonging and, consequently, the tendency for their performance to improve.

## Methods

The methodology followed seeks to understand authentic organisations as a model of coordinated collective unity. To this end, a bibliographic search was carried out in the following databases: the B-ON of the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) in Portugal, an electronic resources library that includes electronic scientific information databases such as Web of Knowledge, DOAJ, SCIELO, and institutional repositories (<https://www.b-on.pt/>) and Scilit, which collates information referenced in CrossRef and PubMed (<https://www.scilit.net/>). A search was carried out between 26 and 27 January 2024, by searching the following expression in the title, abstract or as a keyword: “Authentizotic”. This online bibliographic search was supplemented by the collection of complementary bibliographic material directly related to this topic.

### *Authentizotic organisations*

*What are they?*

“The ‘Authentizotic Organisation’ refers to the best place to work. It is the most favorite and attractive organisation for employees compared to its peers” (Abdelkawi et al., 2023, p. 53). *Authentizotic* organisations are, thus, “organisations in which people feel truly alive” (Kets de Vries, 2004, p. 183) This concept was coined in 2001 by Kets de Vries, who later sustained that

Organisations that cultivate and honour the above meta-values are what I like to call ‘authentizotic’, a

label that melds the Greek words *authentekos* (authentic) and *zoteekos* (vital to life). In its broadest sense, that first part of the label, authentic, describes something that conforms to fact and is therefore worthy of trust and reliance. As a workplace label, authenticity implies that an organisation has a compelling connective quality for its employees in its vision, mission, culture, and structure. [...] The *zoteekos* (vital to life) element of the authentic organisation refers to those aspects of the workplace that give people the sense of flow mentioned earlier and help build a sense of personal wholeness, making people feel complete and alive (Kets de Vries, 2004, p. 199).

These *authentic* organisations would then allow for a confident balance between personal, family and professional life in the organisation (Rego & Cunha, 2004, 2006; Rego & Souto, 2004; Rego et al., 2012; Kets de Vries, 2001, 2011a, 2018; Cunha et al., 2005; Seco & Lopes, 2013; Nenevé et al., 2018), fostering organisational commitment as “[...] the psychological bond that characterises the individual’s attachment to the organisation” (Rego & Souto, 2004, p. 33), and ultimately increasing their performance in the organisation (Seco & Lopes, 2013; Rego & Cunha, 2006, 2008; Cunha et al., 2007) (Table 2).

Table 2. Underlying features the distinguish authentic organisations

1. They have a compelling mission	Everyone understands and signs up to. A values-based mission statement makes employees feel like they're part of something bigger, beyond the daily routine. Each understands the role he or she plays in achieving that mission.
2. The organisation’s culture and practices are aligned with the values they espouse	These values are embraced at all levels-they are part of the ‘organisation’s DNA’.
3. Employees trust the people they work with and for	The culture of trust goes both ways: employees implicitly trust their leaders to make the right decisions, while leaders trust employees to put the organisation’s needs first as they interact with various stakeholders.
4. Leadership is not a solo act but a team sport	People help and support each other. Politics are inevitable in any organisation, but political dynamics are minimal in authentic ones. Internal competition and individualistic thinking are sidelined in favour of collaboration, thereby creating an enriching place to work.
5. The work environment emphasises high-quality day-to-day relationships	Employees enjoy working together and have fun. From a mental health perspective, it is obvious that if people get along with those they work with-they like and respect them-they derive a sense of belonging.
6. Fair process – the perception of a level playing-field for all	Fair pay and benefits are fundamental components of this, but equally important is the feeling that the leadership cares and is interested in employees’ well-being.



7. People feel that they are listened to	Employees feel that they have a voice, and that their input is valued. The leadership creates a culture that is participatory-one where people can speak up and criticise without fear of reprisals, and where top management shares information with employees.
8. A culture of recognition	Efforts never go unappreciated and praise flows generously. Conversely, recognising employees for their personal or team achievements creates a more meaningful experience. When people feel appreciated, higher levels of engagement and retention result.
9. Ongoing opportunities and incentives to develop and grow	Leaders recognise that people inherently want to be challenged so they can acquire new skills and go out of their way to provide opportunities to accelerate their personal growth. Management makes a concerted effort to figure out ways to unlock each employee's potential, knowing that it will benefit both the individual and the organisation.
10. Leaders really make a difference	Top management walks the talk- they embrace and exemplify its values and goals, setting the direction in a way that can be described as 'true north'. They ensure that everyone in the organisation is treated with respect and care.
11. Information is shared	Leadership ensures that communication and transparency are engendered at every level: communication flows upward, downward, and laterally. Putting transparent information systems in place helps employees to make more informed decisions.
12. Leadership realises that people have a life outside of work	Taking a holistic, long-term perspective, they acknowledge the importance of work/life balance. They go to great lengths to avoid employee burnout. This positively impacts organisational loyalty and commitment, making for a sustainable psychological contract between employer and employee.

Source: Based on Kets de Vries, 2018.

### *Leadership and the psychological contract*

These types of organisations make it possible to maintain the psychological contract (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1999a, 1999b; Kets de Vries, 2001), which “[...] implies mutual obligations and commitments (explicit and implicit) between the employees and the organisation” (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1999a, p. 656), which is crucial for the establishment and maintenance of the organisation’s climate (Kets de Vries, 2011a). Table 3 details the features of *authentizotic* climates within organisations.

Table 3. *Authentizotic* climates

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Spirit of camaraderie is the degree to which interpersonal relationships in the organisation are characterised by friendship, team spirit, and mutual concern. |
|---|

2. Trust and credibility of the leaders represents the degree to which leaders are trustful, fulfil their promises, and are honest.
3. Open and frank communication with the leaders is the degree to which employees feel free to communicate openly with the leaders and to show disagreement with them.
4. Opportunities for learning and personal development are the degree to which employees feel that they can learn continuously and perform tasks that contribute towards developing their potential.
5. Fairness/justice is the degree to which people feel that favouritism, discrimination, and inequity in distributing outcomes does not exist.
6. Work-family conciliation is the degree to which the organisation creates conditions for employees to reconcile their work and family lives.

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Source: Table produced according to Rego, and Pina e Cunha, 2012, with reference to Rego and Cunha (2008).

In multiple publications, Kets de Vries stresses the crucial importance of organisational leadership in collaborating towards the emergence and development of authentic qualities (Kets de Vries, 2001, 2004, 2011a, 2011b, 2017, 2018; Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1999a, 1999b). However, these processes are not easy or simple to substantiate (Ketz de Vries & Balazs, 1999a, 1999b; Seco & Lopes, 2013; Rego & Cunha, 2006; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2012; Barbosa et al., 2021; Serpa et al., 2020).

To build authentic psychological climates and healthy organisations, managers must care about how employees perceive the organisation, paying attention to a number of aspects: (a) a respectful and trustful way of acting; (b) opportunities for employee learning and personal development; (c) the degree to which they treat employees as people in search of meaningful work; (d) the honesty and frankness they place in relating to subordinates; (e) strategies they develop to facilitate work-family balance; (f) ways they promote spirit of camaraderie and teamwork and (g) the fairness in their decisions involving promotions and rewards (Rego, & Cunha, 2008, p. 749).

Trust is crucial in this process of moving towards a more sustainable organisational development (Serpa & Sá, 2022; Ketz de Vries, 2001, 2017, 2018), inasmuch that

The main ingredient that makes for an authentic organisation is trust. When trust is part of the organisational culture, people are more confident and more productive and the organisation becomes a vibrant, networked web, connecting people up and down the hierarchy. If there is such a thing as a magic recipe for trust, it may simply be that each individual treats other people as they would like to be treated (Ketz de Vries, 2018, p. 9).

Table 4. Realities translated by the different meanings that work environments provide to its members in multiple dimensions

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1. A sense of purpose created by leaders for people by designing a future perspective and a culture for the organisation to contribute to a group identity.
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2. Sense of self-determination, meaning that employees perceive themselves as masters of their destiny, in control of their lives, not just passive or considered as mere characters without their own identity in the organisation.
3. Psychological climate in which affective well-being prevails.
4. Sense of impact, favouring the members of the organisation having the feeling that their actions effectively influence the life of the organisation.
5. Sense of competence, on the assumption that there is a sense of possibility among individuals for growth and personal development through the organisation. The organisation fosters continuous learning that enhances individual creativity and eliminates feelings of frustration over career stagnation.
6. Sense of belonging, in the sense that people feel inserted in the organisational community. This bond forms the basis of trust and mutual respect.
7. Sense of pleasure and joy, on the assumption that organisational life is run by people who promote and encourage a happy environment, as an influx to the mental health of individuals, from which imagination, innovation and their assertiveness emerge.
8. Sense of meaning, on the assumption that people feel motivated to put their creativity at the service of work, perceiving themselves as involved, focused on the work they do in the organisation.

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Source: Lizote et al., 2020, p. 55.

## Analysis and implications

Several authors highlight three very important aspects to consider: 1. There is no ideal authentic organisation, in any context or at any time, and the local conditions and concrete constraints must be addressed on a case-by-case basis (Cunha et al., 2005); 2. As a corollary to the previous point, there is no magic recipe for developing authentic organisations (Cunha et al., 2005; Ketz de Vries, 2018); and 3., as Pina e Cunha et al. (2014) point out, “The relevance granted to positivity also does not mean that negative phenomena (e.g., pessimism, negative emotions) are necessarily dysfunctional. Above a certain level, the effect of the positivity ratio can be perverse” (p. 323).

Also, other issues and shortcomings could be raised about the concept, the model, and its broader use. Some sort of glass ceilings are present on Kets de Vries’ concept that need to be shattered without refusing the importance of what the author addresses and the real need for authentic organisations. First, the concept and dimensions of the human motivation for work implied in the Kets de Vries’ model need further discussion. Second, a more developed and problematised discussion about the specifics of the work, job and tasks performed by individuals and their role in their motivations needs a deeper analysis. Third, all the macro perspective on the understanding of life, meaning and structure of work organisations also needs attention. Finally, there is the need for some reflection on the nemesis of authenticity and alienation, both from a psychological and a societal perspective and

addressing their manifestations on individuals and in given societies' logics. These issues need more discussion in the conclusions.

Even the scope of authenticity in work should address issues that go beyond the present *authentizotic* organisation concept, discussing what could be authentic but also what should be addressed to discuss authenticity. So, we proposed four ways of enhancing the discussion and the feasibility of an authentic work experience and organisations that actively contribute to it.

Firstly, a contextualisation and relativisation of the weight and importance that the factors identified as essential for an *authentizotic* organisation – and linked to organisational relationships and practices and human motivations – have on the choices and lives of everyone, marked by individual and social differences. For example, a less generalised and decontextualised reflection should be carried out on the meaning and importance that the tasks to perform, the significance of work for identity construction and self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships have for each person and/or social or socio-professional group. The dimensions equated by Kets de Vries strongly refer to the psychosocial dimensions of Herzberg's two-factor theories – hygiene and motivational (Cunha et al., 2007; Herzberg, 1968) and McGregor's Theory X and Y (McGregor, 1960). However, as is the case with these authors, the proposed dimensions need to be relativised and, above all, need to consider how different individuals and socio-cultural and socio-economic factors shape the different weight and divergent reading that each person or group will normally make of these dimensions or needs. They also fail to consider the sociological and social normality of the divergence of interests and diversity of positions and perspectives and the resulting conflict between people and groups in the context of work, and how this divergence and multiplicity are structuring factors in and for organisational life and its social configuration (see, for example, what Sainsaulieu (1977, 1997) says about identity, subcultures and conflicts).

Secondly, it is important to reflect more deeply on the meaning of work and its existential dimension in building an authentic life. There is the need to equate what Dejours (2012) advocates about living work, ethical suffering, the relationship between work and the construction of a social bond, and the power to constitute a profoundly subjective experience beyond utility in the field of reflection, on the relationship between work, moral subjectivity, identity, individuality and culture and civilisation. Dejours (2012) warns us of the need to understand the complex relationship between suffering, violence, alienation at work and the existing or predominant culture. In other words, what the author calls the relationship between the psychodynamics of work and mental health and suffering (Dejours, 2012). Therefore, the centrality of living labour, which is “[...] what the subject must add to the prescriptions in order to achieve their objectives”, requires an in-depth analysis of what “[...] subjective commitment to the task” consists of (Dejours, 2012, p. 365). As the author sustains,

At the end of the day, each new configuration of the real found in work calls for the formation of new skills that the worker did not have until then. In this way, work, understood as production work – *poiesis* – in order to be of quality, summons subjectivity to its most intimate foundations, namely the

body, the place of subjective experience [...]. To work is not only to produce, it is also to transform oneself (Dejours, 2012, p. 366).

Thus, “[...] work is not reduced to an activity, it implies dimensions that have to do more properly with action in the sense that Aristotle (1992) gives to the concept of praxis: morally just action” (Dejours, 2012, p. 368).

Similarly, the proposals of Hackman and Oldham’s (1974) model of Job Characteristics and Herzberg’s Job Enrichment (Cunha et al., 2007; Herzberg, 1968) can be used here to emphasise the importance of the specific nature of the work done and the skills that can be mobilised, increased and enhanced, and how this contributes to a more authentic experience. In other words, increased meaning, autonomy, responsibility, control and information at work, which tends to produce positive psychological states and greater commitment, performance and internal motivation. However, the same authors recognise the need to relativise the linear application of their models by acknowledging the existence of moderating factors related to individual and contextual differences.

Next, there is the need to discuss the macro dimension of looking at organisations and their members, which is practically absent in Kets de Vries. In fact, one cannot discuss the typologies of organisations without this perspective, analysing the organisations themselves, their structures and their environment (Miner, 2002). Likewise, the individuals involved cannot be viewed atomistically and only from a psychological angle; they are social actors with varied collective identities and their discourses and practices reflect this (Ferraz, 2018). That means understanding the human behaviour of employees and managers within contemporary organisations, understood as social constructions (Ferraz, 2018).

This implies analysing the organisational structure in terms of functions, hierarchy and communication, the type of good or service they produce and how they do it, the different internal and external social actors and their identity logics and interests, the subcultures present, the logics of power and authority, the specific nature of existing discourses, ideologies and mentalities, and the way of dealing with conflict and diversity. Similarly, this macro view implies analysing the environment and its complex relationship with the organisation, such as defining and identifying the different *stakeholders* and their interests and perspectives, the economic and technological context, the ideological discourses on economic models and the logic of how organisations operate, and the power relationships between organisational players, sanctioned and legitimised by societal logics and legal determinations.

Another important element in understanding the meaning and authenticity of people’s actions involves understanding that organisations are characterised by a game that takes place between different subcultures – professional, functional, hierarchical and others – and which is crossed by internal and external power relationships and negotiation (Sainsaulieu, 1977, 1997). Such a game can produce a peculiar form of socialisation and organisational continuity that is not aligned with the need to impose a homogeneous and tension-free corporate culture, as sometimes seems to follow from one of the dimensions proposed by Kets de

Vries (2018). In other words, the organisation builds its identity in this multiplicity of processes and actors with different conceptualisations of identity (personal, social and organisational) that do not always coincide, a dynamic plurality that is reconfigured and in tension due to organisational fluidity (Tavares, 2001).

This congruence of values between the individual and the organisation is based on the dynamic and not tension-free combination of the three aforementioned identities, giving it a plural configuration (Tavares, 2001). In this way, the alignment of values envisaged by Kets de Vries (2018) for an authentic organisation cannot ignore its possible plurality or its frequent and normal negotiated tension.

Finally, a more complex reflection on alienation (the ever-present brother-enemy of authenticity) and the complementarity, overlap or difference between alienation from a sociological perspective and alienation from a psychological or even psychosocial perspective would be pertinent. In other words, to also discuss what authenticity is as it is associated with issues of human autonomy, control, dignity, critical capacity and self-reflexivity and its relationship with the societal configuration, its ideologies and existing power structures. And this cannot be considered a secondary issue, not least because one of the central social institutions in our world is private enterprise, along with a hegemonic tendency for the discourse of corporatisation to invade all spheres of human life, even intimacy and physical and mental well-being. A world in which we have become hyperactive individuals, disconnected from social ties, obsessed with income, productivity and the quantifiable usefulness of our actions in all dimensions of our lives (Byung-Chul, 2014, 2019).

## Conclusion

As has been shown, *authentizotic* organisations seek to foster a balance between the individual and the organisation by giving meaning to work (Rego & Souto, 2004; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2012; Potocan, 2021; Polowczyk, 2017; Ketz de Vries, 2001). This results in a motivating organisational climate for the members of the organisation due to this positive feeling of belonging, increasing the psychological contract and improving the organisational climate, consequently improving their respective performance. To achieve this goal, leadership needs to foster and demonstrate trustworthiness, bearing in mind the need to consider the internal and external characteristics of the context of the organisation in question, and there is no such thing as an authentically perfect organisation at any given time and/or space.

In short, there is no ideal *authentizotic* organisation at any given time and/or space. This is a process in permanent (re)construction. There will always be conflicts in organisations, which can sometimes be essential for their progress. *Authentizotic* organisations and the discourses about what matters and why also reflect and participate in the societal environment and their logics. This whole framework needs to be considered if organisations are to be minimally prepared to develop their capacity to respond in an increasingly digitalised society that also fosters balanced social, economic and environmental development (Serpa et al., 2022; Medne & Lapina, 2019). This is a process in permanent (re)construction whose dynamic cannot be the pure happiness



of the organisation's members without considering the need to constantly adapt to the internal and external context and thus enable its sustainable development.

## Notes

This work is financed by national funds through FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., within the scope of the project “UIDB / 04647/2020” of CICS.NOVA - Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences.

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## Dialogue between Sociology and Social Work

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to critically analyse the relationship between Sociology and Social Work, helping to demonstrate the need for a fruitful and enriching dialogue between these two scientific areas. To attain this goal, a documentary analysis was carried out and the authors' experience as sociologists was mobilised, putting forth, as an example, some potential contributions of the *sociological imagination* as a significant heuristic tool for both Sociology and Social Work. Interdisciplinarity between Social Work and Sociology, in which each scientific discipline maintains its specific identity, is one of the paths to be promoted that could also contribute to the scientific and professional legitimisation of each of these scientific areas. It is suggested that *sociological portraits* be mobilised in the analysis of the configurations of the scientific areas of Sociology and Social Work in Portugal, favouring the interdependent articulation of the science, training and profession components and thus collaborating in the definition, implementation and evaluation of better-informed social interventions, which, consequently, have higher potential to be successful and increasingly efficient in promoting social justice and equity.

**Keywords:** Interdisciplinarity, Social Work, Sociological imagination, Sociological portraits, Sociology

**Citation:** Ferreira, C., Serpa, S., & Costa, A. (2024). Dialogue between Sociology and Social Work. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1599-1614), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES Organisation.

### Introduction

In various discursive records produced by multiple actors within the Social Sciences, the tense, sometimes oppositional relationship between Sociology and Social Work is highlighted. Sociology is presented as being focused on science and theorising the frameworks and constraints of Social Work, while Social Work is

presented as being focused on the application of knowledge and the practice of the Social Work profession (Kelly & Stanley, 2012). In this type of argument, Sociology is deemed the best example of Social Sciences, inasmuch that it would be in a better position to understand and analyse the multidimensionality of social reality in an integrated way, making it possible to overcome the individualistic or naturalistic limitations of professional common sense in explaining social phenomena (Caria et al., 2013). Social Work would be the best example of the application of Social Sciences because it would be able to overcome the existing artificial and abstract disciplinary divisions, and social workers would have the best training to integrate different scientific and disciplinary knowledge from Social Sciences and to know how to operationalise them in the field (Caria et al., 2013).

In a very pertinent summary of the relationship between Social Work and other Social Sciences, López Rodríguez, and Torralba Roselló (2020) sustain that Social Work is based on various theoretical corpuses from different Social Sciences disciplines, namely Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, and Economics, among others. These influences had a greater or lesser impact depending on the place, historical moment and country in which Social Work developed. Paradoxically, the relationship between Social Work and Sociology, despite the fact that in both scientific areas inequalities and diversity take centre stage and focus on social action to understand the human condition in context (Kelly & Stanley, 2012; Davies, 2023), this relationship has often been distant and flexible (Ahmed-Mohamed, 2011; Charron, 2014; Levin et al., 2015; Shaw, 2020). Sociology has often assumed a supposed scientific superiority that materialises in Sociology questioning Social Work, while Social Work is not perceived as questioning Sociology (Davies, 2023; Shaw, 2020).

Sociology, as a science that takes a specific stance of social reality, producing plural theoretical topics, formulating research problems in the context of these topics, and developing methodological strategies that guide empirical research (Ferreira & Serpa, 2017), has always been multi-paradigmatic and methodologically eclectic (Babalola & Nwanzu, 2021; Sebele-Mpofu, 2020; Serpa & Ferreira, 2020). Sociology is considered to have focused on broad epistemological frameworks that cut across the Social Sciences, while Social Work has specialised in social intervention (Ahmed-Mohamed, 2011). However, this position does not imply a clear separation between these two disciplinary areas, articulated around the binomial of know-how. However, in general terms, it could be considered that, for Sociology, the theoretical component is more relevant than applying that theory to solve specific social problems (Ahmed-Mohamed, 2011).

This accentuated separation between these two scientific and professional areas can also be seen as a lack of consensus in Portugal. There are more and more sociologists who work together with social workers, carrying out social work in non-academic activities; and, at the same time, there are more and more social workers who carry out activities with academic purposes when they combine their teaching activity in Social Work training with research activity not directly linked to the effectiveness of professional intervention. As a result of this progressive coexistence, these two scientific and professional areas seem to be increasingly in direct competition in the labour market (Caria et al., 2013). It is in this context that this paper aims to critically analyse the relationship between Sociology and Social Work, aim at contributing to a fruitful and enriching dialogue

between these two scientific disciplines.

## Method

This paper seeks to contribute to the discussion of the relationship between Sociology and Social Work. It favours a reasoned reflection based on the authors' experience of teaching in higher education and participating in academic management activities (carried out by one of the authors) in Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes within these two scientific areas under analysis in the Portuguese context. The method used in this paper has an intensive nature. The aim is to understand the many components that characterise this process of dialogue between Sociology and Social Work.

This investigation favoured the document analysis technique, developed from different types of documental sources produced for some purpose. They can be understood as a way of contextualising information and are analysed as methodologically developed communicative devices for producing versions of events (Flick, 2005). To do this, documents found in two large bibliographic databases were selected and analysed: *B-ON* (The Online Knowledge Library, which is widely used in teaching and research institutions in Portugal and provides access to scholarly texts, such as published papers, but also access to repositories of Master's dissertations, doctoral theses and research reports) and *SCILIT* (a platform that aggregates all scholarly publications with a DOI [Digital Object Identifier]).

## Sociology and Social Work

A possible definition of Social Work as a profession from 2014 by the *International Federation of Social Workers* emphasises that "Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people". Social workplaces its theoretical and methodological foundations within the framework of the Social and Human Sciences, ultimately seeking to promote social cohesion and the empowerment of people through social justice (Mareková, 2021), implying a critical reflection of its action (Wu & Greig, 2022). Social Work, therefore, develops empirical studies in various areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Areas into which Empirical Studies of Social Work can be Hypothetically Divided

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1. Emotional experiences and resilience	Studies the reality of human existential suffering: how a shared sense of fragility/vulnerability can be understood and represented. It studies how the associated suffering becomes energy, the capacity for resistance, seriousness and responsibility for one's own lives (care).
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2. Coping and recovery	Studies the dynamics of coping actions that start from the aforementioned internal suffering: how the care of individual subjects engages the care of others and structures the caring associated.
3. Development of experiential competences	Studies how the experience of a deep shared (relational) confrontation develops in common people significant existential capabilities (human ability to help) also of a para-professional nature (natural helpers or experts by experience).
4. Validation / standardisation of professional methods	Concerns the scientific corroboration of professional methods used by social operators, without reference (or with weak reference) to this or that context of use.
5. Evaluation of professional interventions	Studies the empirical evaluation of interventions carried out and already implemented professional practices or projects (including Social Work Education), with particular reference to the satisfaction of the recipient/involved subjects.
6. Analysis of best practices and effectiveness factors	Studies the optimal ingredients and the particular organisation or the master idea that has guided the realisation of practices that are unquestionably considered (or following a scientific evaluation of which point e) are successful (good practices) or even the best ones (best practices).
7. Wellbeing and competences of the practitioners	Studies social professions within existing welfare systems (developed or emerging): how professional social workers or welfare managers live and organise their daily work within services (workloads, training, experiences and stress borne, acquired or missing skills, relations with the management, etc.).

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Source: Table designed following Folgheraiter, 2018, pp. 9-11.

For its part, Sociology aims to advance a reliable and verifiable corpus of scientific knowledge based on research and contribute to improving the global human condition (International Sociological Association, 2001). Sociology, like all the other Social Sciences, is a multi-paradigmatic science crossed by distinct theoretical configurations that are partly overlapping and partly contradictory. Empirical research is based on different paradigms that retain areas of specificity and can produce rival results and explanations of the reality they analyse. Sociology seeks to bridge the gap between macro-social dynamics and local processes. This allows for the linking of subjective meanings with social practices and promotes a focus on the interaction between systems and actors, structures and practices, and the material conditions of existence and social construction of reality, and, by collaborating in this demystification of the established social order, Sociology serves as both a scientific representation and a critical practice in the social domain (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019).

We believe that there are no radical differences between Sociology and Social Work as scientific areas, as “Sociology and Social Work [are] born in the same cradle” (Dunk-West & Verity, 2016, p. 6), provided that we do not exaggerate the division of labour dichotomy, for example, in a radical distinction between “science v art;



theory v practice; research v theory” (Kelly & Stanley, 2012, p. 337), which could potentially harm these Social Sciences (Armstrong, 2014). Thus, it is important to reconfigure the theory/practice dichotomy, acknowledging and conceptualising the existence of a duality between the symbolic-deductive processes and knowledge that guide the analysis of reality and the practical-intuitive processes and knowledge that guide social intervention, both of which contain theory and practice simultaneously (Caria et al., 2013).

Within the symbolic-deductive domain of Social Work, it would be possible to create conditions to overcome the dualisms between Sociology-science and Social Work-profession (Caria et al., 2013). To this end, it would be necessary to consider that, in both professional activities, there are different ways of using theory. In research, the processes of interaction with people are determined by the production of knowledge on a more general scale; in Social Work, the processes of intervention with people, on a micro-scale, shape the general knowledge that can be used (Caria et al., 2013). This equation of the relationship between scientific theory and professional practice would have two consequences. On the one hand, it would allow us to move away from a conceptualisation of professional work that reduces it to the activity of the symbolic analyst and expert by considering that social interaction with service users is an integral part of the professionalisation of Sociology and Social Sciences in general (Caria, 2011; Caria et al., 2013). On the other hand, the skills that can be learnt through the use of theory in research do not function decontextualised from scientific knowledge when they are used in a professional situation, as there are no skills without knowledge (Caria et al., 2013; Perrenoud, 2001). To summarise, social theory can have a dual use, professional and/or academic, which is not equivalent in either case. In academia, theory aims to produce and validate new knowledge about the reality of Social Work, with activity in the field being ancillary and auxiliary. In the profession, social theory favours knowing how to act in the field, with the ancillary and auxiliary activity of knowing how to apply the knowledge already produced (Caria et al., 2013).

When analysing social reality, these Social Sciences can mobilise different levels or scales of analysis: macro, meso and micro. Sociological analysis focuses on three types of social relationships – relationships of interaction (micro); relationships of group constitution (meso); and relationships of systemic interdependence (macro) – which can be defined as, respectively, intersubjective relationships and relationships between individual acts (micro); relationships of coordination and, possibly, stabilisation of interactively combined acts, and relations between collective actors and collective acts (meso); and relationships between properties of relationships between people and between groups (macro) (Pires, 2014). Social Work, at the micro level, focuses on service users, namely individuals, families or small groups; at the meso level, it focuses on strategies involving particular groups of actors at the agency and community levels; at the macro level, it focuses on the formulation of general policies and the development of intervention programmes (Conrad-Amlicke, 2024; Wu & Greig, 2022).

In this process of analysing social reality, interdisciplinarity – implying more intense collaboration, involving the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries from the definition of the problem to methodological options – is crucial (Ahmed-Mohamed, 2011; Sá & Serpa, 2022) and even necessary for Sociology and Social Work,



although this process is not easy given that the oppositional relationships between these Social Sciences continue to shape the cognitive evaluations of these academics and professionals (Frost, 2015; Stanley & Kelly, 2010). Emphasising the relationship between theory and practice in Social Work training can be seen as an epistemic act, i.e., a way of rethinking the construction of knowledge in this scientific area and addressing otherness. Debating the role of the diversity of theoretical perspectives, to which Sociology has contributed and which have been more present in teaching, is an opportunity for the discipline of Social Work to rethink its analyses and interventions (López Rodríguez & Torralba Roselló, 2020).

### *Social problems and the sociological imagination*

Social Sciences, in particular Sociology and Social work, enhance the understanding of social situations, providing self-knowledge and subsequently enabling groups and individuals to change the conditions of their lives and to address and manage social problems in a given historical and social context. A social problem usually refers to something that affects a group or a category of people and raises questions in a wider circle, beyond the individual (Santos, 1999; Serpa & Miguel Ferreira, 2018). The process of producing any problem should be analysed as a social phenomenon because it involves a set of actors and social relationships that the process implies, and as a discursive and conceptual phenomenon because questions of the form of discourses and concepts are relevant (Santos, 1999). Analysing the genesis of a social problem refers to the Social Work carried out around what has become a specific social problem. This work includes political pressure, the progressive formalisation of discourses and the legitimisation of the problem itself as a social issue accepted as existing and relevant and as the starting point for legitimate political and social action programmes (Santos, 1999).

A social problem is not just the result of society's malfunctioning but presupposes real work carried out in and by society or at least by some of its components, which includes two essential stages: acknowledging and legitimising the problem as such. On the one hand, its recognition: making a particular situation visible, making it *worthy of attention*, presupposes the action of socially interested groups to produce a new category of perception of the social world to act on it. On the other hand, its legitimisation: this is not necessarily induced by the simple public recognition of the problem but presupposes a real promotional operation to insert it into the field of social concerns of the moment. In short, in addition to these objective transformations, without which the problem would not be considered, there is the specific work of public enunciation and formulation, i.e., a mobilisation operation (Lenoir, 1989).

One of the essential stages in the constitution of a problem as a social problem is precisely its recognition as such by State bodies. Thus, State recognition makes it possible for certain problems with a more individual dimension to be transformed into social problems that require collective solutions. These solutions are almost always devised by *experts*. As this is a challenge with multiple dimensions, above all economic but also professional and moral, analysing the official recognition of social problems reveals at least two forms of legitimisation that combine and reinforce each other: recognition by senior public administration officials and

recognition by *experts* (Larson, 1977; Rodrigues, 1997).

But for a problem to take the form of a social problem, it is not enough for it to find agents who are socially recognised as competent to examine its nature and propose acceptable solutions; it will be necessary to impose this problem on the stage of public debates, and its publicisation in a public sphere. A public sphere emerges when certain social forces, who want to influence the decisions of the authorities, form a public that uses its reason to legitimise some of its demands in this forum (Mozzicafreddo, 1985). Therefore, the theoretical foundation for informed action is crucial if it is to be successful and not fragmented in solving complex social problems (Mareková, 2021; Armstrong, 2014; Ahmed-Mohamed, 2011; Farmer, 2014; Kelly & Stanley, 2012; Dunk-West & Verity, 2016) (Table 2).

Table 2. Demonstrations of the History of Applied Social Research

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- (1) Almost any question as regards the relationship between theory, research and practice has been raised and discussed within different contexts throughout history.
  - (2) The relationship between social research and political decisions is complicated. You may never expect political decisions to follow recommendations unambiguously.
  - (3) Over time, social research will contribute to the change of political frames of reference and their conception of social phenomenon and political philosophy, partly as a support to current social movements. However, it will end up integrating results from social research in an unpredictable and sometimes astonishing way.
  - (4) Throughout its history, Applied Social Theory has been influenced by political mainstream discourses in its scope, its basic understanding of its role and its choice of methods and designs. One has to acknowledge and be aware of this influence.
  - (5) Recent discussions on evidence-based practice and practice research include elements that may be traced back to former discussions within applied social research. It is urgent to consider the strands of these discussions if we do not want to “do it all over again”.
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Source: Table designed according to Høgsbro, 2015, S67.

Power relationships (Schmitz & Hamann, 2022) tend to shape ideological discourses that are always present in the definition of so-called social problems and which also tend to have a collective and not purely individual dimension (Kelly & Stanley, 2012) in the constitution of the object of intervention (Serpa & Miguel Ferreira, 2018; Ferreira & Serpa, 2021). Therefore, social structures and forms of social interaction that shape contemporary societies can only be explained by considering the coordinates of time and place in their historicity and the socio-historical contexts into which they are integrated, contrary to the naturalisation of certain structures, actions and meanings (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019).

Although ideologies and practical knowledge are ways of rationalising the world and classifying it, i.e., instruments of social cohesion and tension, all scientific disciplines are subject to the influence of symbolic-ideological elements (Silva, 1986). Ideology is a concept with multiple meanings, which Ferrarotti (2021)

summarises as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Ideology

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- (a) ideology as a relatively coherent body of beliefs about the various aspects of society, that is, as a cultural system and a guide for policy;
  - (b) as lore or pre-scientific knowledge, imbued with ethical common-sense implications for behaviour;
  - (c) as an activist aspiration offering a sense of direction for group-behaviour;
  - (d) as a “false” or “mystified” consciousness related to practical economic interests;
  - (e) as a non-scientific theory;
  - (f) as a rationalisation of the *status quo*;
  - (g) as a doctrinaire dogmatic design to change the existing social and political situation.
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Source: Table drawn up according to Ferrarotti, 2021, p. 17.

Ideology can be seen as a system of representations, the central core of which is composed of a system of legitimisation, guiding the actions of a given group and justifying its historical insertion (Javeau, 1998). This demonstrates the need to mobilise the *sociological imagination* (Mills, 2000) to see beyond the obvious (Ferreira & Serpa, 2017), focusing on the interdependent relationships between the micro, meso and macro analytical levels (Farmer, 2014; Nissen, 2013; Stanley & Kelly, 2010; Kelly & Stanley, 2012), articulating Anthropology, History and Sociology and promoting the analysis of probable futures when aiming to understand and manage social problems. This is due to the fact that the *sociological imagination* allows “its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions” (Mills, 2000, p. 5).

Sociology and Social Work focus on social problems, social structure, social integration and how individuals think and act, simultaneously moulded by cultural and structural possibilities and constraints. The static-dynamic, structure-action, and diachronic-synchronic dichotomies could be equated, and their effects limited, if the heuristic and conceptual potential of the process were favoured. The process can be seen as the imbrication between action and structure, characterised by openness, sequentiality and cumulateness, given that the past informs the present and the present shapes the future, considering the conditions and possibilities created by previous events (Ferreira & Serpa, 2021).

#### *Components of Sociology and Social Work – Science, Training, Profession: Sociological Portraits*

This point suggests a procedure for analysing the configurations of the scientific areas of Sociology and Social Work in Portugal, favouring the interdependent articulation of the science, training and profession components. In the science component, Sociology and Social Work (whether in their introductory or general dimension or their specialised dimension) are recognised, to a greater or lesser extent, as scientific disciplines that take a

specific view of social reality by elaborating plural theoretical problems, formulating research problems in the context of these problems and constructing sets of principles, theories, methodical strategies and crucial results that serve as models or guidelines for research (Costa, 2004). This component can be considered the main basis from which the Sociology/Social Work as training and Sociology/Social Work as profession components develop. In the training component, in the training models and practices that are articulated with the science and profession components, various elements are relevant and can be analysed, such as the structure of the courses and curricular units, the programmes of the curricular units, the qualifications and skills of the teachers, and the teaching/learning activities developed (Costa, 2004). The profession component emphasises the diversity of professional roles and practices, the processes of constitution of the actors who carry out activities in an academic and/or business context as a professional group, their forms of professional association, and the models of professional culture (Costa, 2004).

The analysis of this process favours *sociological portraits*, an original proposal by Bernard Lahire. Lahire's proposal is shaped by a view of "multi-socialised and multi-determined actors" (Amândio, 2014, p. 47), with necessarily plural dispositions (to act and to believe) resulting from great heterogeneity, variety and multiplicity of socialisation processes and inter-individual and intra-individual variations in behaviour. Lahire highlights the increasingly heterogeneous complexity resulting from multiple, early and potentially varied socialisation processes (Lahire, 2001b, 2005, 2007, 2019; Lima Junior & Massi, 2015; Rodrigues, 2018).

This sociological framework shapes *sociological portraits* as unique sociologically constructed configurations comparing different portraits (Lahire, 1994, 2002b), thus valuing the internal dynamics of situations in contextualised interdependent relationships, identifying the multiple interactions of causes and effects (Lahire, 1995). This methodological device of *sociological portraits* (Davet & Venera, 2021; Lima Junior & Massi, 2015; Nunes et al., 2016; Lopes, 2012; Lopes et al., 2016) aims to rescue a double plurality in individual trajectories: on the one hand, the plurality of internal dispositions, considering their genesis, unequal strength and systematicity; on the other hand, the contextual, external plurality associated with the multiplicity of processes, agencies and contexts of socialisation or ways of life (Lopes et al., 2015). Of the potential of sociological portraits (Atkinson, 2020; Amândio, 2014, Alves, 2016; Meier, 2003; Lopes et al., 2018; Gomes et al., 2014), it should be emphasised that

Sociological portraits arise as a methodological device capable of capturing a double plurality in individual trajectories: on the one hand, the plurality of internal dispositions, considering their origin, unequal "strength" and systematicity; and, on the other hand, the plurality of contexts, as an external factor, associated with the multiplicity of processes, agencies and socialisation contexts or ways of life (Gomes et al., 2015, p. 1).

But how are *sociological portraits* drawn up? The methodological device of the sociological portrait requires complexity in its elaboration and analysis. In drawing up sociological portraits, the accounts of the individuals themselves through in-depth interviews are central (Nunes et al., 2016; Lahire, 2002b), in the form of a semi-directive biographical interview (Lopes, 2012; Machado, 2019) through a vertical and a horizontal reading

(Maia, 2021), with the aim of objectifying subjectivity (Lima Junior & Massi, 2015).

Lopes (2012), in an attempt to update Lahire's proposal for drawing up sociological portraits, indicates six stages in the composition of the sociological portrait device: 1. Designing a semi-directive interview guide of a biographical nature, suited to the objectives of the research and covering various spheres of life deemed relevant; 2. Conducting two to three interviews, preferably a few days or a week apart, encouraging reflexivity; 3. Transcribing the interviews; 4. Editing the interviews, transforming them into a fluid discourse in the interviewee's first-person; 5. In a back and forth between theoretical resources and empirical material, the portrait is constructed by interpreting the information; and 6. Indicating an interpretative title for each portrait, a summary and a main body (Lopes, 2012, Lopes, et al, 2018; Gomes et al, 2014; Costa & Lopes, 2009) (Table 4).

Table 4. Script for Sociological Portraits: Academics and Professionals in Social Work and Sociology

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**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

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**Block A: Science Component**

A1. Science / Applied Science / Technology

A2. Paradigms: Positivist / Interpretive / Critical

A3. Theory / Practice

A4. Empirical research strategies: Intensive-qualitative / Extensive-quantitative / Comparative-typological / Action Research

**Block B: Profession component**

B1. Diversity of professional roles and practices

B2. The processes of constitution as a professional group

B3. Forms of professional association

B4. Models of professional culture (culture of association/dissociation between science and profession)

**Block C: Training component**

C1. Structure of courses and curricular units

C2. Curricular unit programmes

C3. Teacher qualifications and competences

C4. Teaching/learning activities carried out

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Source: Adapted from Costa, 2004; Costa & Lopes, 2009.

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to critically analyse the relationship between Sociology and Social Work to foster a fruitful and enriching dialogue between these two scientific areas. One of the dimensions of this dialogue is the relevant role that these Social Sciences can play in understanding social situations, providing self-knowledge and enabling the various actors to change the conditions of their lives and participate in the equation and

management of social problems in a given social-historical context.

Interdisciplinarity between Social Work and Sociology, in which each maintains its specific identity, is one of the paths to be promoted that could contribute to legitimising the scientific and professional position of each of these Social Sciences. Kelly and Stanley (2012) sustain that “Bridging this gap may be critical to the longevity of both disciplines and finding ways to come together to do so it seems would be productive” (p. 335), as well as developing holistic interventions in an informed way and consequently with a greater chance of success, with effectiveness but also efficiency, in old and new inequalities (Sá & Serpa, 2022) in the promotion of social justice and equity (Wu & Greig, 2022).

Various reflections on the importance of interdisciplinarity in higher education training (cf. Shandas & Brown, 2016) highlight a framework based on three dimensions: *pedagogical* (implying the learning of an investigative logic centred on the study of a problem from various perspectives; *programmatic* (involving the implementation of a curriculum that focuses on problem-solving to promote an interdisciplinary perspective); and *institutional* (organisational and stakeholder support in promoting this logic, functioning as an interdisciplinary community with high heuristic capacity) (Shandas & Brown, 2016).

## Funding

This work is financed by national funds through FCT-Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., within the scope of the project “UIDB/04647/2020” of CICS.NOVA – Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences of Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

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## From Differences to Social Inequalities


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**Abstract:** Social differences and social inequalities are often confused concepts. However, it is important to understand the difference between these two concepts, as it has relevant implications for how we think about society and the social relationships produced and reproduced in a societal context. This paper seeks to help clarify the distinction between social differences and inequalities. To this end, a methodology of collecting, selecting and analysing various documents related to this subject was applied. The results of the analysis allow to conclude that social inequalities are differences (natural or constructed characteristics or variations that distinguish individuals from each other) that have negative consequences for individuals and social groups. The distinction between social differences and inequalities is important because it helps to understand the causes and consequences of inequalities. Social differences are inherent to the human condition, but social inequalities are created by society. In conclusion, differences become inequalities with the socially constructed and reconstructed reading that associates these characteristics with negative aspects. This understanding of the distinction between social differences and inequalities in the causes and consequences of social inequalities is essential for promoting social justice.

**Keywords:** Social differences, Social inequalities, Social justice, Inequalities, Inequities

**Citation:** Ferreira, C. M., Serpa, S., Ferraz, J. & Costa, A. (2024). From differences to social inequalities. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1615-1630), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES Organisation.

## Introduction

Social differences and social inequalities are concepts that are often confused. However, it is important to understand the distinction between these two concepts, as it has relevant implications for how we think about society and the social relationships produced and reproduced in a societal context. Social differences cannot be directly and linearly associated with social inequalities (Lahire, 2008; Costa, 2019), insofar that inequalities are a socially constructed classification. It is therefore essential to make an explicit distinction between differences and inequalities (Zhang et al., 2022; Hofbauer, 2011; Barros, 2018). This is the starting point of this paper.

In analysing this distinction, Rousseau's (2021) position on the origin and foundations of inequality, conceiving two forms of inequality, one natural and the other moral or political, can be considered a relevant contribution. Natural inequality, which can currently be understood as a dimension of difference, expresses differences in age, health, strength of body and qualities of spirit. Another dimension, absent in this reflection by the author, would regard the types of cultural differences characteristic of certain societies. Moral or political inequality, which depends on a kind of convention established or authorised by the consent of men, would be at the origin of the unequal distribution of privileges, namely wealth and power (Rousseau, 2021).

Human beings are different from each other and live in societies that are themselves unequal and differentiated (Barros, 2018). However, it must be realised that "[...] not all differences can be interpreted in terms of social inequality, nor do they systematically produce a feeling of injustice" (Lahire, 2008, p. 1). Inequalities can be seen as differences that are perceived as unfair (Serpa, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022) in the legitimacy of the desirability of objects of various kinds (Lahire, 2008), which is a central element. So, to a certain extent, inequalities do not respect the proposal of Rawls (1971) of social justice as an equitable distribution of rights, duties, opportunities and social conditions by social institutions that guarantee "justice as fairness".

Social inequalities do not simply express social differences between groups or populations with different lifestyles or specific cultures. The different behaviours of various social groups and cultural differences are not in themselves social inequalities, insofar as these differences are not expressed in terms of more or less resources, goods or opportunities, in terms of advantages and disadvantages, or in the form of social hierarchies (Machado, 2015), nor are social inequalities differences in individual talents, abilities and performances. If individual talents, abilities and performances are socially rewarded differently according to their rarity or merit, we will be dealing with individuals with different amounts of resources. But these are not social inequalities, given that this difference in resources is not the result of any unequal social mechanism independent of individual actions (Machado, 2015).

Social inequalities are systematic and persistent differences in access to goods, resources and opportunities between individuals, social groups or even entire populations (Machado, 2015). To this first element of definition can be added a second element that stipulates differences in access to goods, resources and



opportunities as evidence that exist independently of individuals' talents, abilities and performances. There are individuals and groups with outstanding talents, abilities and performances who will have little access to these goods, resources and opportunities, and other individuals and groups who "[...] have wide access to them without having outstanding talents or abilities or without having particularly meritorious performances" (Machado, 2015, p. 2).

A difference can be horizontal, without anyone being above or below, better or worse; an inequality is always vertical and involves hierarchy. Differences are a categorisation. An inequality is not just a categorisation, it is something that violates a moral norm of equality between human beings, although it does not presuppose any norm of complete equality; it indicates a difference that is too great and/or takes an unjust direction. For a difference to become an inequality, it must also be extinguishable. Inequalities are hierarchical, avoidable and morally unjustified differences (Therborn, 2006).

## Methods

The method used in this article is of an intensive nature. The aim is to understand the various implications inherent in the distinction between social differences and social inequalities. Documentary analysis was the technique favoured in this investigation, developed from different types of documentary sources. In a documentary study, documents can be understood as "means of communication", produced with some purpose and for some end. They can be understood as a way of contextualising information, being analysed as methodologically developed communicative devices for producing versions of events (Flick, 2005).

Documents found in two large bibliographic databases were selected and analysed: B-ON (The Online Knowledge Library, which is widely used in teaching and research institutions in Portugal and provides access to scholarly texts, such as published papers, but also access to repositories of master's dissertations, doctoral theses and research reports) and SCILIT (a centralised platform that aggregates scholarly publications with DOI [Digital Object Identifier]). In these two bibliographic databases, the document collection focussed on the results of advanced searches, in which the keywords "social differences" and "social inequalities" were combined, namely in reference databases and full-text bibliographic databases.

## Social differences and inequalities

When trying to analyse the various societies and social relationships that are produced and reproduced in a societal context, it becomes clear that they are characterised by different types of differences and inequalities. Various types of differences can be listed, such as ethnicity, sex, gender, age, nationality, behaviour, occupation, beliefs, forms of religiosity, bodily specificities, culture, and tastes, among others. Differences are inherent in the human world and the natural world. In general, the existence of differences of all kinds cannot be avoided through human action. The presence of differences in the social world is associated with the very diversity that



makes up human beings as a whole, whether in terms of personal or so-called natural characteristics, or external characteristics (Barros, 2018).

Hence the importance of locating differences suggested by Bottero and Irwin (2003), who sustain that

A productive direction here is to engage with its variability across diverse contexts, both contemporary contexts and changing historical contexts. To do so adequately requires that we move outside the terms of difference and work with a more general perspective. With such a perspective we can analyse difference partly in terms of overt values and commitments: as claims. However, such a focus also needs to be matched by the analysis of implicit assumptions and norms, as they are embedded in social interaction and in practical engagements with the social world (p. 466).

The study of a different society and the various types of differences cannot be carried out without conceptualising the difference as a relationship. This requires establishing a field of differences (Rowland, 1987). Each culture is defined by the differential deviation (Lévi-Strauss, 1952) vis-à-vis others, and the conceptualisation of difference as a system of differences in space and time makes it possible to establish the terms of comparison between different societies or cultures (Rowland, 1987).

The analysis of the types of cultural differences that characterise contemporary societies can be done on the basis of a guiding principle composed of two logics. The first logic is that cultural difference is “first”; it has a certain historical thickness, and its members seek to maintain, reproduce and defend it. The starting point for analysing cultural difference is based on its existence at a given moment, as embodied by actors who claim to have a past, a memory. In the second logic, difference is constructed, new or renewed, “second”, and therefore of the order of invention (Wieviorka, 2002, p.131).

But not all differences can be interpreted in terms of social inequality, nor do they systematically produce a feeling of injustice. Multiple cases can be mentioned, and differences in objects, practices and competences can be considered of little value, or even devalued, from the point of view of the most commonly shared collective beliefs (Lahire, 2008). The socially differentiated distribution of technical competences in a given field does not produce injustice or social inequality, inasmuch that “[...] our institutions and our collective beliefs have not made these specific competences primary attributes, nor have they made the lack/absence of these competences an intolerable flaw or an unbearable ‘socio-cultural handicap’” (Lahire, 2008, p. 2).

Furthermore, if differences are inevitable and desirable, one can imagine that they are perceived and valued socially and are less and less marked by inequalities. For this reason, social struggles are generally not aimed at abolishing differences but at trying to suppress or minimise inequalities (Barros, 2018).

*Social Inequalities: Socially Constructed Differences*

The social construction of differences can contribute to the production and reproduction of inequalities. Let us consider two examples: the first centres on the process of interethnic classification developed by the inhabitants of Yaxcabá (Iacutan State, Mexico), who, based on a supposed cultural difference, produce social, economic and symbolic inequalities. These inhabitants differentiate themselves ethnically by using surnames associated with their Mayan or Spanish ancestry. This system of interethnic categorisation is used to explain and justify discriminatory practices on the part of the inhabitants of Yaxcabá who claim to have Spanish origin, as opposed to other members of the community who are identified as having indigenous origin. These discriminatory practices express a complex social organisation between family groups, which links and opposes different collective identities, “essentialised” and stigmatised that establish unequal social positions and prestige among the inhabitants of Yaxcabá (Pérez Ruiz, 2021, p. 283). Difference is used in two ways:

[...] first, to construct the borders between one identity and another; second, to hide social, economic, and political inequalities within the population. This reveals one of the characteristics, or perversions, of identitarian strategies or politics: constructing and manipulating difference to justify itself (Pérez Ruiz, 2021, p. 299).

Another example relates to the categorisation of tuberculosis as a contagious disease and its implications for the configuration of socially differentiated and unequal valuations of the social condition of being ill, the disease and its inherent medical and political management (Ferreira, 2008).

These values oscillate between two poles, expressed in the notions of phthisis and tuberculosis. Phthisis, especially acclaimed in the literary field by various writers and poets who produced a romantic aesthetic, was seen as a hereditary disease or associated with fate that affected the sensitive souls of the romantic elites, namely young people, women and fragile beings who were consumed by “sad passions”. Being “phthisic” was also a way of life of luxury and idleness that marked the experiences of the sanatorium by the wealthy classes until the end of the 19th century, which continued into the 20th century. From the end of the 19th century onwards, the symbolic representations of phthisis gave way to representations associated with tuberculosis, the “white plague”, a disease of misery that affected the poor and working classes. A double discourse emerged in the public arena. On the one hand, a celebration of tuberculosis, and on the other, fear of the “social scourge”, tuberculosis and the stigmatisation of the “dangerous” classes, the sowers of the bacillus. The “tubercular”, both proletarian and poor, embodied absolute evil in the eyes of the propertied classes – they were identified as dangerous revolutionaries who sowed germs and were a source of contagion – which became urgent to control and isolate in hospitals and sanatoriums aimed at the working classes (Ferreira, 2008).

Inequalities are always circumstantial and historical (Barros, 2018). Differences can be understood as historical and social constructions. On the one hand, there is an external social construction of differences. In a given society, it is decided which differences are considered relevant within the broader framework of socially perceived and valued differences. On the other hand, there is an internal social construction of these differences. Each difference is also constructed internally from different perspectives, and this construction is constantly

being updated (Barros, 2018). For a difference to produce inequalities, it is necessary for everyone (or at least the majority of the “privileged” and the “aggrieved”) to consider that the deprivation of an activity, knowledge, the access to a certain cultural good or a given service is a flaw, a handicap or an injustice deemed unacceptable (Lahire, 2008).

The issue of inequality is, therefore, clearly inseparable from the issue of the belief in the legitimacy of a good, knowledge or practice, in other words, inseparable from what we could call its degree of collective desirability (Lahire, 2008). What distinguishes social difference from social inequality in terms of access to a wide range of goods, practices, knowledge, institutions, and other resources is the fact that, in the latter situation, we are talking about objects that are collectively and widely defined as highly desirable. Thus, one can only talk about inequality when there is a strong collectively defined desirability (Lahire, 2008). The “desirability” cultivated within sub-groups or small communities never constitutes the conditions of possibility for social inequalities. For this to happen, the desire to access a series of specific goods or practices must animate and motivate a much larger population (Lahire, 2008).

Growing social differentiation – the social division of labour, the process of urbanisation and industrialisation, and the consolidation of functional and professional hierarchies – although having required the creation of new forms of functional regulation and coordination between social structures and individuals, and a greater need for institutional organisation to ensure the integration and interdependence of individuals, has fostered the creation and recreation of perspectives on differences, as well as the materialisation of these difference(s) into inequality(ies). As Barlösius (2023) claims,

[...] the differentiation between above and below applies to the way that individual and/or social groups are assigned to social positions. The positioning usually follows from better or inferior living conditions, which are captured mainly by available objective and subjective resources, usually income, education, paid work, and leisure time (p. 5).

#### *The plurality of social inequalities*

Social inequalities are multiple and complex. They are always in a process of change, with some becoming extinct or fading away, others emerging or becoming more pronounced, some persisting for a long time, albeit under new circumstances, and most of them transforming in terms of intensity, scale and social significance. Social inequalities are not only interconnected with each other in varying ways but are also interconnected with many other social phenomena of different types, levels, breadths and temporalities (Costa, 2012a, 2012b; Therborn, 2006; Machado, 2015; Carmo & Costa, 2015).

Inequalities can be seen as a multidimensional phenomenon of a systemic nature. This concept implies favouring a relational perspective when analysing inequalities, which not only encompasses various concepts and variables but also combines different methodologies and tools for analysis. Moreover, the systemic nature of inequalities results from interdependent processes that cumulatively affect the most vulnerable groups and social

categories (Costa & Carmo, 2015). The dynamics of interception tend to form systems (Bhir & Pfefferkorn, 2008) or inequality regimes (Piketty, 2020) that reproduce and perpetuate themselves in the social space (Bourdieu, 1979).

Addressing social inequalities requires the use of the plural, as they take multiple forms and have different generating mechanisms. This plurality expresses the multidimensional configurations of social inequalities that manifest in various societal spheres (Cantante, 2015). Following the approach proposed by Göran Therborn (2009), we can recognise three main types of social inequality: vital inequalities, existential inequalities and resource inequalities. The various types of inequality can interact and influence each other (Tilly, 2005; Bhir & Pfefferkorn, 2008; Therborn, 2006).

#### *Types of inequality*

##### *Resource inequalities*

Resource inequalities, which express the unequal distribution of social, economic and cultural resources, are the type of inequalities with the highest social visibility and are present both in the common and ideological discourse and in scientific discourse produced by the various social sciences. They include dimensions such as inequalities in income and wealth, education and professional qualifications, cognitive and cultural skills, hierarchical position in organisations and access to social networks (Therborn, 2006; Costa, 2012a, 2012b). These types of inequalities directly influence the establishment of vital inequalities and existential inequalities.

These unequal distributions of capital structure the social space (Bourdieu, 1979). Social space is markedly unequal in that it is constituted and reshaped based on the dynamics of conflict and social struggle over access to, possession of and strategic mobilisation of various resources. It is, thus, a space of relationships structured based on dominant and subordinate social positions depending on the type and extent of capital appropriated and utilised. Economic capital encompasses the different factors of production (land, factories, labour) and all economic goods (income, assets, material goods).

Cultural capital regards the totality of intellectual qualifications, whether produced by the school system or passed down through the family. This capital can exist in three forms: incorporated (social status inscribed on the body), objectified (differentiated possession of cultural goods), and institutionalised (diplomas). Social capital concerns a network of interpersonal relationships, involving the work of sociability: reciprocal invitations and shared leisure time. Symbolic capital consists of a set of rituals (such as etiquette or protocol) linked to recognising the power of an agent with greater possession of the other three forms of capital.

##### *Existential Inequalities*

This sort of inequalities refers to the unequal recognition of human individuals as persons (Therborn, 2006). They highlight inequalities in freedom, rights, recognition and respect that individuals and groups can enjoy in

society. It means oppression and restriction of freedom, discrimination, stigmatisation and humiliation. Patriarchy, slavery and racism are some of the best-known manifestations of existential inequalities in the history of societies. Today, there are multiple versions of these and other existential inequalities, some more institutionalised, others more socially diffuse (Costa, 2012a).

Unequal recognition and respect, different degrees of freedom to act and the effects of hierarchies of self-respect and self-confidence mean that social status hierarchies generate persistent inequalities in health and life expectancy. Social hierarchies produce existential inequality, with serious psychosomatic consequences. A study of 18,000 English civil servants found that heart disease killed 50 per cent more people from the lower strata than those from the higher strata (Marmot, 2004; Therborn, 2006).

### *Vital Inequalities*

It covers inequalities in life, death and health. Inequalities relating to the prevalence of certain diseases and vulnerability to them, the health resources available to prevent and deal with them, inequalities relating to the occurrence of certain disabilities and the social responses to them, indicators of life expectancy at birth and child mortality rate are some of the most commonly used to comparatively analyse inequalities between populations and analyse changes over time (Therborn, 2006). These dimensions of human life in society, which are directly linked to the biological constitution of human beings, are neither socially homogeneous nor static. They show considerable variability between individuals, groups and societies and are frequent dimensions of social inequality (Costa, 2012a).

Long historical persistence or rapid social change can occur. A huge increase in life expectancy over the last century; on average, worldwide, it has risen from between 30 and 40 years to between 60 and 70 years. On the other hand, there are inequalities in life expectancy between different populations in the world today. The average life expectancy at birth in sub-Saharan African countries is 53 years, whereas in OECD countries, it is 80 years (UNDP, 2010; Costa, 2012a).

The comparison between OECD countries and US states reveals that the more unequal the distribution of income, the lower life expectancy tends to be and the higher the child mortality rate (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). The manifestation of vital inequalities in the United Kingdom (life expectancy, prevalence of chronic diseases, prevalence of disabilities and self-perception of health status) is intertwined with social classes, income levels and poverty situations (Shaw et al., 2008). Analysing hospital records in Portugal, research into the ages at death, causes of death and social attributes shows that the longevity of members of social classes with greater economic and cultural resources is significantly higher (Antunes, 2010).

It is possible to speak of the crystallisation of inequalities, be they vital, existential or of resources, to refer to the fact that the lines separating positions of social advantage and disadvantage remain the same over time and that individuals, families, groups and entire populations who are in these positions also tend to be the same

(Machado, 2015).

*Social inequalities and social categories*

Consisting social inequalities of systematic and persistent differences in access to goods, resources and opportunities, generated independently of individual talents, abilities and performance, they tend to crystallise and form lasting social categories, which can be class, gender, ethnic-racial, status, age or other categories (Machado, 2015). Analysing categorical inequalities involves examining the distribution of certain attributes (income, wealth, education, and longevity, among others) by social category. It allows us to see to what extent those attributes are equally or unequally distributed among the social categories considered.

According to Tilly (2005), the establishment of categorical inequalities is associated with processes, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Establishment of Categorical Inequalities

Meeting	Between previously separate social groups who, when they come into contact, develop symbolic forms of reciprocal categorisation
Imposition	Discriminatory categorisation of groups of individuals by other social groups;
Negotiation	Of borders, designations, practices and interpretations between individuals and groups in interaction;
Transfer	From these categories, boundaries and relationships, from certain contexts and groups to others.

Source: Tilly, 2005; Costa, 2012b

The relationship between types of social inequality and social categories is one of interdependence. On the one hand, the various types of social inequalities can lead, through their persistence, to the establishment of crystallised and lasting social categories. On the other hand, since these categories were initially established based on the unequal distribution of a certain resource or certain vital or existential inequalities, their persistence will contribute not only to maintaining these inequalities but also to creating or accentuating inequalities that were not initially present in the establishment of these specific categories (Machado, 2015) (Table 2).

Table 2. Matrix Types of Social Inequalities X Social Categories

		Social Categories			
		Class categories	Gender categories	Age categories	Categories ethnic-racial
Types of Social	Income	Income inequality is felt at multiple levels in the conditions and			

	lifestyles of the different classes.		
Power	Women tend to occupy less dominant positions than men in institutional hierarchies of all kinds, in governments, parliaments, companies and universities.		
Prestige		Ageism: e.g. when people over 40 or 50 lose their job and try to find a new one, many of them cannot because of their age and become long-term unemployed, too young to retire and “too old” to work.	
Recognition			Racism and ethnic discrimination mean that people are not recognised and are disrespected because of this attribute of their identity.
Health	The longevity of members of social classes with greater economic and cultural resources is higher (Antunes, 2010).	Women adopt more positive health beliefs and behaviours than men and have healthier lifestyles, which may explain why they suffer fewer severe conditions and have greater longevity	Inequalities in the interaction between health professionals and patients; Inequalities in the management of the care provided; Reproduction of inequalities



(Courtenay, 2000;  
Augusto, 2013).

Source: Adapted from Machado, 2015.

Therborn (2006) identifies a set of social processes that generate significant inequalities and which have been analysed from various multi-paradigmatic disciplinary spaces. A theoretically and analytically enlightening analysis of social inequalities in today's world requires characterising the main mechanisms and factors at play (Costa, 2012a) (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Mechanisms of Inequality

Exploitation	The generation of inequalities due to the asymmetrical appropriation by some of the goods and values produced by others. Monopoly of resources; unfair or non-existent remuneration of the wealth produced.
Distancing	Generation of inequalities as a result of processes of competition or competition in systems of interdependence (vital and income distances have increased).
Exclusion	The generation of inequalities due to the selective restrictions that certain groups place on others' access to resources and opportunities.
Hierarchisation	Generation of inequalities due to the institutionalisation of positions of superiority or inferiority in formal organisations. Unequal recognition and respect generates existential inequality.

Source: Therborn, 2006; Costa, 2012a; Costa, 2012b.

Table 4. Mechanisms of Equality

Catching-up	Covering processes of systemic change, equalisation of opportunities, compensatory policies and affirmative action.
Inclusion	Rule of law, citizenship, public services, migration possibilities, human rights.
Compression	Shortening institutional and organisational hierarchies, involving training processes.
Empowerment	Organisational democratisation, associations.
Redistribution	Welfare state, progressive taxation, social policies, mutualism

Source: Therborn, 2006; Costa, 2012a; Costa, 2012b.

With regard to the social bases of inequality, Tilly (2005) highlights the historical importance of unequal distribution of resources or unequal control of means of action, such as labour (skilled and organised labour), animals (used for food and production), land (including the natural resources located on it) and machines (used in the conversion of raw materials, the production of goods and services, and transport), but also the means of coercion (weapons, specialists in violence) and social bonding institutions (from kinship networks to religious

sects, trade diasporas and so on) (Tilly, 2005; Costa, 2012b). In addition to these social bases of inequality, it is important to emphasise the crucial importance today of unequal ownership, access and control of financial capital, information, the media and scientific and technological knowledge. These factors, which have been decisive as the social bases of inequalities in the contemporary world on a global scale, will probably become increasingly important in the immediate future (Tilly, 2005; Costa, 2012b).

As for the social mechanisms that explain inequalities, Tilly (2005) focuses, above all, on “exploitation mechanisms” (a relationship of interconnection between social agents, with an asymmetrical appropriation of the results of productive endeavours), “opportunity closure mechanisms” (with the exclusion of more or less vast groups of people by others, and the consequent reproduction of social barriers) and “selection-distribution mechanisms” (Tilly, 2005; Costa, 2012b). Various explanatory factors can be mobilised to analyse the current situations and dynamics of inequality on a global scale: global history (international interactions and the sedimentation, institutionalisation and knock-on effects they bequeath), global imbrications (between states and nations, on the one hand, and transnational movements and organisations, on the other) and global flows (of people, capital, goods and information) (Therborn, 2006; Costa, 2012a).

#### *Social inequalities and social (in)justice*

When social inequalities are analysed, not only are situations described, but valuations are also called for. This observation raises several questions that can be approached from two complementary levels. One has to do with the value orientations of those who undertake analyses of social inequalities from different points of view intrinsic to the various social sciences; the other has to do with the value systems of the societies in which inequalities are analysed (Costa, 2012b). Analyses of social inequalities are crossed by this relationship between cognitive and evaluative parameters. The issue of which social differences can or should be considered social inequalities has often been answered in terms of social justice (Rawls, 1971; Therborn, 2006; Lahire, 2008; Fraser, 2008; Sen, 2009; Dubet, 2010; Costa, 2012b).

We can consider whether social inequalities are differences deemed to be unfair (Therborn, 2006). Several meanings are generally associated with the notion of social injustice: the violation of a norm of equity; excessive inequality, severely limiting the life chances of the most disadvantaged; and something socially perceived as undeserved (Therborn, 2006; Costa, 2012b). However, from a liberal perspective, social and economic inequalities can be admitted and accepted subject to positions being open to all, in conditions of equal opportunities, and greater benefit for the most disadvantaged members of society. As Rawls (1971) sustains, “[...] all primary social goods – freedoms and opportunities, income and wealth, and the foundations of self-respect – should be distributed equally, unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured” (p. 303). However, for Amartya Sen (2009), there are, on the one hand, a multitude of dimensions and situations in which inequalities in capabilities have relevant consequences of social injustice and, on the other hand, efforts to reduce inequalities in capabilities meet a fundamental objective of social justice (Sen, 2009; Costa, 2012b). For Sen (2009), rather than trying to abstractly design the ideal

institutions of a just society, it is important to understand the multiple situations of concrete social injustice, associated with various specific forms of inequality, and to try to mitigate, correct or even eliminate them (Sen, 2009; Costa, 2012b).

Three central types of injustice coexist in contemporary societies: economic, cultural and political. Various strategies have been developed to address and combat these social injustices (Fraser, 2008). In the face of socio-economic injustices, which cause distributive injustices, redistribution policies have been advocated and developed, such as progressive taxes, labour legislation, social security, public education and public health services (Fraser, 2008). To address sociocultural injustices – injustices of recognition, namely deficient, stigmatising recognition of status or identity – policies have been developed to acknowledge difference, or the right to difference, involving processes of changing cultural sensibilities, social movements, changes to the legislative framework and public policies of “affirmative action” (Fraser, 2008). In the face of new socio-political injustices, injustices of representation – which include the unfair political representation of certain social categories (e.g. gender and region) in the various instances of nation-states – focus on limitations to the framework of people, groups, categories and populations (e.g. foreigners, migrants and refugees) in the various instances of nation-states, in national or global spheres of belonging and in instances of defining rules of relationship on a global scale – the politics of representation, which refer to defining spheres of inclusion for social actors, taking these social actors into account in national and supranational decision-making bodies, access to redistribution policies and recognition policies – have been favoured by non-governmental organisations of a transnational nature, globalised social movements and global regulatory or governance institutions (Fraser, 2008; Costa, 2012b).

## Conclusion

Differences are transformed into inequalities through the socially constructed reading of these characteristics, which potentially contributes to the structuring of existing and new inequalities (Costa, 2019). As Cunha and Durand (2016) state, “What is at stake is not the naturalness of differences, but almost always the naturalisation of social inequalities as a way of legitimising and perpetuating them (p. 185). Instead of unreflectively measuring the distance between social groups, social classes or social categories, automatically converting all differences into inequalities, social scientists should, first and foremost, look at the genesis of these collective beliefs, the processes of legitimisation, de-legitimation or re-legitimation of different types of goods, activities or knowledge, and, in essence, the struggles over the social definition of “what matters”, “what has value”, in short, what is a “capital” (p. 3) in the eyes of the majority (Lahire, 2008).

The distinction between social differences and social inequalities is fundamental to understanding, in an interdisciplinary logic (Serpa et al., 2017), on the one hand, the social mechanisms that create and perpetuate inequalities and, on the other hand, the public policies that need to be implemented to mitigate inequalities and maximise the value of difference in harmony with the value of equality. The concept of social justice as equality

of conditions refers directly to the “[...] places that organise the social structure” (Dubet, 2010, p. 9). In this conception, what is contested are not the inequalities of situations, structural asymmetries or functional hierarchies, but rather the privileges of some and the discrimination against many others (Costa, 2012b, pp.102-103).

It is important to encourage an increase in social justice in contemporary societies, combining policies inspired by both the concept of equality of place and equality of opportunity, seeking to minimise the undesirable effects of both. However, given the seriousness of the problems of social injustice linked to structural inequalities, it is pivotal to prioritise policies more directly focused on promoting equal situations (Dubet, 2010).

## Notes

This work is financed by national funds through FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., within the scope of the project “UIDB / 04647/2020” of CICS.NOVA – Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences.

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## Exploring The Visual Literacy Parameters in English Elementary Textbooks by The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture

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**Abstract:** This research discusses the close relationship between visual literacy, the ability to read, understand, and create visual texts - and elementary school books, particularly children's picture books. It aims to explore the visual literacy parameters in English elementary textbooks published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. In comprehension and retention, visual content embedded in school textbooks serves as a powerful tool to enhance student understanding. This research uses the descriptive qualitative method and visual literacy paradigm by Maria Avgerinou. The research object of this study is English digital schoolbooks for an elementary level which can be accessed through <https://buku.kemdikbud.go.id/> by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. The results of this study found that visual perception affects the learning process, concept formation, and problem-solving ability, thus contributing to critical thinking skills. Thus, the combination of illustrations and images in English learning books for elementary students develops students' visual literacy. The findings will contribute valuable insights to inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers about the current state of visual content in education materials.

**Keywords:** English Textbooks; Indonesian; Visual Literacy

**Citation:** Nugroho, R.S., & Widiatmojo, R. (2024). Exploring The Visual Literacy Parameters in English Elementary Textbooks by The Indonesian Ministry Of Education and Culture. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1631-1641), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Gaining proficiency in visual literacy is essential in the information-saturated era, where visual communication is becoming more important. This is especially true for those studying English as a foreign language (EFL), since images can help explain concepts and words that they are unfamiliar with. This move toward the visual is evident in many sectors. While written words on paper used to be our primary form of communication, text combined with still or moving visuals seen on progressively smaller screens is rapidly taking its place (Goldstein, 2016). Visual literacy training ensures that elementary students can engage with visual information



successfully, and it enhances recall, comprehension, and inferential understanding (Golding & Verrier, 2021). Visual literacy has been a prominent aspect in language teaching.

Visual literacy is defined as the learned ability to interpret visual messages accurately and to create such messages, paralleling reading and writing in print literacy (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011). Visual literacy has been always regarded as an important literacy ability for 21<sup>st</sup> century students in the digital age. The current generation, who were born in the “bain d’images” (Avgerinou, 2009), is familiar with visual culture but lacks sophisticated visual literacy abilities, like how listening to an iPod does not teach critical analysis or music creation. Because of that matter, students should be taught and developed in visual literacy abilities (Wang, 2021). It marks the time to stop relying solely on verbal literacy for teaching and assessment in schools.

Visual literacy is integrated into English Curricula in several countries such as Australia, Sweden, Canada, Singapore, and New Zealand (Callow, 2020). The Indonesian curriculum for learning English makes no formal mention of visual literacy as separate topic. In contrast, the Indonesian English curriculum focuses on communicative development of the four language abilities (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) (Sulistyaningrum & Sumarni, 2023). In other words, visual literacy is emphasized as a part of a broader educational framework (Prameswari et al., 2023). Visuals can be effective aids for this, offering context and assisting comprehension, particularly for young learners in learning EFL.

The combination of visual and text helps students increase their visual literacy skills by providing a multi-dimensional approach to learning. The combination of visual and text interplay is important in visual literacy as learners are most able to build connections between verbal and visual representations when text and illustrations are actively held in memory at the same time (Avgerinou & Pette rsson, 2011). Visual representations can stimulate students’ cognitive processes to be able to analyze visuals and catch students’ attention (Prameswari et al., 2023). Thus, it will make them understand the idea easier. Effective usage of the visual work will communicate the message, especially in the learning process of EFL.

The combination of visual and text interplay in visual literacy as learners are most able to build connections between verbal and visual representations when text and illustrations are actively held in memory at the same time (Avgerinou, 2009). This can enhance the interpretation and understanding of visual messages and aid in effective visual communication in education. Martinec and Salway (2005) have studied the relationship between images and text in various media. The combination of images and text allows for the integration of visual and verbal elements, enhancing the overall communication experience and making the content more engaging and impactful (Martinec & Salway, 2005). Different levels of image-text relations have been explored and it provides a system for analyzing these relations in different genres and media types.

To develop visual literacy in elementary students, they are expected to study textbooks' images that interact with texts in diverse ways to build visual literacy. An examination of image-text relation is consequently required since it is unclear how texts and images interact to produce meaning in the English textbooks in Indonesia.

However, not many studies follow this approach. In Indonesian senior high school of English textbooks, visual images show no significant power discrepancy between images and texts, indicating that visual images could enhance students' engagement (Elmiana, 2019). The aim of visual literacy is to increase people's ability to think and analyze (Widiatmojo, 2020). Other studies examined the second language acquisition aspect of English textbooks (Syairofi et al., 2022). Few academic articles from Indonesia have been published on visual literacy topic examine the visual images in EFL textbooks. None provides a thorough examination of the relationships between images and text, and the visual literacy parameters on the EFL elementary textbooks. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the visual literacy parameters in English elementary textbooks published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture.

## Method

The study employs a qualitative research methodology using the visual literacy paradigm by Maria Avgerinou and Martinec and Salway's model of image-text relation. The data collection was conducted from the official website of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (<https://buku.kemdikbud.go.id/>). As a sample, the English textbooks were chosen from Grades 1, 2, and 3 because they were considered as early level of elementary schools and early level of acquiring English. The series of English textbooks is entitled "Student's Book: My Next Word". All the images in combination with language are selected from the sections of vocabulary, conversation, and exercise in elementary English textbooks.

After the textbooks were collected, the pictures within the book were categorized into several models of image-text relation by Martinec & Salway (2005). The models are divided into two categories, relative status relation (image and text independent, image and text dependent, image subordinate to text, text subordinate to image) and logico-semantic relations (elaboration, extension, enhancement, locution, and idea). Data analysis includes both descriptive tables of frequency and percentage and text analysis of image-text relations.

## Results

In Elementary English Textbooks the image-text relation is found more equal (70.97%) than unequal (29.03%) in status. The equal relation is shown from the dependency degree of image and text, while the unequal relation is shown from the subordination degree of image and text. From Table 1, it is shown that of 186 cases of image and text combinations, a majority (59.68%) shows image and text dependent, and image and text independent is found the least frequent (11.29%). In addition, the higher the grade, the more image subordinate to text.

Table 1. Image-Text Relative Status Relation in Elementary English Textbooks

Grade	Image & Text Independent	Image & Text Dependent	Image Subordinate to Text	Text Subordinate to Image	Total
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1	11	34	19	5	69
2	3	39	9	1	52
3	7	38	4	16	65
Total	21	111	32	22	186
Percentage (%)	11.29	59.68	17.20	11.83	100

Most images are related to only a part of the text. It indicates that images are applied to support the text and help the students to illustrate ideas or concepts. Figure 1 shows an example from image and text complementary. It shows an image of explaining a giraffe’s body parts with a text pointing to the body part. It shows how the text forms a meaningful exercise for the students to match the text and the image. Figure 2 shows an example of image and text independent. It shows pictures of caterpillars which their body length symbolizes the word length of days’ names. The text is not solely conveyed through the picture nor the colors. In this way, it illustrates how the text and images co-contribute to an understanding of the days’ names.

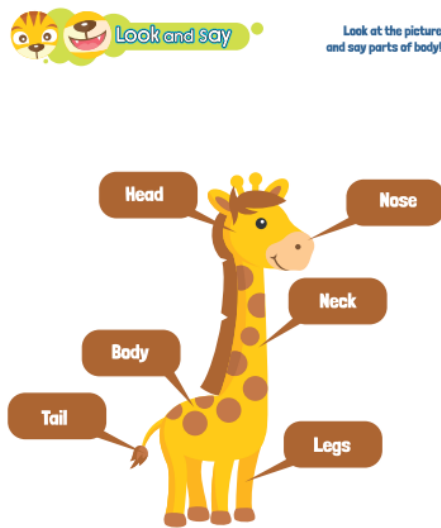


Figure 1. Image & text complementary

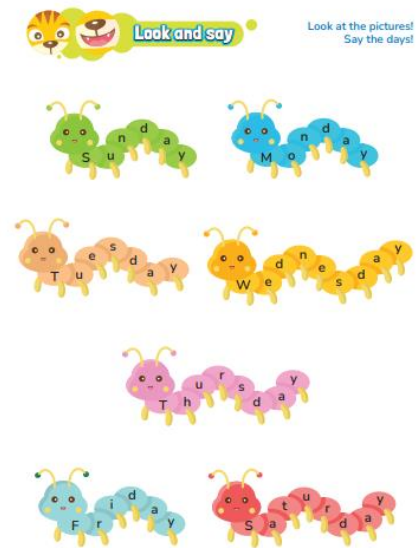


Figure 2. Image & Text Independent

Figure 3 shows how text is subordinate to images. It shows a picture of students' activity in a school. Students are expected to know the context by the richness of visual aspects in the picture. The text only encourages the students to look at the picture and describe it with their understanding. Thus, the use of text subordinate to images is to encourage students to be more engaged in EFL learning process, such as speaking or writing. Figure 4 shows how images are subordinate to text. It is an evaluation sheet which the students are asked to fill out. The images are emojis to explain their feelings on the learning process, while the text describes the aspects of assessment's evaluation.

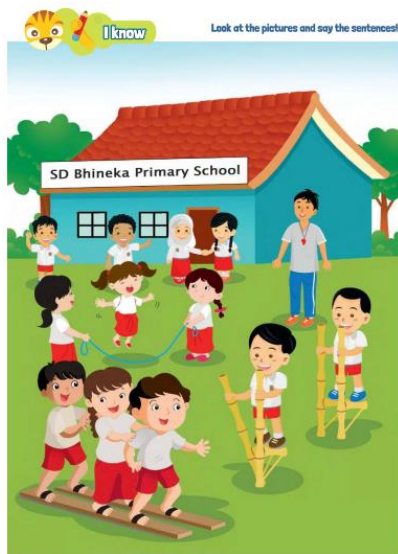


Figure 3. Text subordinate to image

Refleksi Peserta Didik

Saya senang				
1.	Mengenal likes dan doesn't like.			
2.	Mengetahui apa yang disukai dan yang tidak disukai teman.			
3.	Mengetahui apa yang disukai dan yang tidak disukai orang tua.			

Saya bisa				
1.	Menyebutkan likes dan doesn't like.			
2.	Merespons teks tulis menggunakan likes dan doesn't like.			

Figure 4. Image subordinate to text

The image and text logico-semantic relations in elementary English textbooks is shown in Table 2. From 186 cases found in the textbooks, it shows elaboration relation (38.71%) as the most frequent, followed by extension relation (23.65%), locution projection (22.58%), enhancement relation (14.52%), and idea projection (0.54%).

Table 2. Image-Text Logico-Semantics Relations in Elementary English Textbooks

Grade	Elaboration	Extension	Enhancement	Locution	Idea	Total
1	23	14	6	26	0	69
2	24	14	9	5	0	52
3	25	16	12	11	1	65
Total	72	44	27	42	1	186
Percentage (%)	38.71	23.65	14.52	22.58	0.54	100

Elaboration refers to the image and text relation which either one of them adds more detailed but not always new information to the other. Figure 5 shows the example of it, and it illustrates the use of English verbs where visual images explain the action. Students are asked to complete the sentence in which it has gained detailed information from the image. Extension refers to the image and text relation which either one of them provides new information for the other.

Figure 6 shows an example of it, and it displays new vocabularies for students in EFL learning process. The images represent the new vocabulary.

Figure 7 shows an example of enhancement. Enhancement happens when one word or image benefits the other in a contextual way due to a difference in time, location, purpose, or cause. In the English elementary textbooks,

enhancement occurs when there are series of description of images in the context of the name and adjective that usually follow. In this way, students are expected to be able to describe an animal the way it is illustrated in the books.

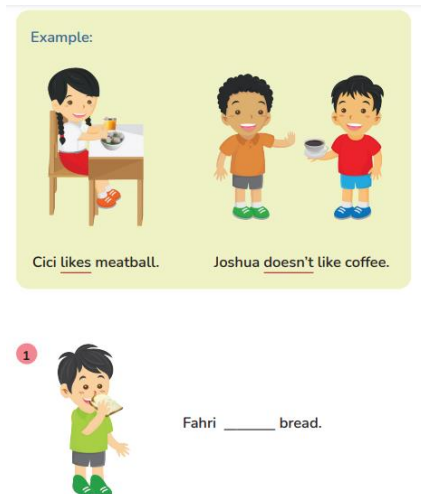


Figure 5. Elaboration



Figure 6. Extension



Figure 7. Enhancement



Figure 8. Locution

Figure 8 shows an example of one of projection types, locution. Locution refers to the exact wording quoted. In the books, Figure 8 illustrates how a picture of students greet in English and it is expected to be followed by the students. Another type of projection, idea, is shown in Figure 9. It illustrates the wording projection that appears in the speech bubble. The meaning of projected wording is illustrated in the right bubble. The bubbles serve as a model for understanding the context of the illustrated conversation.

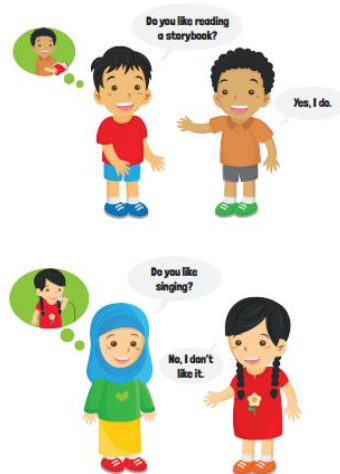


Figure 9. Idea

## Discussion

As pointed out by Avgerinou (2009) today's children live in visual culture which influences enormously our perception of self and the surrounding world, attitudes, beliefs, values, and general lifestyle. Visual message has established a visual vocabulary before a verbal one, and it has learnt to deal with the complexity and subtlety of visual communication. Viewing is more than just seeing with eyes; it is a sensory perception. Viewing is a cognitive skill to decode and encode visual components that can be cultivated and improved via training (Wang, 2021). The Indonesian curriculum in teaching EFL identifies viewing as a component of linguistic competence, one of four basic competencies to cultivate (along with cultural awareness, reasoning capacity, and learning ability). The analysis uses Avgerinou's visual literacy aspects such as visual language, visual learning, and visual perception.

Visual language is a system of communication that uses visual elements including images, symbols, and gestures to transmit meaning and information (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011). Visual images are powerful tools for building students' knowledge of the real world, which cannot be produced through classroom activities alone (Elmiana, 2019). Visual images in EFL textbooks depict places, situations, and personalities that help students to learn about the actual world and provide chances for students to develop their grasp of the target language, culture, and worldview. In the context of Indonesian EFL textbooks, the students can understand the new vocabularies through provided images.

Furthermore, the series of images construct a mini scenario that reflects the real world. Thus, the images help the students understand how to practice in a certain social context. Specific gestures, such as a smiling face, serve as a nonverbal communication bridge to teach children to smile habitually. Smiles also reflect cheerfulness, happiness and harmony. Other visual languages such as skin color and hair type also reflect the



Ministry of Education and Culture's efforts to teach diversity to elementary school children. Differences in skin color and hair types appear to be united by smiles and eye gaze that imply enthusiasm and cheerfulness.

Although diversity is taught and implied in visual language, the Ministry of Education and Culture should also take the opportunity to educate elementary school children about colleagues with disabilities. The visualization of disabled friends living in harmony with other friends, will be a trigger to do good and not be picky in making friends. At some point, this could potentially raise awareness not to bully friends. This is an implementation of visual learning.

Through the use of visual stimuli like pictures, characters, diagrams, and films, students can acquire, process, and retain information more efficiently through the cognitive process of visual learning (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011). Understanding difficult concepts and comprehension and memory retention can be improved through visual learning. Visual learning can be incorporated by teachers into real-world learning situations (Guo et al., 2018). It is important to emphasize to students that visual aids frequently convey information that is not found in text and are not redundant. Less proficient readers will probably benefit differently from modeling and training in these areas because they frequently do not come up with complex methods on their own.

Visual perception is the process by which the brain interprets and organizes visual information acquired from the eyes (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011). It requires the capacity to detect, evaluate, and comprehend visual inputs such as shapes, colors, patterns, and spatial relationships. Previous research has highlighted the importance of initial education as a period in which an individual's intellectual characteristics are developed and as the first step in preparing for primary education, in which the child is provided with knowledge and the formation of capacities, abilities, and personality qualities (Baldeón et al., 2022).

On the other hand, visual compositions that present social functions such as helping, reading, cleaning and so on, should be emphasized more in each theme. Indeed, the complexity in digesting meaning occurs when an image presentation has various purposes. But with the strength that visual language is a universal language, there is nothing wrong with the Ministry of Education and Culture being more sensitive in embedding visuals with a positive tone, so that at the end of class all students have the potential to digest perceptions that are at least uniform, although not the same. This can be the basis for students who have critical thinking skills.

The study integrates Martinec and Salway's (2005) concept of image-text relation, which offers a framework delineating the status and logico-semantic connections between images and text. Avgerinou and Pettersson's (2011) examination of verbal and verbal-visual logico-semantic relations in images within the textbooks extend this framework to analyze the nuanced interactions between images and text within students' English textbooks. Textbooks should incorporate sound, print, and image elements in unique ways. Various aspects in communication should be used as teaching tools for visual literacy, and students should have access to many resources for skill development. These resources should include time for in-depth analysis of visual and verbal texts and discussions on how various modes interact to co-create meaning.



Through visual learning and visual perception, students are encouraged to directly think critically in processing all the information in the picture. Why on page 6, the picture presented is a curly-haired boy with a slightly dark skin color, why many students are together doing one activity, why the teacher presented is more Mrs. Teacher than Mr. Teacher, or why the giraffe is smiling. Of course, this kind of stimulation will liven up the learning atmosphere in the classroom. And it is just expected that there will be questions from students about small aspects of the picture, but they can potentially have a big impact on the discussion in class. On the one hand, the variety of images is expected to provoke students' curiosity to ask questions. On the other hand, it is expected to arouse the courage of students to answer the curiosity of other students, resulting in an exchange of perceptions. Critical thinking can start from small things like this.

The Ministry of Education and Culture's efforts to make textbooks more "alive" certainly need to be appreciated. The challenge is not only in the quality of the visuals presented, but also the teachers must be more proactive in deciphering the message in a picture. The role of the teacher in honing students' critical skills is crucial, considering that the conditions on the ground in Indonesia with its unique demographics will never have the same standards. Therefore, the presence of picture textbooks requires teachers to learn to explore all possible meanings that will emerge as a form of visual literacy, regardless of whether the teacher teaches in private or public schools.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the image-text relations in Indonesian elementary English textbooks. The parameters used in the analysis cover visual language, visual learning, and visual perception. The findings reveal that visuals are primarily used to complement and support the text (elaboration relation, 38.71%), often by illustrating vocabulary or concepts. However, visuals can also present new information (extension relation, 23.65%) and enhance the understanding of the written text (enhancement relation, 14.52%) by providing context. Importantly, the analysis demonstrates a clear trend towards a more equal image-text relationship (image and text complementary, 59.68%) in lower grades, with visuals becoming increasingly subordinate to text (image subordinate to text, 17.2%) in higher grades.

These findings highlight the crucial role visuals play in EFL learning for young learners. Students' visual literacy skills and support the development of new language skills by bridging the gap between unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts. The textbook design, with a dominance of equal and complementary image-text relations, aligns well with the emphasis on viewing as a component of EFL learning in the Indonesian curriculum. This approach fosters visual learning, visual perception, and ultimately, a deeper understanding of the target language and the world it represents. In other words, visual literacy can help students to increase their ability to think and analyze critically.

The study emphasizes the importance of teachers effectively utilizing the interplay between visuals and text. By

engaging students in analyzing visuals and discussing how they co-create meaning with the written text, educators can further enhance the effectiveness of EFL textbooks and promote the development of both visual literacy and language skills in their students.

## Recommendations

Further research should concern on the guided classroom activity and interactivity that help students in visual learning process. It should be the concern on how the teacher's guide the students in visual learning process. Another concern should be in other subjects' textbooks. As in science studies or social studies, other visual aspects like diagrams and graphs are applied to elementary textbooks.

## Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to Binus University and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture for helping us in conducting this study.

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## The Impact of Workplace Bullying on Job Satisfaction and Psychological Distress among Bank Employees

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**Abstract:** Securing employment is a fundamental aspect of individuals' economic well-being. Those involved in the workforce invariably navigate a work environment that can exert distinct impacts on each individual. One potential issue in the workplace is the occurrence of workplace bullying, which can affect the psychological well-being of its victims. Individuals thriving in a positive work environment typically exhibit job satisfaction and a lack of psychological distress. This research aims to investigate the influence of workplace bullying on job satisfaction and psychological distress among Bank X employees in Denpasar City. Employing a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, the study involved a sample of 93 individuals selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), and the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10). Data analysis utilized the stepwise linear regression technique. Results indicate that workplace bullying (sig. = 0.021,  $p < 0.05$ ) and tenure (0.017,  $p < 0.05$ ) significantly impact job satisfaction. Furthermore, workplace bullying (sig. = 0.000,  $p < 0.05$ ) and gender (sig. = 0.003,  $p < 0.05$ ) have a significant influence on psychological distress.

**Keywords:** Workplace bullying, Job Satisfaction, Psychological distress

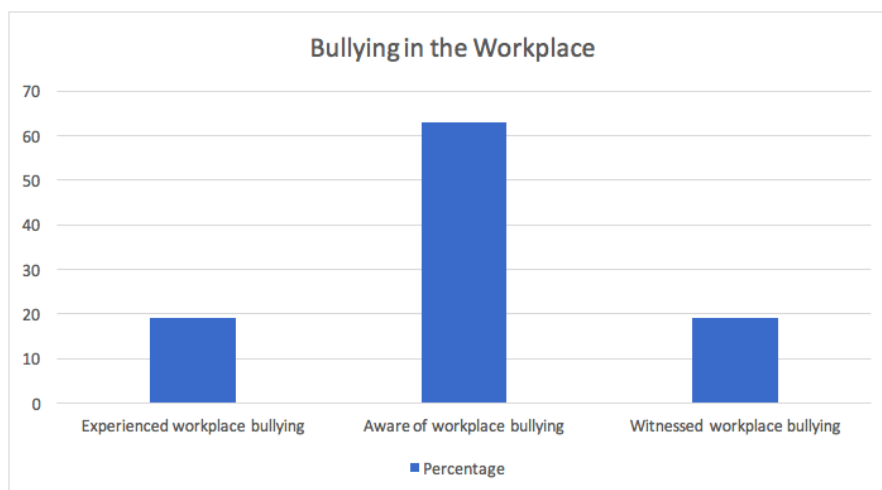
**Citation:** Wulandari, P. D., Wulanyani, N. M. S., Bakta, I. M., & Pramatha, C. (2024). The impact of workplace bullying on job satisfaction and psychological distress among bank employees. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1642-1649), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

**Introduction**

Work can be considered one of the primary necessities for most individuals. In today's egalitarian era, the meaning of work has undergone a significant shift. Traditionally associated with men, work is now equally pursued by women. Work represents an individual's endeavor to fulfill their life's needs, encompassing both physical and social dimensions. The ability to meet these needs through work contributes to a positive psychological impact on the individual.

As individuals engage in their professional activities, they inevitably encounter various challenges within their work environments. One persistent organizational problem that continues to plague workplaces today is workplace bullying. Workplace violence or "bullying" has become a significant organizational phenomenon that has garnered widespread attention from diverse groups, including researchers, educators, protective organizations, and community leaders (Rudi, 2010).

Namie (2003) defines workplace bullying as the perpetrators' need to control others and engage in deliberate, repeated, and harmful interpersonal hostility that can jeopardize the health and economic status of the targeted individual. Workplace bullying is described as recurrent and systematic behavior and activities by superiors or colleagues that can have a negative impact on the victim (Stale, et al., 2018). Workplace bullying can happen to anyone. Workplace bullying is classified into three categories: 1) downwards bullying (bullying by managers to subordinates); 2) horizontal bullying (bullying by one or more colleagues to those in the same position or job); and 3) upward bullying (subordinates bullying individuals in higher managerial positions) (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013).



As illustrated in Figure 1, 19% of Americans have experienced workplace bullying, another 19% have witnessed workplace bullying, and 63% are aware of workplace bullying (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2017). The phenomenon of bullying is not limited to developed countries but also occurs in developing countries like Indonesia. According to a study conducted by Gunawan, Prihanto, & Yuwanto (2009) on workers in Surabaya,

workplace bullying has a negative impact on both psychological conditions and behavior. Psychological effects include feelings of anger, hurt, sadness, disappointment, loss of self-confidence, self-anger, feeling isolated, frustration at work, and fear of facing others, while behavioral effects include defensiveness, loss of work commitment, and the urge to quit one's job.

Findings from a systematic review conducted by Akter (2019) indicate a positive correlation between workplace bullying and psychological distress. One of the psychological impacts experienced by victims of workplace bullying is stress. Stress can undoubtedly lead to decreased employee productivity and even cause employees to leave their jobs. According to León & Leon (2021), 4% of workers worldwide leave their jobs due to stress.

Undoubtedly, workplace bullying can foster a sense of discomfort in the work environment and negatively impact employee job satisfaction. Employee job satisfaction is heavily influenced by the work environment. According to O'Driscoll et al. (2011), victims of workplace bullying experience higher levels of stress, lower emotional well-being, frequent absenteeism, decreased job satisfaction, and diminished work motivation.

The repercussions of workplace bullying extend beyond individuals and permeate groups and organizations as well. For groups, workplace bullying can disrupt team effectiveness and erode established group norms. At the organizational level, workplace bullying can negatively impact organizational performance and undermine the prevailing organizational culture (Samnani & Singh, 2012).

Workplace bullying is reportedly highly prevalent in the banking sector. The banking industry is claimed to have a high prevalence of workplace bullying, which negatively impacts both individuals and organizations (Xiao, et al., 2022). This can occur due to the hierarchical structure, performance-based evaluations, and intense competition within the banking industry, which can foster a climate where workplace intimidation can flourish (Gupta, et al., 2020). Based on the previously described issues, the researcher is interested in conducting a study to examine the role of workplace bullying in job satisfaction and psychological distress among employees of Bank X in Denpasar City.

## Method

The research employed a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional study design. The dependent variables in this study were job satisfaction and psychological distress, while the independent variable was workplace bullying. The research was conducted at Bank X in Denpasar City in February 2023. The population of this study was all employees of Bank X in Denpasar City. The research sample was selected using simple random sampling, resulting in 93 respondents.

The research instrument for this study uses a questionnaire adapted from the research of Erwandi, Kadir, and Lestari (2021). Workplace bullying is measured using the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R). The

NAQ-R consists of 22 items that assess bullying incidents experienced by the subject during the past 6 months at work. NAQ-R consists of 5 answer choices, namely "never", "sometimes", "every month", "every week", and "every day". The validity test shows results of 0.721 to 0.897. Meanwhile, to measure psychological distress using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10) questionnaire. K-10 consists of 10 questions about the feelings the subject has felt during the last month. Measuring job satisfaction was carried out using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) questionnaire (Spector, 1997) and was adapted by Rindyantika and Safitri (2014). The JSS scale consists of a score of 1 to 6 with categories ranging from "strongly disagree", "disagree", "somewhat disagree", "somewhat agree", "agree", and "strongly agree". The statistical test to analyze the effect of workplace bullying on job satisfaction and psychological distress uses a simple linear regression test with a significance value of  $\alpha < 0.05$ .

## Results

### Linearity Test

Correlation	Indicator	F	Sig.
Job Satisfaction *	<i>Linearity</i>	4.753	.032
Workplace Bullying	<i>Deviation from Linearity</i>	1.538	.109
Psychological Distress *	<i>Linearity</i>	27.264	.000
Workplace Bullying	<i>Deviation from Linearity</i>	1.817	.044

Figure 1. Linearity Test Results

The linearity test is a test carried out to determine whether the relationship is linear or not between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The decision making method for the linearity test is with a significance  $< 0.05$ , then the relationship between the two variables is linear and vice versa, if the significance is  $> 0.05$ , then the relationship between the two variables is not linear (Priyatno, 2010). Based on table 1, it can be seen that job satisfaction with bullying in the workplace has a significance value of 0.032 and psychological pressure with bullying in the workplace has a significance value of 0.000. Based on the data above which shows (sig.  $< 0.05$ ), it can be assumed that job satisfaction with workplace bullying and psychological pressure with workplace bullying have a linear relationship.

### Regression Test

Dependent Variable	Model	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Beta		
Job Satisfaction	<i>Constant</i>	135.173		20.457	.000
	<i>Workplace Bullying</i>	.521	.213	2.084	.040



Psychological	<i>Constant</i>	1.764		.512	.610
Distress	<i>Workplace Bullying</i>	.636	.456	4.882	.000

Figure 2. Regression Test Results

Based on table 2, it shows that the sig value is  $0.004 < 0.05$  and  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Based on the basis for decision making, it can be concluded that the hypothesis in this research is that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted. This means that there is a significant influence of workplace bullying on job satisfaction and psychological distress.

#### Stepwise Test

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficient</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	t	Sig.
		B	Beta		
Job Satisfaction	<i>Workplace Bullying</i>	.576	.236	2.356	.000
	<i>Tenure</i>	.354	.244	2.438	.017
Distress Psikologis	<i>Workplace Bullying</i>	.606	.434	4.840	.000
	<i>Sex</i>	-3.490	-.271	-3.018	.003

Figure 3. Stepwise Test Results

Based on table 3, it is known that  $Sig < 0.05$ . This means that workplace bullying and work experience have a significant influence on job satisfaction. Workplace bullying will certainly affect employee job satisfaction.

## Discussion

Workplace bullying has a detrimental impact on employee job satisfaction. Based on the results of research conducted by Cakirpaloglu, Cech, & Kvintová (2018), workplace bullying causes a decrease in job satisfaction, frequent absences from work, fluctuations, decreased performance, and decreased work motivation. Apart from that, the latest research conducted by Develi and Turak (2023) shows that workplace bullying in the public sector contributes negatively to job satisfaction, which means that the higher the workplace bullying, the lower the level of job satisfaction. If we look at the work period, it can be seen that the work period plays a role in job satisfaction.

Workplace bullying can certainly affect the psychological condition of employees. Employees who experience bullying at work tend to have an impact on their mental condition. Samsudin, Isahak, & Rampal (2018) conducted a systematic review which stated that bullying behavior can cause individuals to experience burnout, mental strain, and undesirable psychosomatic effects. Workplace bullying also has a positive effect on employee emotional exhaustion, which means that the higher the workplace bullying

experienced, the higher the employee's emotional exhaustion (Anasori, Bayighomong, & Tanova, 2019). Individuals who experience bullying will usually experience psychological distress which will certainly cause them to become emotionally tired. This is in line with research results which say workplace bullying damages morale, increases stress, and encourages some individuals to resign from their jobs (Georgakopoulos & Kelly, 2017).

Apart from that, in table 3 it is also known that workplace bullying and gender have a significant influence on psychological distress. Women are said to experience psychological distress more often than men. Based on the results of research conducted by Bilodeau, Marchand, and Demers (2020), it is known that the level of psychological stress is higher among working women compared to working men. This is caused by women having greater exposure to stress triggers and their access to fewer resources than men (Milner et al., 2019). If it is related to workplace bullying, women are said to experience more harassment in the workplace than men (Tonini, et al., 2011), so it can be one of the causes of psychological distress.

## Conclusion

Workplace bullying is a prevalent concern in the professional environment that demands attention due to its detrimental impact on both organizations and their employees. This pervasive issue can lead to a decline in job satisfaction and significantly affect an individual's psychological well-being. Research findings have consistently demonstrated that workplace bullying exerts a substantial influence on job satisfaction and psychological distress among employees of Bank X in Denpasar City.

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## Preliminary Data from The Study Using The MRR Method of The Lepidoptera Order in Albania

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**Abstract:** Mark–Release–Recapture (MRR) techniques are widely used today and are specialized techniques to study organisms in the entire field of biology using Artline 999 XF (water-resistant marking marker) without harming individuals, which are released and recaptured again. We applied the MRR method for the Order Lepidoptera (Insecta) in the area of Drenova to estimate the population size, distribution, habitat, behavior, etc., for the species *Pseudochazara tisiphone* Brown 1980, during 2023. During this year, we catch 43 species of this type, of which 33 were women (76.7%) and 10 were men (23.2%). The captured species were marked and re-released, according to the rules of the MRR method, and out of the total number of captured individuals, eight *P. tisiphone*, species or 18 %, were re-encountered, considered to be a low frequency. We conducted sampling in 2 time intervals, where the first interval took place from July 15 to August 8, while the second interval took place from August 25 to September 12, 2023. The first time we recaptured 5 individuals and the second time we recaptured 3 individuals. From the analysis of the days and months, when we met and re-met more often individuals of *P. tisiphone*, it turns out that the frequency of meeting this type results more in Spring – Summer, than in Autumn. Based on these preliminary data, we think that in the future, we should increase the number of days in the field, to increase the chances of re-encountering individuals, and have a clearer picture to design conservation models for Lepidoptera species.

**Keywords:** Lepidoptera, Mark – Release-Recapture, Insect, Albania

**Citation:** Qirinxhi, X., Halimi, E., Paparisto, A., & Mançi, J. (2024). Preliminary data from the study using the MRR method of the Lepidoptera order in Albania. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1650-1656), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Mark-Release-Recapture (MRR) is a method for obtaining demographic information about animals, including insects (Gall 1984; Pollock et al. 1990; Sandercock 2006). Marking of animals with different marking methods dates back to 218 BC, when ornithologists first marked birds with tape (Fisher 1964). Marking insects for scientific studies began around 1920, when researchers used dyes, and stains in insect population studies (Dudley 1923). MRR studies of butterflies were first initiated in Britain and Europe in the 1930s (Brett 1936; Dowdeswell *et al.* 1940), and later in America (Whrlich 1960), or Western Australia Williams (2002). During studies using the MRR method, marking does not affect the subsequent survival of the animal (Manly 1971; Pollock *et al.* 1990; Pollock 2005). Information derived from the number of Lepidoptera captured and recaptured provides important variables such as: population size, reproduction rate, threat level, etc. Among the positive sides of the MRR method is that marking does not affect the subsequent survival of the animal (Manly 1971; Pollock *et al.* 1990; Pollock 2005).

The study of Lepidoptera in Albania has continued for several decades, with various researchers and entomologists who have contributed and continue to contribute in the discovery of butterfly species in the country. The first publications about Lepidoptera in Albania were made at the beginning of the 20th century, by foreign authors, who explored the Albanian territories of those years, continued afterwards, by foreign and local authors (Bershov, *et.al.*1993).

In June 2018, a review article was published (Cuvelier, *et.al.* 2018) with new distribution maps of the butterflies of Albania, which recorded 3 new species of butterflies in Albania also confirmed 2 species, for which there was not enough information (Verovnik R, *et.al.*2013). These study contributed in updating the status of 6 butterfly species in Albania, for which, little was known before.

These researches represent collection efforts throughout Albania, contributing to the discovery and documentation of numerous butterfly species. Today, 205 species of butterflies have been confirmed in Albania, but there are still potentially more to be found, and it is estimated that about 10 – 15 potential species can to be found, which have not yet been identified (Cuvelier *et.al.* 2023).

The study with the MRR method was carried out for the species *Pseudochazara tisiphone*. This species was discovered in the ophiolite zone of northern Pindos (Greece) by Brown (1976), and since then, has declined due to human activity (Brown, 1976). In 2017, an isolated population was found near Bulqiza (Diber), (Cuvelier et al. 2018), and in 2022, 30 km north of Bulqiza, another population was found in Lurë-Dejë National Park (Cuvelier *et al.* 2023). It is worth noting that at least 4 *Pseudochazara tisiphone* mutations are reported between Dibër district and Korça district. *Pseudochazara tisiphone* is found on stony plateaus and rocky slopes, on ophiolite substrates, with patches of loose gravel and scattered grasses from 1000 to 1700 m a.s.l (Figure 1).



Albania has a decisive role in the conservation of these butterfly populations with significant interspecific genetic variations or with their world center of gravity in this country. This also goes hand in hand with the protection of these special habitats that are prone to serious human threats (Cuvelier *et al.* 2023).

## Method

Our study was conducted throughout 2023 in the Korça Region, in the area of Drenova – National Park “Bredhi i Drenova” (DCM No. 96 dated 21.11.1966). It is a protected area of the second category (according to the classification of protected areas by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN), with a surface of 1380 Ha (Figure 1). The monitoring of this species was carried out in 2 transects of this area with a surface of 5 Ha each, according to Williams (Williams *et.al* 2018). Was also done on a daily basis in each transect between 09:30 and 12:30, starting later on cooler days (i.e. if temperatures were below 24°C), throughout the months of July – September.

Monitoring was based on days with suitable weather conditions depending on precipitation and temperature, aiming at random assessments of species (Pollock *et al.* 1990). Collection and marking of species was carried out during this period, which also coincides with the flight time of the Order Lepidoptera (Pollock 2005).

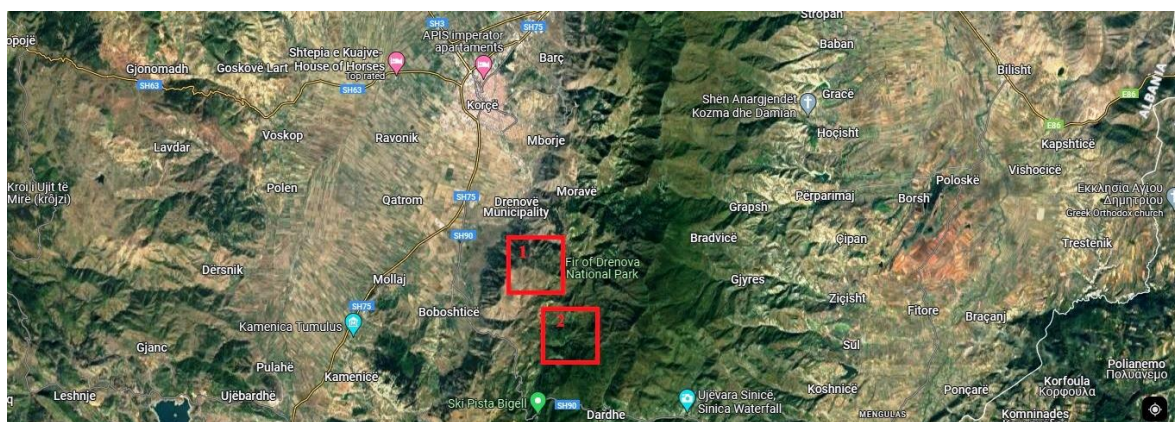


Figure 1. Map of the study area

Each transect was observed for almost 2 hours at a slow and steady pace. Unmarked individuals, as well as any previously marked individuals, were noted during monitoring (Manly 1971). In using the MRR technique, butterflies in the field were collected by aerial entomological netting. Individuals are then removed from the web (Figure 2), holding the butterfly by the flaps between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand (Morton 1982).

Individuals are passed in the left hand (the right hand is free for marking), and it is held on the thorax at the base of the lower flaps which are raised in this position, and at the base of these flaps a symbol (number /line/ dot) with gold metallic ink tip pen (Figure 2), to be recognizable (Williams *et.al.* 2002).





Figure 2. Marking of individuals of the species *P. tisiphone* (photo by © Xh. Qirinxi)

Marked insects are released back into the same field/site. Then we return to these same stations, and aim to meet again these same individuals marked by us. In each case, utmost care was taken not to damage the flats and disturb the marked individual (Gall 1984). Recaptured butterflies were then checked for the presence of the marker to differentiate from unmarked butterflies. In some cases prior to tagging, individuals were kept on ice to reduce the stress that the tagging procedure may cause (Kemp 1999).

Butterflies, which hold their wings (flats) in the closed position straight above the body, are again not disturbed by this procedure. In this case, the marking symbol from our side is visible to the naked eye, and therefore they are registered as marked individuals without the need to be recaptured. However, most of the butterflies did not hold their wings straight, so marking the underside of the hind wing requires recapturing and distinguishing any marked individual (Gall 1984).

## Results and Discussions

To test the marking procedure on Lepidoptera survival, 43 individuals were captured using the MRR (Mark–Release–Recapture) method.

The survival rate was evaluated with two parameters: one for the first day after marking and the other for the following days. This is the standard way of testing for a temporal effect of marking on subsequent survival (Gall 1984; Sandercock 2006). The butterfly species studied was *Pseudochazara tisiphone* Brown, 1980, family Nymphalidae Rafinesque, 1815, subfamily Satyrinae Boisduval, 1833.

Tabel 1. Number of individuals according to transects and sex

	<b>Transect 1</b>	<b>Transect 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
Individuals caught	18 individuals	25 i individuals	43 individuals
Males	6 individuals	4 individuals	10 individuals
Females	12 individuals	21 individuals	33 individuals

The first interval was between: July 15 and- August 8, while the second interval was for 18 days, in the period: August 25 – September 12. During the fieldwork process, 43 *P. tisiphone* species were caught with an entomological net, of which 33 females (76.7%) and 10 males (23.2%). In the period July 15 – August 8, we caught 27 individuals, of which 21 were female and 6 were male. Of the 27 that were caught the first time, there were also some recaptures. In the second period, August 25 – September 12, we caught 16 individuals, of which 12 were female and 4 were male, and here we also had some recaptures. 8 individuals were recaptured, so the recapture rate was 18%. The first time we recaptured 5 individuals and the second time we recaptured 3 individuals. Out of the 27 individuals who met for the first time, 5 of them were recaptured, 3 of whom were female and 2 were male, resulting in 18%. Out of the 16 individuals caught the second time, 3 of them were recaptured again, 2 of whom were female and 1 was male, resulting in 18%. (Williams *et al.* 2018).

The transects where the monitoring was carried out, were observed for almost 2 hours with slow and steady walking. In the first transect, 18 individuals were caught, of which 12 were females and 6 males, and in the second transect, 25 individuals were caught, of which 21 were females and 4 were males (Table 1, Figure 3). After the capturing, the species were marked with an identification mark on the lower part of the front wing of the hind wings. During the marking process, we also had 2 dead individuals.

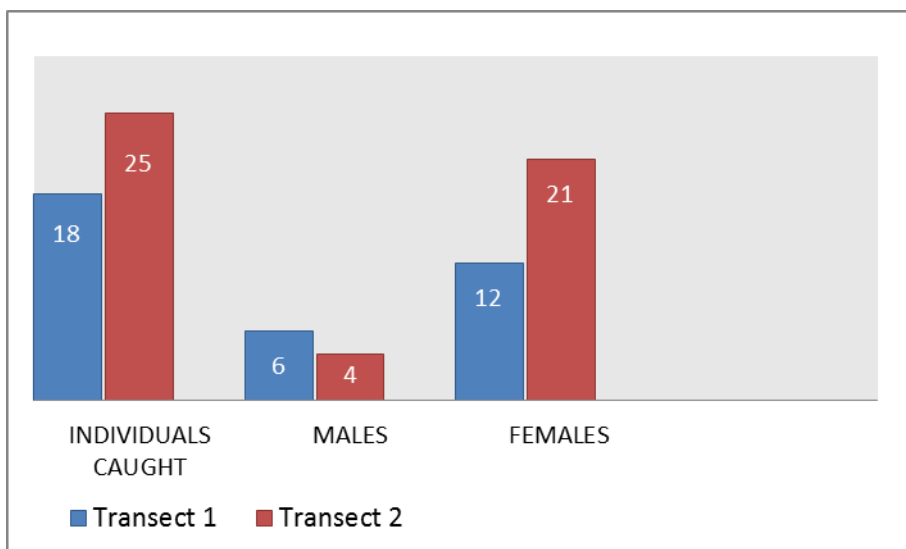


Figure 3. Number of individuals according to transects and sex

## Conclusion

The analysis of our data aims to design a conservation model for Lepidoptera species, starting from the study with the MRR method of the *P. tisiphone* species, which is used to estimate the size of a population where it would be impractical to count each individual.

This study focuses on the use of the Mark-Release-Recapture method, increasing the number of studies, although there are biases with this method, it is one of the most acceptable methods, comparing it to other commercial methods.

Our results provide information on the diversity of the Order Lepidoptera, present in the area of Korca, (“Bredhi i Drenova” National Park), during the year 2023. In this study, the MRR method was used, where the total number of captured individuals is 43 type *P. tisiphone* of which 33 females (76.7%) and 10 males (23.2%). The highest ratio results for females of the *P. tisiphone* species. The lower number for males is thought to be a result of the effect of the emasculation of male individuals during the time interval between our meeting and re-encountering the species.

From the analysis of *P. tisiphone* individuals that we met and re-met more often, we conclude that the frequency of this species results more in Spring – Summer than in Autumn.

*P. tisiphone* marked and released, can be easily identified – as the identifying metallic paint markings are on the upper surface of the exposed hindwings, they are visible when the butterfly is in a normal perched position and in many cases this avoids the need to recapture the individual.

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## Descriptive Qualitative Research on Awareness of Adequate Accommodation for Foreign Workers in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** Various factors affect labour mobility. It not only benefits the employees, but it also helps employers who need more local workers. Therefore, in addition to earning a wage by working in a foreign country, they also need a place to live. According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), every individual is entitled to adequate housing, including foreign workers. However, inadequate housing for migrant workers has been a feature of the global housing crisis for years, including in Malaysia. Many reports and media coverage mention the issue of neglect of workers' rights and the issue of non-compliance with the act created when employers provide accommodation for their workers. The issue of adequate housing involves numerous parties, including workers, recruiting agents, employers, and government authorities. This study employs descriptive qualitative research methodology, utilising interview and focus group discussion techniques to collect data pertaining to the concept of "awareness of adequate accommodation". The findings of this study lead to an insufficient level of awareness about the rights of each individual, including foreign workers, to ensure that the house and accommodation they live in are comfortable and appropriate. This study will contribute ideas to all parties so that appropriate action can be taken to increase awareness about safeguarding workers' rights and complying with the act related to the provision of housing and worker facilities in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Descriptive, qualitative, awareness, accommodation, foreign workers

**Citation:** Suhaida M.A., (2024). Descriptive qualitative research on awareness of adequate accommodation for foreign workers in Malaysia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1657-1667), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In 2019, there were 169 million international migrant workers worldwide, and they constituted 4.9 per cent of the global labour force in the destination countries. Males comprised 58.5% and women 41.5% of all foreign migrants. Conversely, the majority of migrants moved from low—and middle-income to high-income countries. Approximately 10% of them were between 15 and 24 years old, and the services sector was the main employer (Migration Data Portal, 2024).

The ability of workers to shift between various jobs, occupations, industries, or geographical areas in pursuit of

employment opportunities is referred to as labour mobility (McConnell et al., 2021). International mobility and migration have become a vital feature of globalization and an important source of economic growth. Migrants are known to have participated in creating prosperity and wealth in their host countries, as well as assisting development and poverty reduction efforts in their countries of origin through remittances. Migrants have the option to work where they find satisfying and think it is worthwhile in order to support their families and themselves. Employers who are facing a labour shortage might also benefit from the labour movement in order to increase the quantity of labour required to ensure a smooth production process (Borjas, 1989). This concept of labour mobility is a fundamental aspect of a dynamic and adaptable labour market.

Workers who live distant from their families require a place or accommodation to rest and meet their necessities. Because they work outside of their home countries or regions, firms may be required to make specific arrangements for migrant workers. Concerning the right to adequate housing, Article 25 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including foods, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services" (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

The Malaysian law that regulates the accommodation of workers has been passed as early as the 60s is the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1966. The Act was amended in 1990 and is known as the Employees' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 (Act 446). This act sets out minimum standards for housing and amenities that employers must comply with for their employees who are provided with accommodation as part of their employment (Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia, 2024). The purpose of Act 446 is to safeguard the welfare of employees and promote decent living standards. It helps to prevent exploitation and ensures that employees are provided with necessities for a comfortable living environment.

However, many non-compliances with Act 446 have been recorded. Among the cases related to the accommodation of foreign workers are related to the placement of too many people in one residence, exceeding the required number (Suratman et al., 2019; Low, 2021; ILO, 2022a). In addition to overcrowding, the cleanliness of living quarters is also a problem, and this exposes migrant workers to infectious diseases that can spread to others (Wahab, 2020; The Star, 2022). In addition, the media also reported many cases related to the non-compliance of employers who provide accommodation for foreign workers (The Star, 2020, 2021; Sinar Harian, 2021; Bernama, 2022, 2023; Malay Mail, 2022).

The point is, with regulations and guidelines at the global and national levels, why is it still feasible to ignore the right of foreign workers to have an adequate living condition? Why are there parties who do not see these foreign workers as other human beings who need a comfortable place to live and emphasize the aspect of health care? Thus, this study aims to qualitatively review the awareness related to the right to have accommodation that is appropriate, comfortable, safe and healthy for foreign workers. The concept of awareness that will be discussed covers awareness among workers, recruiting agents, employers and the government related to the



management of foreign workers in Malaysia.

## Literature Review

### Adequate housing

Adequate housing is a crucial component of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, it is addressed under Goal 11: "Sustainable Cities and Communities" (United Nations, 2024). Under Goal 11, Target 11.1 explicitly focuses on ensuring access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services, as well as upgrading slums by 2030. The SDGs recognize the importance of ensuring access to safe, affordable, and adequate housing for all, as it is essential for people's well-being, dignity, and overall quality of life.

Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This means that the International human rights law recognizes everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing (OHCHR, 2009). For that reason, the concept of adequate housing is often used in discussions about human rights, social justice, and sustainable development.

The characteristics of the right to adequate housing are clarified mainly in the Committee's general comments No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions. The right to adequate housing contains freedoms (OHCHR, 2009). These freedoms include (i) protection against forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction and demolition of one's home, (ii) the right to be free from arbitrary interference with one's home, privacy and family, and (iii) the right to choose one's residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement.

Besides, the right to adequate housing contains a few entitlements. These entitlements include security of tenure, housing, land and property restitution, equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing and also participation in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels (OHCHR, 2009).

The right to adequate housing can be affected by the extent to which other human rights are guaranteed. Access to housing is most at risk for those denied the right to education, work or social security. Improving housing conditions and protecting against forced evictions are often dependent on claims made by those affected. Where the rights to freedom of expression, assembly or association are not respected, the possibility for individuals and communities to advocate better living conditions is significantly reduced (OHCHR, 2009).

Accountability mechanisms are essential to guarantee that all parties fulfil their responsibilities concerning the right to adequate housing (OHCHR, 2009). Many different players at the national, regional, and global levels are involved in monitoring the human right to adequate housing. The role of the private sector and NGOs also



helps the monitoring process.

#### *Accommodation for foreign workers*

International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 97 concerning Migration for Employment requires that migrant workers are not discriminated against in the provision of housing (C097 -Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949, 1952). The convention aims to protect the rights of migrant workers by ensuring fair and ethical recruitment practices, promoting equal treatment with local workers in terms of working conditions and social security, and facilitating their return to their home countries. Thus, for countries where migrant workers are a large proportion of the workforce, they may have specific laws governing worker housing.

Accordingly, ILO Recommendation No. 115 concerning Workers' Housing gives guidance on policy, legislation and practice to the national authorities in charge of housing. It offers useful guidance on what is expected from employers who provide housing to their employees, specifying a number of housing standards. This Recommendation applies to the housing of manual and non-manual workers, including those who are self-employed and aged, retired or physically disabled persons (ILO, 1961). It also aims to ensure that workers have access to safe, healthy, and adequate housing.

Nevertheless, a press release and report by the ILO highlights that migrant worker living standards in Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, still needed more improvements to ensure decent and adequate accommodation (ILO, 2022b). Before the COVID-19 outbreak, many migrant workers in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand were living in substandard accommodation with deficits across the criteria for adequate and decent housing. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, low-wage migrant workers were at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission due to structural factors such as their economic status, working conditions, and overcrowded and poor standard accommodations that are often in deprived areas that are at higher risk of repeated outbreaks (Wahab, 2020; ILO, 2022a). These socioeconomic inequalities see migrant workers in housing and workplaces that do not permit adequate safe physical distancing.

Malaysia has had legislation on minimum standards for accommodation for workers and their families, including migrant workers, for over 50 years. The Ministry of Human Resources first introduced the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act in 1966. The 1966 Act aimed to compel employers to provide minimum standards of housing and amenities to foreign employees and local estate workers in agriculture, plantations and mining industries (Nasir et al., 2023). In 1990, the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1966 was amended to streamline the existing law as well as consolidate various other workers' accommodation provisions contained in several different laws. In July 2019, the Act amended by Parliament further extended the sectors for which it is mandatory to provide decent accommodation for migrant workers. The 2019 amendment has expanded the coverage of Act 446 to cover migrant and local workers in all sectors including the construction sector.

### *Awareness of adequate accommodation*

Awareness can be defined as knowledge that something exists or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience (Cambridge University Press, 2024). It can also be explained as knowing something, knowing that something exists and is important (Oxford University Press, 2024).

Awareness is often described as the first step in the change process and the first step in self-management (Agosti et al., 2019). Developing an adequate co-creative capability to allow for socially responsible action is of critical importance in the current climate of swift changes. Besides, within the context of globalisation, communication opportunities and challenges presented by information technologies, having awareness is very important. (Vyas et al., 2012). Besides, awareness development practices are recognised to affect not just individuals but also groups, teams and society

The concept of awareness to be explored in this study is related to the awareness of adequate accommodation for foreign workers. What awareness should be given to migrants about their rights? What awareness needs to be applied by recruiting agents and employers to ensure the provision of accommodation for employees? How is the awareness of the government and authorities to ensure that laws and regulations are obeyed?

## **Research Methodology**

This study is based on descriptive qualitative research, which aims to explore the characteristics of a phenomenon, rather than explaining the underlying causes or mechanisms. The most frequently proposed rationale for the use of descriptive approach is to provide straightforward descriptions of experiences and perceptions, particularly in areas where little is known about the topic under investigation (Doyle et al., 2020). A qualitative descriptive design is most appropriate as it recognises the subjective nature of the problem the different experiences participants have and will present the findings in a way that directly reflects or closely resembles the terminology used in the initial research question.

Qualitative descriptive studies (also known as 'exploratory studies' and 'qualitative description approaches') are relatively new in the qualitative research landscape. The design of qualitative descriptive studies evolved as a means to define aspects of qualitative research that did not resemble qualitative research designs to date despite including elements of those other study designs (Ayton, 2024). A qualitative descriptive study is an important and appropriate design for research questions that are focused on gaining insights about a poorly understood research area rather than on a specific phenomenon.

Given that this research examines the management of foreign worker housing in Malaysia, the study population comprised policymakers, employers engaged in foreign worker employment, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in foreign worker arrangements, researchers, and labour-related institutions. According to

Lawrence A. Palinkas et al. (2015), descriptive research generally uses purposive sampling as it focuses on the specific characteristics or target participants that align with research objectives and possess certain knowledge. For that reason, to identify the appropriate participants during the data collection process, the purposive sampling technique will be used.

The data collection process for this study began with three focus group discussions (FGD) and continued with a series of interviews. Two FGDs are among those involved with the provision of accommodation for foreign workers by sector: FGD group 1 for the manufacturing, servicing, and construction sectors and FGD group 2 for the plantation and agriculture sectors. FGD group 3 is among government agency officials and monitors who are responsible for the acts and regulations provided.

For each FGD, 8-10 institutions were involved in the discussion. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the data were analysed using inductive qualitative content analysis in accordance with Burnard et al. (2008). Content analysis is a research tool to identify the simplest form of word count, theme or concept. It will discover the pattern of ideas through this analysis. Each participant was given interview questions beforehand and filled out personal information and a consent form. The session is started by each moderator in the FGD group and the opportunity to speak is given to all participants.

## **Finding**

The question asked during FGD is, "What are the concerns and challenges encountered in meeting the guidelines for the provision of housing and accommodation for foreign workers?". Several themes emerged when these questions were answered by the participants. However, for this research paper, only the theme of "awareness" will be discussed.

### *Migrant worker*

As an employee, it is appropriate for each individual to know their rights in obtaining comfortable and safe accommodation. It is also appropriate for the individual to know the rules provided by each country so that their welfare is not neglected. Before migrating, in addition to employment and salary factors, they should also be aware of their needs and rights to get accommodation that meets the needs of survival. As the opinion expressed by Mr RZ, representative of the NGO "don't just think about work, they need to care about the place to live, which is also their right as an employee". The representative of employer-A also thinks that "it is necessary to give awareness to foreign workers, so that they know what is happening".

### *Recruitment agent*

According to a representative from the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), Malaysia has a system to

manage the employment of foreign workers. Applications for the employment of foreign workers are made online through the Ministry of Human Resources through the Foreign Workers Centralized Management System (FWCMS). This is an online platform developed by the Malaysian government to facilitate the registration, monitoring, and management of foreign workers in the country. The system helps to streamline the process of hiring foreign workers and ensures compliance with relevant regulations and laws.

Various information and guides are available on the website, including related to employee rights and employer responsibilities related to employee accommodation. Applications for foreign workers also can be made through a recruitment agent. As employment agents, they should have information about workers' rights in general and specifically according to the country to which foreign workers are to be supplied. Since these foreign workers come from various countries and have different educational backgrounds, it is appropriate for these foreign workers' recruitment agents to share information about adequate accommodation rights with their clients. "But most of the agents only accept money without informing the right of the workers. As a result, the welfare of workers is neglected" – Mr F., representative from MTUC.

#### *Employer*

Under Malaysian law, specifically under Act 446 (the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990), employers are responsible for providing adequate housing and amenities for their foreign workers. Under Act 446, employers are required to provide suitable housing that meets certain standards, such as adequate ventilation, lighting, and sanitation facilities. Employers are also required to ensure that the housing provided is clean, safe, and in good condition. Failure to comply with the provisions of Act 446 can result in penalties, including fines and imprisonment.

However, according to a representative from Mrs. N from the Local Authority, procedures do exist and are clear, but they do not care or pretend not to know". This attitude of not being concerned about other people's rights and lack of awareness brings a bad image to the country.

Mr RZ, a representative of the NGO is of the opinion that all employers are aware and know about Act 446, which they need to comply with. But some who deliberately take it for granted are willing to be fined. "Some have money and are willing to pay fines and compounds repeatedly". However, he added, "when asked, they say they don't know the rules, because they exchange employees who manage them, while they actually take advantage. In developed countries where the laws are clear and strict, employers can obey. But non-compliance in Malaysia is high". He emphasized that there is a high level of ignorance of human rights and welfare, including foreign workers.

Miss R, a representative of a labour-related institution, also shared her experience handling cases she went through. According to her, some foreign workers are not covered by insurance and workers' compensation. In the event of an accident or injury at work, only authorized and registered workers are compensated. "This

situation occurs because the employer's attitude of responsibility is weak, and there is no awareness of the consequences if something happens".

### *Government agencies*

On the government's side, Act 446 has been introduced since 1990. Several amendments have been made to adapt the act to current changes and needs. Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia (DoLPM) is a government agency who responsible for enforcing various labour laws and regulations in Malaysia, including Act 446 the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990. According to Mrs N, a representative from DoLPM, this department plays a crucial role in ensuring that employers comply with Act 446 by providing suitable housing and amenities for their workers, including foreign workers. They conduct inspections and enforce penalties against employers who fail to meet the minimum standards set out in the act.

DoLPM plays a crucial role in ensuring that employers comply with Act 446 by providing suitable housing and amenities for their workers, including foreign workers. The department conducts inspections and enforces penalties against employers who fail to meet the minimum standards set out in the act. Mrs N, a representative from DoLPM, said, "We not only have many new cases of non-compliance, but there are employers who have been repeatedly fined for the same offence... their sense of responsibility and awareness is indeed low."

In addition to the role of a recruitment agent, Mr. RZ, a representative from an NGO, suggested that the government could also share information and raise awareness among foreign workers about their right to obtain adequate and habitable accommodation. He mentioned that "the government or agents need to explain about workers' rights before arriving or after arriving in Malaysia."

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Access to adequate housing is recognized as a fundamental human right and as an element of the adequate standard of living. The right to adequate housing is understood as central to economic justice, recognized in the ILO's Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944 (ILO, 2022a).

Accountability concerning the poor standards of migrant worker housing requires effective enforcement. New standards have little meaning if they are not comprehensively enforced with deterrent punishment against employers, property owners/agents, and dormitory operators for breaches. Evidence suggests that problems related to housing and accommodation of foreign workers occur due to the parties involved' lack of awareness.

Awareness of an issue sometimes does not come by itself and requires a campaign to create and increase it. Research about the role of public awareness campaigns in sustainable development shows that the results of effectiveness studies generally allow one to evaluate the usefulness of public awareness campaigns in promoting

sustainable development, especially when it comes to increasing awareness and changing behaviour (Borawska, 2017).

## Acknowledgement

This research was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2022/SS06/UITM/02/45).

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## The 5M Approach in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Islamic Education

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**Abstract:** Education serves as a cornerstone in advancing civilization and fostering the development of a prosperous human capital. Aligned with the National Education Philosophy's goal of fostering a balanced and harmonious society, the pivotal role of educators becomes increasingly significant in the era of 21st-century globalization. This study endeavors to elucidate the methodologies of Islamic education in contemporary times. Furthermore, it seeks to delve into the multifaceted roles of teachers as *Murabbi* (mentors), *Mudarris* (instructors), *Muallim* (educators), *Muaddib* (nurturers), and *Mursyid* (guides) in instilling moral values within students, following the objectives of the National Education Philosophy. Employing a qualitative approach, this study undertakes a literature review and document analysis to discern trends and insights. Despite the evolving landscape of 21<sup>st</sup>-century education, which accentuates student-centered learning, the indispensable presence of teachers remains paramount. Teachers, operating under the paradigm of the 5M concept, continue to play a pivotal role in orchestrating the learning journey, ensuring holistic development and moral upbringing of learners. In essence, this study underscores the enduring significance of educators in navigating the complexities of contemporary education, particularly within the realm of Islamic pedagogy, while also highlighting their instrumental role in shaping the ethical fabric of society following the overarching aspirations of educational philosophy.

**Keywords:** education, Islamic, 5M

**Citation:** Rohana, N., A., M., Sulaiman, N., A., M., Halim, F., H., Surtahman, A., W., Razak, A., Q., A. & Rameli, M., F., P. (2024). The 5M Approach in 21st Century Islamic Education. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1668-1679), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Education is an important tool in shaping human civilization. Islamic history has proven the significance of education in the series of civilization development through the covert propagation movement in delivering knowledge to society, as well as the emphasis on education through the condition of releasing prisoners of the Battle of Badr, which required them to teach 10 children of Medina to read and write until they were proficient. The importance of education also forms the basis in the history of the existence of various human civilizations in terms of forms and patterns of life in line with changes in time, place, and customs of a society. The educational process begins from birth and continues throughout life to enable humans to gather experiences and knowledge, subsequently passing on such matters to the next generation.

Therefore, education forms the basis for reflecting attitudes and tendencies that exist within a society, where it is an essential element in the development of individuals to shape a useful and morally upright generation. This goal can be realized through the practice and application of pure values that form the core of the development of a society and nation. Neglecting education will lead to setbacks and moral decay (Ahmad Munawar & Noranizah, 2012)

## Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study, and the research design is descriptive analysis. The study is conducted to collect and obtain data to assist the researcher in making a comprehensive review of the literature related to the topic under investigation. The researcher has gathered data from initial writings on the concepts of *mudarris*, *muaddib*, *murabbi*, *mursyid*, and *mu'allim* in the context of education, as well as teaching practices around the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These data were obtained through reading and researching various sources, including working papers, journals, thesis reports, scholarly books, proceedings, and articles. Based on the data obtained, the researcher then conducted data analysis to address the research questions.

## Islamic Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### Education from Islamic perspectives

Education in Islam is not merely aligned with contemporary trends; rather, Islamic education has a mission to transform the minds and behaviors of society to be in harmony with the demands and requirements of Islamic teachings. Islamic education does not sideline all elements or aspects of societal development; instead, it should

be based on the al-Quran and al-Sunnah, rooted in the belief in the Oneness of Allah (*tauhid*), and submission to Allah SWT. Failure to place these primary sources at the forefront of life results in the failure to shape committed Muslim individuals who adhere to the demands of religion (Ahmad Munawar & Noranizah, 2012).

Aji Luqman et al. (2023) outline that Islamic education aims to instill awareness in individuals as servants of Allah and in community members to have a sense of responsibility towards community building in matters of administration, environmental conservation, and worship to Allah SWT. This direction is achieved through education that emphasizes balance and harmony between worldly and hereafter life. These fundamental Islamic values can safeguard human life from engaging solely in matters driven by desires and even serve to meet the demands of social and individual change.

Al-Faruqi believes that the success of the Muslim community depends on efforts to improve the educational aspect, where there should be unity and complementarity between Islamic education and the secular system. This integration will create an education system based on the spirit of Islam or the Islamization of knowledge and become an integral ideology within society. To achieve this goal, several objectives have been set as guidelines (Zuraidah, 2012):

- (i) mastery of modern disciplines,
- (ii) mastery of the heritage of Islamic knowledge,
- (iii) determining the adaptation of Islam to modern knowledge fields,
- (iv) seeking a creative synthesis between the Islamic heritage and modern knowledge, and
- (v) directing Islamic thought towards achieving Allah's SWT planning pattern.

The main goal of the Islamic education system is to provide skills, knowledge, and the development of individuals who are mindful of Allah SWT. Schools and teachers play a crucial and significant role in the world of education towards educating the younger generation. Schools, as formal institutions, not only play a role in imparting knowledge to students but also emphasize the development of social and moral skills, which are fundamentally the responsibility of parents. Therefore, the role of teachers is crucial in developing the society of a country (Ab. Halim, 2021).

#### *Education in the 21st Century (PAK-21) in Malaysia*

The current developments have an impact on the educational aspect. Therefore, Islamic education in the 21st century is also experiencing a phase of change in the learning curriculum. Learning in the form of teacher-centered tradition has shifted towards education that stimulates social development to face the industrial era, which influences society to become more modern. The use of technology such as smartphones and the internet is a necessity in achieving life goals more effectively and efficiently. However, it can still have negative effects if it is not based on morals. Therefore, education in the 21st century still needs to uphold a balance and moral values in line with current developments (Mohd. Faizin et al., 2023).

In Malaysia, education is one of the foundations of civilization development in strengthening the formation of a prosperous human capital. In line with the National Education Philosophy (FPK) towards achieving the formation of a balanced and harmonious society, the role of teachers is crucial in the era of globalization around the 21st century. 21st-century education (PAK21) refers to approaches and educational strategies tailored to the demands of the modern era, where technology and globalization play crucial roles. PAK21 aims to prepare students with relevant skills and knowledge to succeed in the information age and promote the development of PAK21 such as the four Cs, namely critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (YM Raja Abdullah & Daud, 2018).

Furthermore, PAK21 emphasizes a student-centered approach, based on collaboration and problem-solving orientation. The use of technology in the learning process is also a crucial component of 21st-century education because technology can enhance access to information and develop digital skills. According to Abd Rahman & Ramli (2021), due to the global outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of 2019, the government announced the closure of all educational institutions, including government and private schools, at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

Pedagogy forms the foundation of the quality of teaching and learning for teachers that encompasses principles, techniques, and teaching processes. A systematic, engaging, and relevant teaching and learning process can ensure that students are actively engaged and motivated throughout the learning process.

There are several challenges to new norm pedagogy, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Abd Rahman & Ramli (2021), face-to-face teaching and learning methods have been completely transformed into remote learning methods to control the movement of teachers and students. This is to ensure their safety from COVID-19 infections. As a result of the implementation of the new norm pedagogy, some challenges faced by students and teachers include unsatisfactory internet access, a non-conducive learning environment, as well as a lack of electronic devices (Mohamad, 2021).

However, the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia (KOMM), in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), has initiated efforts to assist the learning process of students from the Bottom 40 (B40) group in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) by providing them with a device. Additionally, in a study by Norazlin & Siti Rahaimah (2013), it is stated that time constraints, insufficient knowledge, and limited information and communication technology facilities are challenges in implementing 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning.

## **Teachers' Role Based on The Understanding of the 5m in 21st-Century Learning**

### **5M concepts in education**

The concept of the Five *mim* (5M) refers to the combination of five concepts of Islamic education teachers,

namely: *mudarris*, *muaddib*, *murabbi*, *mursyid*, and *mu'allim* (Muhamad & Jaafar, 2021). Mohammad Ali & Abang Muis (2021) have listed five terms synonymous with Islamic education teachers, namely *murabbi*, *muallim*, *mudarris*, *mursyid*, and *muaddib* or *ulama*. Meanwhile, Ab Halim Tamuri's study discusses in detail the characteristics of the domain of the roles of Islamic Education teachers, including responsibilities as *mudarris*, *mu'allim*, *murabbi*, *muaddib*, and *mursyid* (Mamat & Wan Abdullah, 2014). Essentially, this concept is specifically designed for Islamic education teachers. However, it can also be applied to teachers of other subjects with some modifications. This concept constitutes important characteristics that should be possessed by a teacher, especially an Islamic education teacher. According to Jaafar et al., (2019), among the 5M, the following statements can be correlated:

*The teacher (murabbi) plays a role in developing morals, not only as a knowledge disseminator (mu'allim). In short, teachers should also strive to instill etiquette (discipline in thinking, physical, and spiritual aspects) by being a muaddib and shaping effective teaching characteristics within themselves (mudarris) as well as being capable of leading by providing guidance (mursyid).*

#### *Mudarris*

The term "mudarris" originates from Arabic, literally meaning a teacher or educator. Although the term "mudarris" is not directly mentioned in the Quran, it is closely related in meaning to its root word, which is "س د ر" (Mamat & Wan Abdullah, 2014). "Mudarris" is the active participle form of "tadris", and it is also a derivative of the words "darrasa" and "darasa". These two words differ in meaning, where "darrasa" means to teach, while "darasa" means to learn.

Lubis (2020) stated in his study that a teacher who plays the role of "mudarris" is so special that Allah SWT mentioned it in several verses of the Quran. Three verses in the Quran use the root word "darasa", namely Surah Ali-Imran verse 79, Surah Al-An'am verse 105, and Surah Al-A'raf verse 169 (Muhamad & Jaafar, 2021). Mamat & Wan Abdullah (2014) listed several other verses, including Surah Al-An'am verse 156, Surah Saba' verse 44, and Surah Al-Qalam verse 37.

A "mudarris" is an Islamic education teacher who has successfully demonstrated himself as an excellent educator based on five important characteristics: personality, effective teaching methods, the ability to create a conducive classroom environment, and proficiency in making professional decisions (Abdul Hakim Ramli, 2020; Mamat & Wan Abdullah, 2014).

According to Muhamad & Jaafar (2021), a "mudarris" plays a role as an excellent teacher in classroom management from the beginning to the end of the learning session. Norliza Nor Hashim et al., (2019) also define a "mudarris" as an effective teacher encompassing aspects of teaching and learning preparation, teaching processes, and self-assessment.

### *Mu'allim*

The teaching process is also associated with the term "*ta'lim*". "*Ta'lim*" encompasses three important terms in education, namely *tarbiah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib*, which are directly related to individuals, society, the environment, and the relationship with Allah SWT. *Ta'lim* is also understood as the process of transferring knowledge from the teacher to the students who do not possess that knowledge. The person who transfers this knowledge is called a "*mu'allim*" (Tamuri & Ajuhary, 2010).

The study by Muhamad & Jaafar (2021) states that *ta'lim* is a process of imparting knowledge from a teacher to his students. Therefore, a *mu'allim* can be defined as a disseminator of knowledge to students based on authoritative sources without denying the right of intellect to acquire knowledge. The wisdom of the *mu'allim* in fulfilling the responsibilities as a guide and leader to the students will complete themselves as professional and authoritative *mu'allims*.

Therefore, *mu'allim* is the actor associated with the derivative term '*ta'lim*', which means teaching. The verb for *Mu'allim* is '*allama*' in the Quran. Allah SWT says:

*And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He presented them to the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful.*

(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:31)

This verse narrates that Allah SWT taught Prophet Adam the names of all creatures that can be perceived by humans, whether through sensory perception or intellect (Mohamad Azizi bin Md Mukhtar et al., 2020).

According to Mohamad Azizi bin Md Mukhtar et al., (2020), *mu'allim* refers to the explanation of knowledge so that students can have a deeper understanding of the knowledge conveyed, using various teaching methods. *Mu'allim* is also a teacher who imparts knowledge and skills because it forms the foundation that students will practice in their daily lives, aligning with their responsibilities as servants of Allah on earth (Norliza Nor Hashim et al., 2019).

The success of the *ta'lim* process depends on the harmony between teaching processes and the Quran and Sunnah. As the *mu'allim*, the teacher must implement the educational process based on the principle of harmony between theory and practice, determine the direction and goals of *ta'lim* before accepting and understanding any information, and be attentive to and nurturing students' abilities. Additionally, teachers need to be proficient and creative in delivering lessons, master knowledge, and act as planners, managers, facilitators, and mentors, always staying motivated, and possessing a positive personality as a role model for students to emulate (Tamuri & Ajuhary, 2010).

In summary, the role of the teacher as a *mu'allim* encompasses responsibilities in the classroom to inform, teach, transfer, and convey various types of information, discipline, and knowledge to students, whether through



training, instructions, or any form of teaching. Thus, this process aligns with the requirements of Islam in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, where students are required to consider these sources as the primary reference for evaluating and understanding any knowledge or information. This is the educational approach in Islam that emphasizes the importance of knowledge and understanding based on the first verse revealed to Prophet Muhammad SAW (Tamuri & Ajuhary, 2010).

### *Murabbi*

*Murabbi* originates from the verb "*rabba*," which means to educate, nurture, and raise. *Murabbi* is derived from the word "*tarbiyah*," which means education, nurturing, upbringing, and caring (Muhamad & Jaafar, 2021). According to Lubis (2020), *tarbiyah*, in terms of terminology, is the process of realizing human development, shaping a society that is aligned with the philosophy of life, having high personalities, and fostering the qualities and talents of students to develop according to their maturity level. Mohamad Azizi bin Md Mukhtar et al., (2020) define a *murabbi* as a teacher who serves as a role model for students in addition to teaching. As a good role model, a teacher must possess commendable characteristics such as honesty, compassion, sincerity, and others.

The role of a *murabbi* involves engaging in the realization of the formation and development of students in terms of physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social aspects to produce individuals who are virtuous, righteous, and obedient according to Islamic views (Norliza Nor Hashim et al., 2019). A *murabbi* is also responsible for showering affection, educating, nurturing the innate nature of students, and developing their inherent abilities.

In their writing, Mohammad Ali & Abang Muis (2021) elucidate that teachers with the characteristics of a *murabbi* emphasize efforts to nurture and develop human potential, which includes the physical, spiritual, and intellectual development of students. Four elements of the *tarbiyah* process include nurturing and caring for children, developing talents and potentials, guiding potentials towards perfection, and this process occurs gradually.

Sidek Baba elaborates on the role of teachers as *murabbis* in seven roles, which include preparing oneself with knowledge, skills, and specialization; setting an example for others, delivering the curriculum with appropriate methodologies, instilling moral values in students, being creative and proactive in handling teaching and learning, understanding the challenges of the times and the whims of the environment, and creating a conducive atmosphere during the teaching and learning process (Jaafar & Rashed, 2015).

Among the characteristics of a Rabbani teacher highlighted by al-Ghazali is a teacher who plays the role of a parent or guardian to the students in school, fostering a sincere relationship full of compassion to establish trust between them. Furthermore, the teacher also needs to strive to instill Rabbani traits in the thoughts and actions of the students so that the formation of excellent individuals in this world and the Hereafter can be realized

through the *tarbiyyah* process conducted by teachers with *murabbi* characteristics. The role of the *murabbi* teacher is also encompassed in the role of the teacher as a *muaddib* (Muhamad & Jaafar, 2021).

Therefore, teachers characterized as *murabbis* need to embody four elements of teacher quality, such as Rabbani thinking, mastery of religious knowledge, practice and cultivation, teaching skills, and moral excellence (Jaafar & Rashed, 2015).

### *Muaddib*

*Muaddib* refers to the word "*addaba-yuaddibu-ta'diban*" which means to instill good manners or cultivate good character, in other words, to cleanse someone from bad manners (*suul adab*) or impurities (Lubis, 2020). According to Lubis, *ta'dib*, in terms of terminology, is the process of educating for noble character. Therefore, an individual needs to be educated with good manners to shape their identity following the laws of Allah. A study by Norliza Nor Hashim et al., (2019) states that a *muaddib* must educate students to be cultured, and possess noble character, and integrity. While Mohamad Azizi bin Md Mukhtar et al., (2020) define *muaddib* as an educator who guides students in terms of manners by fostering commendable qualities.

The role of a *muaddib* is to shape his students by instilling behavioral, effective, and cognitive values. According to Abdul Hakim Ramli (2020), a *muaddib* plays the role of a teacher to educate, guide, and cultivate noble character in the development of students' personalities within the classroom. Muhamad & Jaafar (2021) also state in their study that the process of *ta'dib* involves moral aspects to produce students with noble characters.

### *Mursyid*

*Mursyid*, on the other hand, means a guide or a giver of guidance, derived from the verb "*arsyada*" or "*irsyad*". The Quran mentions "*Mursyid*" several times, and the term "*Irsyad*" in the Quran encompasses meanings that indicate the right path and true guidance. Allah SWT says:

*It is a Book which guides to the right path; we have believed in it, and we will never associate anyone with our Lord.*

(Surah Al-Jin, 72:2)

Abdul Hakim Ramli (2020) stated that *Mursyid* refers to the leadership aspect of a teacher in the classroom to nurture, advises, and guide students to become righteous individuals. However, Mohamad Azizi bin Md Mukhtar et al., (2020) explained that *mursyid* means someone who helps their students differentiate between right and wrong, and lives a high standard of life in line with the situation and educational level of their students, or provides guidance towards the truth. According to Lubis (2020), the process of *Irsyad* in teacher's leadership while teaching students involves showing the right way, advising, accompanying, guiding students,

giving directions, and also providing guidance. The characteristics of a *mursyid* teacher are considered experts in their field, leaders in pedagogy, striving to make decisions and solve problems that arise in the field of education, and also assisting their colleagues.

*Teachers as Murabbi, Mudarris, Muallim, Muaddib, and Mursyid in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning*

From the Islamic perspective, teachers bear significant responsibility in shaping morals and individuals, functioning not only to impart knowledge but also as preachers. This responsibility is associated with the role of a preacher or *da'i* in raising awareness among communities about the Islamic religion and its implementation in daily life, especially targeting its primary audience, the students. Da'wah (preaching) and education are two inseparable elements because their goal is to develop knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices among students (Ab. Halim, 2021).

The four patterns of goals that teachers aim to achieve in teaching and learning Islamic Education are:

- (i) transferring knowledge,
- (ii) behavioral change,
- (iii) excellence in students, and
- (iv) success for students in this world and the hereafter.

Therefore, in achieving the curriculum goals of Islamic Education, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating the teaching and learning process by implementing, providing materials, planning teaching and learning activities, modifying the curriculum, improving it, and being directly involved in the introduced curriculum.

The relationship between students and teachers in the learning process can be observed through the qualities and feelings of care given, frequent advice, guidance, assistance provided to students, and guidance to follow what is advised. This situation provides motivation and encouragement for the ideas and positive thinking of students, in addition to enhancing mastery of knowledge and understanding among students. The application and approach of the 5M represent a paradigm shift in the role of teachers in the context of Islam, where this practice has a relationship with Allah SWT.

The study by Ab Halim Tamuri entitled "The Practice of Islamic Education Teachers in Developing the Hadhari Islamic Society" outlines 25 main domains that Islamic Education teachers need to master to become effective educators, as stated by Mamat & Wan Abdullah (2014):

1. Capturing students' attention during teaching and learning.
2. Structuring teaching content.
3. Linking with students' existing knowledge.
4. Introducing teaching topics during instruction.
5. Delivering information easily, accurately, and clearly.
6. Using blackboard or whiteboard effectively.

7. Adapting teaching strategies to the time, interests, and abilities or levels of students.
8. Adapting teaching strategies to available resources.
9. Managing the classroom well (creating a conducive learning environment).
10. Using appropriate and effective teaching aids (OHP, flip chart, pictures, ICT, computer, and others).
11. Having a sense of humor.
12. Having good interpersonal skills (body language, gestures, eye contact).
13. Diversifying effective teaching methodologies.
14. Diversifying questioning techniques during teaching.
15. Answering students' questions wisely.
16. Identifying student learning problems.
17. Adjusting teaching pace (slow or fast).
18. Teaching according to the sequence of teaching content.
19. Providing reinforcement to students during teaching.
20. Teaching actively or energetically inside and outside the classroom.
21. Using Jawi script effectively.
22. Conducting formative assessment of student learning.
23. Making teaching summaries.
24. Giving follow-up assignments or homework.
25. Reflecting on teaching from an Islamic perspective.

## Conclusion

Teachers of Islamic education serve as icons and are categorized as role models in leading a religious and moral life by students and the entire community. The teaching methods of teachers can have a significant impact on students in receiving the knowledge imparted because of their compassionate nature and wise guidance. The desired learning outcomes in the implementation of Islamic education are the mastery of knowledge and the internalization of values in life.

## Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to thank UiTM Cawangan Melaka for funding this study through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2022/SS10/UITM/03/7) channeled by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. We would also like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to everyone who was part in this work, whether directly or indirectly.

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## Woman's Representation in Music Video

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**Abstract:** "Beautiful We Are" is the title song by Alffy Rev which in the music video chronicles the beauty of Indonesian culture and the sacred love story of two lovebirds depicting scenes of female domination and male subordination. Combining EDM music, gamelan and national songs, Alffy Rev admits his goal is to make Indonesia more loved among young people and to make Indonesia known to the world. This study aims to determine the representation of woman in the clip "Beautiful We Are". Culture is a representation of the identity of a community. From culture also stored the character, symbolism, philosophy and way of life of the people. This study uses descriptive qualitative research methods. The data analysis technique uses semiotic analysis by Roland Barthes which analyzes video sequences with markers of denotation, connotation and myth. The results of this study indicating the representation of women in the clip "Beautiful We Are" is presented through female domination and male subordination, the role of women in social and cultural life. The content of the video shows the beauty of Indonesian culture.

**Keywords:** Culture, Music video, Representations, Domination, Woman

**Citation:** Gasa, F. M. & Rahmat, F. N. (2024). Woman's Representation in Music Video. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1680-1687), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Mass communication is a form of interaction that influences itself intentionally or not but is not limited only to verbal forms of communication, but also in terms of facial expressions, writing, painting and music. Music communicates through the presentation of lyrics. Meanwhile, the lyrics written by the lyricist are part of the intentionally created verbal symbols.

The music video is known as a 1-5 minutes audio and visual spectacle that displays the storyline of the message in the song lyrics content. In fact, many of the actors in the production (musicians) use music videos as a promotional event to showcase their work. Thus, in music video works, the emphasis is on the visualized stories in order to create false views and aim to gain the attention of the audience. In this case, to support the power of



visualization and audio stories, it is certainly important to place the talent for portraying the characters in the clip.

The positioning of the representation of the character in the music video generally places the figure of the genre as the main figure in the music video. In addition, the positioning of talent in music videos often contrasts with the promotional goals of the music video itself. Like Rihanna's music video titled *Work*, in the video Rihanna is scantily clad and sexy. Rihanna's sexuality and the accompanying dancers are heavily featured in her music videos. With this, because we know that the form of exploitation of women's sexuality that occurs in the media is an unfair form that is contrary to the legal protection of human rights, both in international and national instruments. As mentioned in *Undang-undang nomor 39 tahun 1999, Pasal 2*, “*Negara Republik Indonesia mengakui dan menjunjung tinggi hak asasi manusia dan kebebasan dasar manusia sebagai hak yang secara kodrati melekat pada dan tidak terpisahkan dari manusia, yang harus dilindungi, dihormati dan ditegakkan demi peningkatan martabat manusia, kesejahteraan, kebahagiaan dan kecerdasan serta keadilan*” (Tajna Jasmine, 2021).

Based on this social phenomenon, there are several music videos that raise related issues. One of them is Alffy Rev's music video called *Beautiful We Are* which raises the issue of gender equality. The clip, titled *Beautiful We Are*, has a call for further study, as in this clip it chronicles the adventures of two lovebirds struggling to find secrets in prehistoric times, and how to portray the value of the genre. equality in the nuances of Balinese culture.

Alffy Rev's EDM genre music released their 7th single on YouTube in July 2020. The clip, which was played for 3,198,023 in December 2020, chronicles the adventures of a couple to uncover the secrets of prehistoric times. Bali. The story of the video goes backwards and makes the female character here told as a brave, hardworking and friendly character. Not only that, the role of the other packed characters also shows a group of tribes, the traditional Balinese dances in this scene are more female-oriented. Here, traditional art is also included as a means of communication as it also contains messages which are passed on to other people (Media Mahasiswa Publishing, 2015).

Therefore, Alffy Rev's *Beautiful We Are* clip is worth discussing in more depth. If you look at previous researchers, there haven't been any studies on women to instill the value of gender equality in Balinese culture. Previous research results with the title *Representation of Radical Feminism in the "God is a Woman - Ariana Grande"* music video yielded the results of female domination and male subordination, descriptions of monoandrogynous women, female body power and the role of women in social and legal life. The second study titled *"Representation of Women's Stereotypes and Patriarchal Culture in Meghan Trainor's Video Clip - All About That Bass"* gave the results that female stereotypes are still attached to public opinion, namely the use of skirts and the pink color which is always identified with women. And a patriarchal culture that sees women as the sex objects of men and women must serve men.

Based on the data contained in previous studies, this research is worth exploring to see how the form of representation of women in the value of gender equality in Balinese culture. This research is also expected to provide educational value on gender equality and Balinese cultural arts in the digital age for millennials and video maker communities.

## Methods

This research is qualitative research. Qualitative research is conducted to acquire knowledge through understanding and discovery. In qualitative research, the researcher is the key. This study emphasizes the boundaries of meaning and linked by value. (Lexi, 2010). The research method used to conduct this research is the semiotic method. Semiotics is a method used to study various science, it is possible because there is a tendency to see various social discourses as phenomena of language (Kurniawan, 2020). The main source of this research is the clip titled "Beautiful We Are" which is the 7th single created by Alffy Rev which was released on his personal YouTube social network (Alffy Rev) in July 2020 with a video duration of 4:03 minutes.

To obtain the results of the research, the researcher will analyze the Alffy Rev video clip "Beautiful We Are" using the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. Barthes' theory focuses on the idea of meaning in two stages, namely denotation and connotation or commonly referred to as the Order of Significations. First order of meaning (denotation) and second order of meaning (connotation). The denotation refers to what we believe in common sense, the observable meaning of a sign, which explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified, or between the sign and its reference to reality which produces a direct meaning / explicit. Connotations in Barthes' framework are called myths because they are the same as ideological dissections that function as revelations and justify the dominant values that apply to a certain period.

In qualitative research, researchers must test the validity of the data to obtain the validity of the data found. According to Moleong, to determine the validity of the data, an examination technique is necessary. The examination technique is based on a number of certain criteria. Four criteria are used to check the validity of qualitative data, namely: a) credibility, b) transferability, c) dependability, d) confirmability (Abdullah, 2009).

## Results

Various ways can be done to foster a sense of homeland love, at least by not making speeches or spreading hatred towards the public. One of them was successfully implemented by a young man from East Java, Awwalur Rizqi Al-firori. With his positive works, he is able to cultivate a sense of love for the homeland by introducing or elevating local culture in his works.

Known as a composer who defends nationalism and regional culture in his works, Alffy Rev published a work titled "Beautiful We Are" on his YouTube account on July 22, 2020 in collaboration with a young Indonesian singer, Hanin Dhiya. His work is now steeped in nuances of Balinese art and culture. In the description column

of his YouTube channel, Alffy Rev describes that his song with the title "Beautiful We Are" is his seventh work. This special song was eventually born into a new story form for Alffy. The reason is that his song is tightly nuanced with Balinese culture with lyrics full of romantic values. According to Alffy Rev, the song "Beautiful We Are" tells the secret of prehistoric Bali which shows that Indonesia was once a land of extraordinary civilizations in its time. The hidden civilization was finally discovered, and how beautiful this country was. For example, the correct way to wear kamen (Diantari Putri, 2020).

In the clip "Beautiful We Are", there is no longer any subordination of the role of gender inequality, when it is said that women are less important, for example in the development of household policies, or that there is a double burden when a woman is considered capable of doing all the housework, because women are considered to have a nurturing nature, and women are in charge of labor because they are in a precarious family situation.

This is shown in the second scene, a woman is depicted as a modern woman who becomes an educated person as seen in the photo frame which shows the moment when she is wearing a paskibra uniform, and several stacks of books and computers laptops that open a map site of Indonesia showing that she is a researcher. Not only that, the scene which shows that women also play an important role in decision-making is depicted in the fifth scene, where a woman becomes the leader.



Figure 1. Scene 2



Figure 2. Scene 5

On an adventure with his lover, he is invited by his lover to walk first to find a place to go. With a brownish yellow image display, this clip looks warm, besides telling the audience that women are the givers of life. Where the yellow color associated with brown gives the meaning of prosperity and the foundation of life (Epsikologi, 2020).



Figure 3. Scene 7



Figure 4. Scene 1

The role of the female character who transforms into a Balinese goddess in the seventh scene has the connotation of a special female figure where a goddess is known to have divine power, which can be a creator, destroyer or impart beauty. In this case, the producer seems to want to tell the audience that women are valued and compared to a goddess who has strength and beauty, because an adult woman can give life to offspring and become a mother and a wife. who deserve to be loved and respected.

Not only that, the first scene, when the woman has just woken up in black pajamas, portrays a female character who is genuinely respected for not exploiting the character's body shape so that she gets trapped by a blanket. Plus, with the male lover versus female character masculinity scene at the start of the adventure journey played by Alffy Rev and Linka Angelia, namely the scene where Alffy extends her hand to help Linka, and Linka responds to the scene of Alffy's hand holding arm as if to show the audience that the two lovebirds are a complementary couple, supporting each other without limiting their gender roles, both male and female.

Overall, this clip succeeds in expressing the issue of unequal gender roles regarding women, which manifests as unimportant women, or simply as *konco wingking*. This music video also provides education to the public about the history and culture of Bali, where in the eighth to tenth stage, female dancers are shown wearing traditional Balinese clothing, as well as Balinese dances such as the Pendet dance and Kecak dance. This clip can also be a small satire on the value of the spirit of nationalism and love for the homeland for young people, which begins with the scene of the introduction of self-identity in a photo frame of a female character wearing a paskibra uniform, for the persistent struggle of a loving couple even with limited tools to find a place they want to live. In order to achieve their goal, they keep trying to do so by exhibiting a high sense of love, respect and concern in order to find the place they are looking for, namely to see the beauty of Indonesia. , both in culture, music, dance and makeup. The role of the producer in creating the script for this music video comes down to showing that the nation of Indonesia is no less beautiful and no less interesting than the incoming global works and culture.

### **Discussion: Culture from the perspective of millennials**

Culture is a representation of the identity of a community. From culture also stored the character, symbolism, philosophy and way of life of the people. Culture has three forms, the *artefak* is the name of the visible culture, while the *sosiofak* is an image of the social order of society and the *mantifak* is a representation of ideas or thoughts (Erza, 2013).

The typology of the company can be arranged according to technological adaptation, hence the emergence of the term millennial or generation Z, which is a name tag for people born in the 1990s and 2000s. There is a difference between this generation and the previous generation in the vision of culture. Generation Z seems to be an exclusive generation that breaks the chain of cultural relays and prefers to develop its own culture.

Their culture, which now follows the current of globalization, makes popular with some Indonesians anything that smells of foreign culture like Korea. The spread of Korean cultures in East Asia and some countries in Southeast Asia is commonly referred to as *Korean Wave*, who is able to present South Korean culture well to Indonesian people, even to be able to influence the lifestyle of Indonesian youth. From musical tastes, dress styles, food, manners, beauty products, etc. As recently, the phenomenon of the abundance of McDonald's (McD) fast food restaurants due to their partnership with the famous k-Pop, *Bangtan Boys (BTS)* providing a new menu innovation namely *BTS Meal*. The success of the *BTS meal* marketing strategy certainly cannot be separated from the *BTS fans* who are all over the country, especially in Indonesia. In fact, the Indonesian government has temporarily closed 13 McD outlets (Putri, 2021). However, in this context, *BTS* is mentioned as the most successful producer of Korean pop culture and contributes greatly to the national economy of South Korea. The Hyundai Research Institute (HRI) said in 2018 that *BTS* contributes 4 trillion won (US \$ 3.54 million) annually to the South Korean economy (Setowara, 2021).

The spillover of *BTS* meals in various countries is reminiscent of Indonesia in 2020, and the work of young Jakarta musicians, *Weird Genius*, which consists of Reza Oktovian, Eka Gustiwarna and Gerald Liu. It all started with his song *Lathi*. *Lathi*, which was released in February 2020, is unique as the lyrics combine two languages, namely English and Javanese. Not only that, the combination of a touch of traditional music and electronic music, often referred to as EDM or Electronic Dance Music, may surprise Asian listeners. Until *Lathi* managed to go viral and achieve many accomplishments. Even the faces of *Weird Genius* members were plastered on *Billboard Times Square*, New York.

Not only that, the combination of the concept of EDM music with a touch of traditional music was also sung by musicians from Mojokerto, East Java, *Alffy Rev*. It also managed to innovate by organizing national songs and Indonesian folk songs with electronic music. In fact, in 2017 he had the opportunity to appear at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in the UK, and in 2018 he received an award *The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA)* as *YouTube* cover song *Asian Games 2018* (Damanik, 2018).

Combining EDM music, gamelan and national songs, *Alffy Rev* admits his goal is to make Indonesia more loved among young people and to make Indonesia known to the world. He said this during a BBC interview in 2019 "I want the Indonesian national anthem to be included in youth playlists because of its extraordinary national values, I want the national anthem to be in line with western music" (BBC News Indonesia, 2019). He also said that he wanted to make Indonesia global with his work, that he would try to make Indonesia seen as elegant in the eyes of the world. One of them, in his original work titled "How Beautiful We Are", although the clip tells the love story of two lovebirds, *Alffy Rev* still wraps it with elements of Indonesian culture, à la both dance, history and myth, as well as Balinese music.

The positive reviews in *Alffy Rev's* music video prove once again that his work can be easily accepted by millennials. Additionally, the storyline of the original music videos is still full of adventure, mystery, and

shows the richness of Indonesian culture. Not only that, behind the clip, full of adventure, mystery and beauty of Indonesian culture, there is always the theme of the love story of two lovebirds. One of them in the clip entitled "Beautiful We Are", tells the adventure of the love story of two lovebirds who can not separate. In fact, according to the results of a survey on rumahmillennials.com, the romantic genre is the favorite among millennials. This can be read from data on seven film genres, there are three genres most favored by millennials, namely; romance, action, comedy. The action genre is in first position with 63.8% and romance is in second position with 60.9% and comedy is in third position with 58% (PRATOMO, 2019). This is related to mass communication, where mass communication is a process of communication carried out to people in large numbers so that it requires data which becomes the raw material for messages which will then be disseminated to the public (Triputra, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

There is a portrayal of a woman who is strong, respected and becomes a supportive figure for her partner, to which scenes from the video such as the main character stand. transforming into a goddess filled with wings, clothes and a golden crown which represents strength, luxury and a polite and elegant woman, the main female character wakes up in black pajamas, represents a female character who is truly respected as not harness the character's body shapes to be fooled by a blanket, and a scene where the female character returns help from her partner. The man holding her arm gives a message that women are supporters, men and women complement each other. Not only that, unconsciously, the messages contained in this clip are intended to influence the audience through ideologies such as the myth of the existence of a city thought to be lost, namely Atlantis.

And in another case, it is used for campaigns on gender equality where previously many thought that being a Balinese woman was a difficult life, as she had to bear three burdens, namely economic burden, family burden and the religious charge. Even if it is about culture, this music video is still packaged according to the millennial eyes which are packaged in a modern form, for example in terms of arrangement and images using CGI, so that while the video is aired, it looks very luxurious and real. Not only that, this clip also provides values for the spirit of nationalism and love of the motherland, as well as education in Balinese culture, both in terms of the correct use of traditional clothing, dancing, history and language.

## **Recommendations**

Future research would be better if it was seen from a different perspective regarding how cultural commodification is carried out through art and other entertainment.

## **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to Maulida Saharana Putri (alumni of BINUS University) for supplying the samples utilized in



this study.

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## Profiling Digital and Collaborative Competencies in International Online Learning (COIL) in Higher Education

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**Abstract:** Collaborative international learning (COIL) is one of the most recently adopted higher education activities, especially after the pandemic. In COIL, students from two countries come together through digital communication tools to participate in academic activities coordinated by professors from both countries. Despite frequent academic and innovative activities, studies analyzing these activities still need rigorous exploration. Although the COIL strategy proposes collaboration as one of the central cores, few studies examine the competencies students require for optimal team performance. This work aimed to characterize the collaborative and digital competencies of students who learned in a COIL experience. The results showed that the student's personal experiences are at the forefront of how they develop and perceive their digital and collaborative competencies when learning with others and that the educational modality to which students are continuously exposed impacts the competencies they develop and how they collaborate.

**Keywords:** COIL, Digital competencies, Higher education, Educational innovation, Collaborative competencies

**Citation:** García-Chitiva, Mdp. (2024). Profiling Digital and Collaborative Competencies in International Online Learning (COIL) in Higher Education. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1688-1698), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Collaborating involves working together to achieve common goals (Guitert & Pérez-Mateo, 2013). It also requires coordinated, continuous, flexible, and symmetrical efforts and distribution of assignments according to each one's expertise and the nature of the task (Iinuma et al., 2016; Roschelle & Teasley, 1995). In addition, it demands dialogue, collective construction, negotiation of meanings, management within the group, and awareness of each group member about each one's strengths.

Lewis (2003) proposed a cognitive measure called Transactive Memory System (TMS), which allows understanding of the cognitive functioning of a collaborating team based on three dimensions: specialization, Coordination, and Credibility. Specialization reflects the differentiated knowledge of group members; Credibility, the members' beliefs about the reliability of other members' knowledge; and Coordination, the efficient and coherent processing of the group's knowledge (Garcia-Chitiva, 2020). These dimensions are

shaped by trainees' increasingly detailed knowledge about what their teammates know and can do. They also comprise coordination systems deployed to establish effective channels and moments to communicate, work, and meet expected objectives. This deployment contributes to Credibility, constituted by the time spent working together and the positive or negative experiences of working with peers (García-Chitiva, 2021b).

How collaboration is developed also adds value to learning with others. For example, if it is face-to-face, the possibility of having immediate feedback from peers and teachers is direct and more significant (Peñarrubia-Lozano et al., 2021), while doing it in an online environment 'can extend the response time, requires the support of tools to communicate (e.g., email, mobile applications, etc.), and even require teaching and learning to be balanced between flexibility and teacher guidance (Lin, 2020).

The Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) strategy is among the ways to teach and learn online. COIL has as its primary purpose the development of academic and intercultural knowledge exchanges between teachers-teachers, students-students, and teachers-students from different national and geographical contexts (San Martín et al., 2022), *i.e.*, its primary purpose is the internationalization of the curriculum and the development of intercultural skills. Being grounded in the collaborative structure, COIL could be said to be a learning activity in which "peers work together towards a common goal, with a certain degree of symmetry in their actions and knowledge" (Dillenbourg, 1999, p. 8). Therefore, it favors the dynamics of interaction, collaborative negotiation, and exchange of meanings in group work (Stahl et al., 2006) and joint knowledge construction while learning.

Given its nature, COIL has provided opportunities for cross-cultural contact among groups of students, especially those with fewer resources who cannot finance international travel (de Castro et al., 2019; (Gutiérrez-González et al., 2023). Studies on COIL have been predominantly exploratory. De Castro et al. (2019) analyzed the characteristics of experience ratings perceived by university students after participating in COIL learning experiences. In another study, Gutiérrez-González et al. (2023) determined the effect of the COIL experience on the communicative competencies and educational achievement of Architecture students, while Simões & Sangiamchit (2023) and Loyo Rosales & Gutiérrez (2022) examined the incidence of the COIL experience on developing intercultural, digital, and communicative competencies in English, adaptability, and research competencies in university students. Participants' perceptions and learning outcomes have been favorable in all cases.

However, other variables relevant to the learning processes with others and online have yet to be systematically addressed; for example, differential aspects of the collaborators concerning their digital competencies to perform online when working in teams. Nor do we anticipate studies that examine in detail aspects that shape the activity of collaborating, such as the levels of expertise of the group members and the use that the group makes of this knowledge, as well as the levels of Coordination and communication that they achieve for joint performance. These relationships become essential due to the development of the COIL experience in different cultural contexts, in which students' different dispositions for working with different ways of accessing and

processing information may be present, as well as the impact of their digital competencies. It is a space where collaboration is possible because it takes place online.

This study examines whether there is a relationship between the experience of learning collaboratively online when the colleagues in the group have different digital competencies.

Learning collaboratively online involves the knowledge of one's digital competencies and those of peers to perform in a virtual or online environment (Colás-Bravo et al., 2017). This is essential in online learning environments, considering that low digital competencies can affect individual performance and group achievement and thus generate demotivation and conflicts in teams (Huachara-Martinez et al., 2023; Lin, 2020). Recent studies analyze the relationship between digital competencies, the optimal development of collaborative learning, and success in educational achievement (Huachara-Martinez et al., 2023).

Others have examined how digital competencies facilitate or hinder student participation and outcomes in online learning environments (Kwiatkowska & Wiśniewska-Nogaj, 2022). In addition, the relationship between digital competencies and how computer-mediated instruction and online systems favor learning and collaboration has been reviewed (García-Chitiva, 2021b).

In this context, digital competencies play a crucial role in online collaborative learning, and some teammates may be more advantageous than others in this aspect. Therefore, from perspectives such as those of Conde Jiménez, (2017), multidimensional scales have been proposed to examine them and identify strengths and gaps to be covered to increase student learning opportunities.

Although the COIL strategy proposes collaboration as one of the central cores in this scenario, only some studies examine the competencies students require for optimal team performance.

Therefore, this work aimed to characterize the collaborative and digital competencies of students who learned collaboratively in a COIL experience. This is to identify patterns, areas of strength, and opportunities for improvement that provide evidence for similar subsequent ones. This is critical, as possessing digital and collaborative competencies can be critical to student learning. It is also valuable for the teacher to understand which competencies require further development. In this way, he/she can design and develop pedagogical actions that strengthen them.

Given the above, this paper conducted a statistical profiling of the 21 groups formed by students from two Latin American universities who worked together in the COIL experience documented here. This is to identify the relevant collaborative and digital competencies in the groups and those that require further development.

Lewis's (2003) proposal, which examines the cognitive functioning of team members working together, was used to examine the collaborative process. This has three dimensions that were addressed by García-Chitiva

(2021) to examine team collaboration: Specialization (expertise and knowledge of each member), Credibility (knowing who knows what and trusting the contribution they make to the work), and Coordination (agreeing on attitudes towards the work and developing effective communication). To analyze digital competencies, the dimensions proposed by Conde Jiménez (2017) were taken in his three-dimensional scale: instrumental (includes basic technical skills for the use of information and communication technologies -ICT); strategic (involves the creative use of ICT to build and create with social impact) and expansive (refers to the appropriation and reinsertion of ICT tools in different cultural and social contexts).

In the following, the methodological approach of this work is presented. The results and their subsequent discussion follow this. The paper concludes with conclusions and recommendations.

## Method

The cluster analysis methodological approach, in which the non-hierarchical K-means method was used, was used. This method facilitates the identification of variations in groups by establishing similarity and clustering (Chen & Witten, 2023).

### Data pre-processing

Data processing was carried out with the R libraries tidy and dplyr (R Core Team, 2023), rows with missing data were removed, missing values were imputed, and the scores of the scales used were normalized (mutate() and scale()).

### Data analysis

Subsequently, the factoextra and cluster libraries were used to perform K-means clustering. The Euclidean method was used to calculate the distance matrix between the groups to cluster the groups. This made it possible to determine the students' similarities and dissimilarities (Rquer, 2020) based on their responses to the scales. The k-means method was then applied to divide the data into clusters.

### Instruments

Two types of instruments were used. Lewis's (2003) TMS test, adapted to Spanish by García-Chitiva (2021), consists of 15 items to examine the perception of collaborative work, or collaborative competencies per se (within groups), in terms of expertise, Coordination, and Credibility. The second, developed by Conde-Jiménez (2017), has 22 items and examines digital competencies in the Instrumental, Strategic, and Expansive dimensions. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly was used in both cases.

*Sample*

The sample comprised 65 students from two private universities in Ecuador and Colombia. Table 1 presents details of January, courses, and programs of study. The Ecuadorian students were enrolled in face-to-face health and architecture programs, and the Colombian students were enrolled in virtual education programs.

Table 1. Participants

Characteristics	Nominal Distribution
Gender	
Female	35 (53%)
Male	30 (47%)
Age (years)	
18-26	43 (66%)
27-35	16 (24%)
36-43	6 (9%)
University	
Ecuador	33 (50,7%)
Colombia	32 (49,2%)

*Características de la actividad colaborativa en la experiencia de aprendizaje COIL desarrollada*

The experience occurred over six weeks and was structured in three specific moments (see Figure 1). The students worked in freely formed groups. As conditions for the formation of the groups, the students were told that each group could contain a maximum of 4 people and that in each of these groups, there had to be students from the two universities, University 1 Ecuador, and University 2 Colombia. In the introductory stage, the students got to know each other, formed groups, and learned about the expertise of their classmates.

In the second stage, they developed collaborative work each week, under the agreements of times and communication channels to meet in each group. In this stage, there was continuous asynchronous accompaniment by the teachers (1 Ecuador and 1 Colombia) every week and a weekly synchronous meeting. In the third stage, the groups of students used the data and/or information collected, analyzed it, and, through counseling with the teachers, specified the appropriate type of methodological orientation according to the type of topic addressed and the information collected.

In addition, they generated the writing of the research report in which the conventional structure of a research article was considered (title, abstract, keywords, introduction, method, results, conclusions, recommendations, and references). During the closing session, each group presented their proposal.

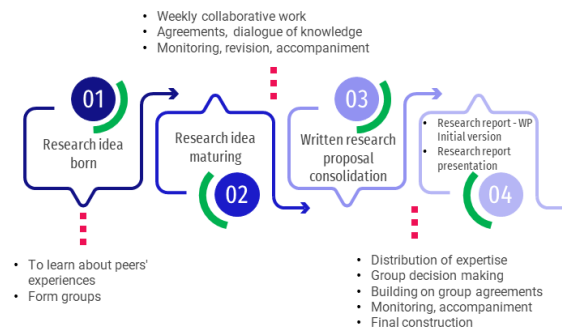


Figure 1. Flow chart COIL educative experience.

The task of the collaborative activity consisted of developing a research report from the generation of the topic of interest and formulation of the problem to the generation of a working paper (WP) research report. The activities' contents and development were arranged in the Google Classroom platform and distributed in four units (see Figure 1).

## Results

We begin our analyses by examining the participants' aggrupation from the Euclidean distance of their average response to all questionnaire items. A cluster analysis of the Euclidean distance matrix revealed the presence of six clusters with an unequal number of subjects per cluster (see Figure 2).

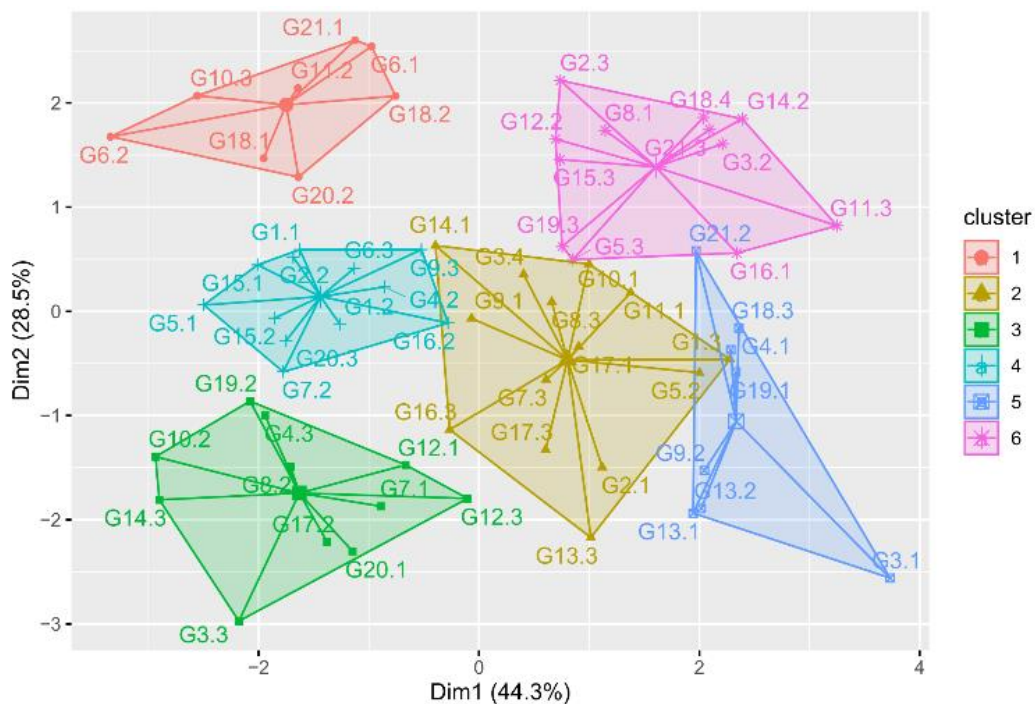


Figure 2. Group members clustered by their responses in the questionnaires.

This analysis detected two interesting data patterns when examining the total collaborative and digital competencies scores in the resulting clusters (see Figure 3). On the one hand, total scores for collaborative competencies (e.g., specialization, credibility, and coordination) were higher than for digital competencies in clusters 1, 3, and 4. On the other hand, the total scores for digital competencies (instrumental, privilege, appropriation, and expansive) were higher than those for collaborative competencies in clusters 2, 5, and 6.

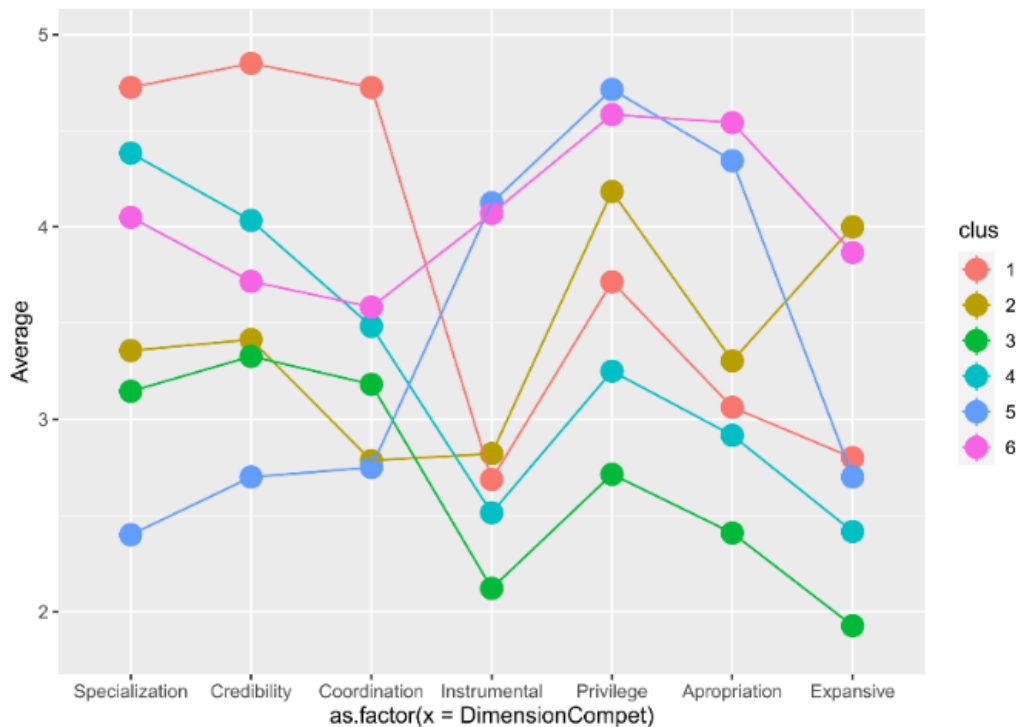


Figure 3. Differences in collaborative and digital skills by cluster

In this case, Colombian students outperformed their Ecuadorian peers in all three dimensions of digital competencies. Given that the Colombian and Ecuadorian students only met after these coil sessions and came together in small groups of three members, we examined whether their educational backgrounds played a role in obtaining these total scores. We observed statistical differences between Colombian and Ecuadorian students on three dimensions of the collaboration scale, such that Ecuadorians outperformed their Colombian peers. In the competence scale, significant differences were observed in the high scores of Colombian and Ecuadorian students, mainly in the instrumental dimension (see Table 2).

Table 2. T-student comparative analysis by adscription country participants

	Ecuador M(sd)	Colombia M(sd)	t(df)	p-value
Specialization	19.91(3.85)	16.83(4.66)	2.87(58.4)	.005*
Credibility	19.82(3.8)	16.61(3.10)	3.69(61.99)	0.0004**
Coordination	18.35(3.68)	15.12(3.24)	3.75(62.9)	0.0003**
Instrumental	14.3(2.69)	22.2(4.15)	-9.07(50.62)	3.39e-12***



Privilege	22.64(4.89)	31.58(3.08)	-8.88(56.28)	2.64e-12***
Apropiation	11.23(2.42)	16.25(3.15)	-7.15(56.2)	1.91e-9***
Expansive	12.41(3.54)	18.09(4.13)	-5.92(59.4)	1.68e-7***
Note: * p < .001. ** p < .0001. *** p < .00001.				

## Discussion

This work aimed to characterize the collaborative and digital competencies of students who learned in a COIL experience. To meet this objective, a statistical profile was developed from which six clusters were derived, which were diverse regarding the members of the groups formed to collaborate. The clusters' agglutination variety is estimated to have at least three origins. The first concerns people's differences (e.g., cognitive styles, learning styles). This particular trait implies people's preferences for learning and relating to others (Aggarwal et al., 2023), and even a preference for specific communication channels and times.

Secondly, it is also part of another culture because of the novelty of working with strangers. This aspect has been documented in the teamwork literature, where it is mentioned that extended working time is vital to strengthen the interaction and performance of collaborative teams (García-Chitiva, 2021a, p. 48). While in the COIL educational experiences, one cannot expect extended learning time beyond a few weeks (usually six), it is crucial that educators can generate an introduction among students to each other's cultural issues, experiences, and tastes of their peers from another country. For example, do introductory activities using different formats or synchronous introductory activities in which students talk about their tastes, work preferences (e.g., types of homework, schedules, etc.), and other aspects that allow them to get to know each other.

Thirdly, the statistically significant differences in collaborative competencies in favor of the Ecuadorian students have to do with the fact that they were part of a face-to-face program and knew each other previously. Since the groups were freely formed, students from this country were placed with peers of the same nationality in 11 of the 21 groups.

As for the advantage of Colombian students in digital competencies, it is assumed that this high perception is because these students are enrolled in a virtual mode. Therefore, using ICT and the Internet is part of their daily routine.

Considering the abovementioned, the present work contributes to the visibility of the strengths to guide collaborative learning processes in a COIL Experience. Also, it finds a way to include orientations and guidelines to collaborate, which allows all students to strengthen their credibility, coordination, and expertise. Similar support is also required for the development of digital competencies. Teachers can perform diagnostics to identify which aspects of the competency need to be strengthened. On the other hand, the possibility of incorporating other personal and contextual variables in future studies is also becoming visible. In addition,

there is a need to configure symmetrical collaborative teams (Isohätälä et al., 2020), to encourage effective collaboration among participants.

## Conclusion

Considering the above, this paper contributes to the visibility of the strengths to guide collaborative learning processes in a COIL Experience. It is recommended that future studies consider the possible inculcation of orientations and guidelines to collaborate in the curriculum. This will enable students to authentically, in practice, strengthen their credibility, coordination, and expertise.

Guidance for developing digital competencies is also required. Teachers can perform diagnostics to identify which aspects of competence need to be strengthened. Finally, the possibilities of incorporating other personal and contextual variables in future studies are visible. In addition, it is necessary to set up symmetrical collaborative teams to foster effective collaboration among participants.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that future studies seek symmetry in the groups of students participating in the COIL experience, i.e., that they are students with the same modality (virtual or face-to-face) and that they are from similar educational backgrounds, to determine the characteristics of collaborative and digital competencies without the pre-existence of these marked differences.

Jointly analyzing collaborative and digital competencies in samples of students participating in COIL educational experiences in educational and cultural contexts other than Latin America may generate interesting results.

## Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the financial support of Writing Lab, Institute for the Future of Education, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico, in the production of this work.

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## Representation of Father's Interpersonal Relationship with Fatherless Children in the Film Series HBO Euphoria Season 1

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**Abstract:** This research is based on the incident of the father's minimal role in the family. In Indonesia, the percentage of children who do not live with their parents in 2021 is 3.8%. This research focuses on "Representation of Interpersonal Relations between Fathers and Fatherless Children in the HBO Euphoria Season 1 Movie Series". This descriptive qualitative research uses Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis method. There are two characters whose representations are examined, with the aim of understanding how these two characters represent the results of interpersonal relationships with their fathers. The researcher analyzed descriptively the signs that existed in the two characters when they interacted with their father. Based on the research results, the signs appear and have a lasting effect on both characters. Cassie's character is shown as a teenager who finds it difficult to say no when she is a teenager. at the same time, Nate is shown as a teenager who has an anger issue. The things that influence their character from children to young adults are The role of technology in children's development, the language of love used, sex education during puberty, and the culture of promiscuity in the United States.

**Keywords:** Representation, Semiotics, Interpersonal Communication, Roland Barthes

**Citation:** Sugiantoro, T.B. & Gasa, F.M. (2024). Representation of Father's Interpersonal Relationship with Fatherless Children in the Film Series HBO Euphoria Season 1 In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1699-1708), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Communication activities can be found anywhere and anytime. In general, communication is done between two people or is referred to as interpersonal communication. The result of interpersonal communication is the creation of interpersonal relationships which are connections that are owned at least between two people who are interdependent on one another. Communication can also be done face-to-face or through mass media (Nurudin, 2007). Mass communication is addressed to an enormous audience. It can be interpreted that the

intended audience is all people who read and watch television. Mass communication is also communication transmitted by audio and visual transmitters.

According to Wibowo (verywellhealth.com, 2022), film is a tool for conveying various messages to audiences through a media story. Being a form of mass communication, the film contains signs, symbols, and semiotics, which can be interpreted by audiences who enjoy them. Films are also made to channel the expressions of the creators which are presented to the public. Several types of films include entertainment, education, informative, inspirational, and documentaries.

A family is a social group characterized by shared residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction united by marriage or socially approved adoption, which interacts following its social roles.

Patriarchal culture teaches Indonesian society that the father's job is to earn a living and the mother's role is to take care of the household and children. The result of this Patriarchal Culture is the absence of a father figure from family life, especially children.

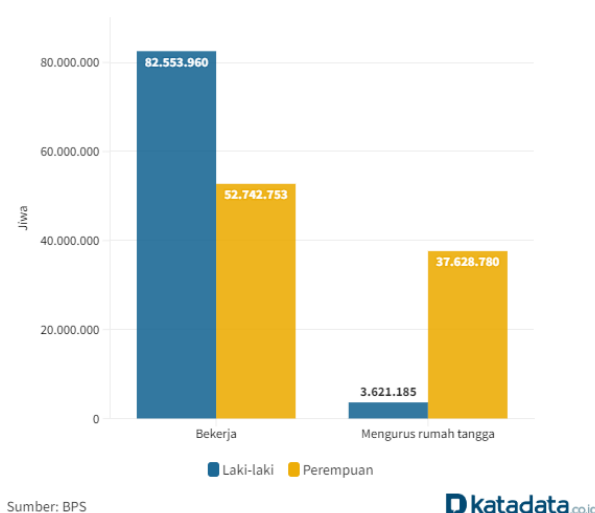


Figure 1. Parent's duty

Based on the data found (Figure 1), it can be seen that children in Indonesia spend more time with their biological mothers than with their fathers. The percentage of children who do not live with their parents as of 2021 is 3.8%. The negative character that children have can arise as a result of childhood events involving parents that are not good or arguably traumatic for the child. The absence of one of these roles can shape a child's character and the way the child responds to things.

Based on the fatherless phenomenon, data on the number of children in conflict with the law as perpetrators of both physical and psychological violence from the 2016-2020 period amounted to 655 cases (Katadata.co.id, 2022). With details of 506 children being perpetrators of physical violence and 149 children being perpetrators of psychological violence.



Figure 2. Child Physical and Psychological Abusers

The data from figure 2 can be concluded that the number of these cases is certainly related to the role of the family in the growth and development of children because in this case, the family is the primary social group owned by children. The impact of the vacant role of parents in a child's life can also influence children to become abusers or victims.

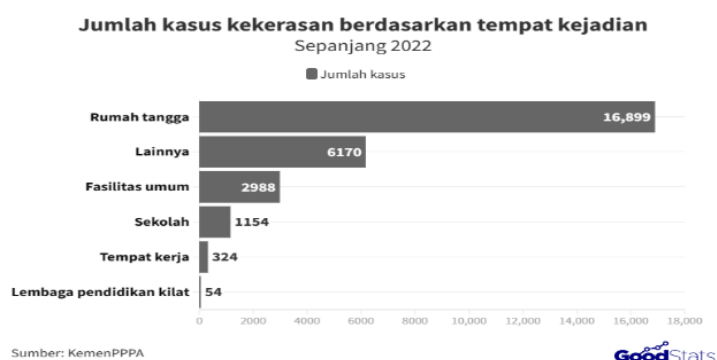


Figure 3. Cases of Violence by Place

Based on the data above, it was found that the highest rank in the perpetrators of violence was the husband-wife relationship with 4,893 perpetrators, then the boyfriend-friend relationship with 4,588 perpetrators, and parents against children with 3,075 perpetrators throughout 2022.

Research by Gurning, F.P, et al (Gurning et al., 2022) discusses "Analysis of Audience Reception of Family Communication in the Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap Film". The results of this study reveal that parenting has a very close relationship with the child's personality. Amalia, A. & Natsir, M. H. D. in 2017 published the results of research on "The Relationship Between Interpersonal Communication in the Family with Adolescent Identity". The results of this study indicate that there is a significant influence between family communication and juvenile delinquency.

Based on the results of the two studies, this study will examine the representation of the relationship between the role of the father to the child so that the fatherless phenomenon occurs in the HBO series film "Euphoria" by



Sam Levinson Season 1. This study aims to determine the representation of the relationship between the characters Nate and Cassie towards their father so that they experience the Fatherless phenomenon from the HBO series film "Euphoria" Season 1.

## Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach because it will analyze the representation of the father's relationship with characters who experience the Fatherless phenomenon from the HBO series "Euphoria". Qualitative research is research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects. This approach is used to examine matters related to behavioral research, attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and actions of the subject. According to Creswell, J. W qualitative research is research used to examine human and social problems. This research will report on the results and analysis of data obtained in the field, then be described in a detailed research report.

This research uses the Semiotics analysis method according to Roland Barthes, which is a science used to interpret a sign, where language is also an arrangement of signs that have certain messages from society. Signs here can be in the form of songs, dialog, music notes, logos, pictures, facial expressions, and gestures. Roland Barthes divided the semiotic analysis into two, namely denotation and connotation.

1. Denotation: This is the relationship between the signifier and the signified in real form or denotation.
2. Connotation: there is a connotation that describes the relationship when the sign is mixed with feelings or emotions.
3. Myth: this is a way of giving meaning as a result of traditional stories.

The initial stage of data collection in this research uses observation and documentation methods. The second stage is the results of observation and documentation will be analyzed by Roland Barthes's semiotics. The last stage of the research conducts a documentation study, namely studying the literature relevant to the research and the results of the analysis that has been done to get the results of the research.

This research is semiotic, therefore the data validity technique used is the nine-formula technique (Purwasito, 2006). Here are the nine validity formulas:

1. Who is the communicator  
Communicators play an important role in communication semiology. The background of the communicator needs to be known to understand the sign to be interpreted. Communicators need to be known so that the signs conveyed either directly or indirectly can be conveyed to communicants.
2. Motivation of the communicator

In communication semiology, there is an interpretation of signs related to the communicator. here the communicator builds a message to be conveyed to the communicator.

3. Physical and Social Context

Communication semiology interprets signs based on the social and cultural context, time, and location of the sign. Communicators build messages by considering rules or norms and then giving them to communicators.

4. Sign structure and other signs

Signs in communication semiology can be interpreted by looking at signs related to close signs functionally and their relevance.

5. Sign Function, History and Mythology

Giving meaning to signs can also be seen by how people see signs or their functions. This is related to the communicator's intention to the communicator.

6. Intertextuality

Communication semiology strengthens interpretation and argumentation by comparing sign functions with other texts. Intertext is an effort to deepen interpretation by using similar sources.

7. Intersubjectivity

Communication semiology presents interpretation with signs obtained from the interpretation of other signs that have relevant relationships. The researcher takes his experience as a reference, books, and other supporting data.

8. Common sense

Retrieval of meaning in communication semiology by using common meaning in society. Usually used for social signs.

9. Scientific Explorer Researcher

It is an intuitive interpretation carried out by researchers in communication semiology. Using intellectual experience, subjective beliefs, and scientific searches conducted by researchers. This concerns the credibility of the researcher.

To measure the validity of this study, researchers only used five formulas from the nine formulas described. The formulas that researchers used in this study are: 1. Who is the Communicator, 2. Motivation of the Communicator, 3. Physical and Social Context, 4. Sign Function, History and Mythology, and 5. Common sense.

## Results

The Euphoria season 1 series consists of 8 episodes, and each of the episodes has a duration of 48-62 minutes. The series tells the story of a group of teenagers with the main character Rue as the narrator of the series. Rue tells how the system that exists in the environment and life of teenagers is now broken. Starting from the use of drugs that are easily accessible to teenagers, free sex, fraud, and relationships that lead to violence.

The delinquencies in this series are shown explicitly and categorized as movies rated 21 years and above. Based on the research results, 4 episodes were found that showed interpersonal relationships between fathers and children related to the fatherless phenomenon. The following are the results of this research:

### Technology and Child Development

In this series, the role of technology is mostly shown as a tool that hurts child development. The negative impact that affects the characters of Nate Jacobs and Cassie Howards depicted in the Euphoria Season 1 series is pornography (Ratnaya, 2011).



Figure 4. Cal Jacobs Sex Tape

Based on the scene above, Nate Jacobs' character is a technology user who is not supervised by his parents. This allowed him to have access to his father's adult content when he was a child. Nate even remembers how the video collection was arranged in such a way by Cal Jacobs so that his father would not notice the change in the arrangement of his porn collection.



Figure 5. Cassie's Revenge Porn

In the snippet above, the character Cassie Howards experiences revenge porn. The definition of revenge porn is images or movies with sexual content that are published, posted on the internet, or circulated without the consent of one or more participants, usually with malicious intent and revenge followed by separation (Dictionary Collins English, 2023). Cassie Howard is asked to make a sex tape with every man she is currently with, despite refusing the invitation, Cassie still complies due to her fear of being alone and unloved.

### *Love Language that Appears in the Relationship between Father and Son in the Euphoria Season 1 Series*

Love language according to researchers is a way that a person uses to show his love for others. Reviewed by Dr.

Fadhli Rizal M (halodoc.com, 2022), humans have 5 love languages that are often used to show love for the intended person, namely: word of affirmation; physical touch; quality time; receiving a gift; and act of service. In the Euphoria Season 1 series, the most common love languages are physical touch, quality time, and words of affirmation.

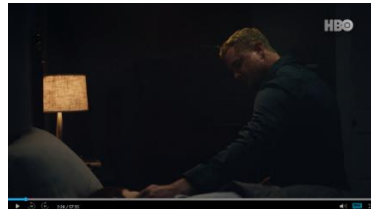


Figure 6. *Physical touch* Cal Jacobs

For Nate's character, Cal gives a word of affirmation in scene 2. Cal says that he believes Nate will grow up to be successful and a strong child. While giving the word of affirmation Cal Jacobs also touches his hand to Nate's cheek, this is a form of physical touch love language.



Figure 7. *Physical touch* Gus Howard

Cassie Howard felt her father's intense affection during her childhood. The snippet above shows Gus Howard hugging Cassie Howard warmly when giving her a birthday present. This changed during Cassie's transition to adolescence, as Cassie's parents often fought and ended up separating.

### *Sex Education in Childhood Puberty*

Puberty is a transitional phase or growth of children reaching reproductive maturity. Children at puberty experience rapid brain development. Therefore, this transition is also a process of identity formation so that children experience emotional and physical changes.

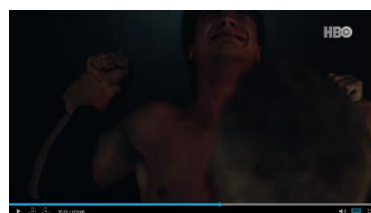


Figure 8. Nate Jacob's *Emotional Outburst*

Cal Jacobs and Nate's relationship also fluctuates when Nate has experienced puberty, marked by a snippet of image 8. In this scene, Nate experiences an emotional outburst or emotional outburst, according to Rebecca Valdez, MS, RDN (verywellhealth.com, 2022), emotional outbursts are characterized by sudden and uncontrolled and extreme anger. Cal's role in Nate's puberty is not optimal, coupled with the big secret that Cal has, namely the collection of pornographic videos he made with many people has been watched by Nate secretly during Nate's childhood.



Figure 9. Cassie's uncomfortable hugs

The puberty experienced by Cassie was enough to make people overlook because Cassie's body underwent quite drastic changes. Her body, especially her breasts, grew larger than other teenagers who were also going through puberty. This can be seen from the snippet of picture 9 when she hugged a man her body was hugged too tightly so that her breasts stuck out for too long and made her uncomfortable. The discomfort is shown by Cassie's expression which gives a fake smile.

### *The Culture of Promiscuity among American Teenagers*

The Euphoria Season 1 series is set in the United States, of course, the cultural role of the country plays an important role in the storyline of the series. The United States is one of the countries that has the nickname of a free country. Set in East Highland High School, the characters in this series are teenagers who have experienced puberty. Lisa Wade from the book American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus (Wade, 2017), discusses the culture of dating and sexual activity on American campuses. The shows presented by this series also show similar things, namely promiscuity ranging from free sex, drug abuse, and violence.

Nate Jacobs' character, in this series Nate is exposed to promiscuity from his childhood. His father, Cal Jacobs has a collection of videos of him having casual sex with younger men, young women, and even transgenders. Nate was exposed to these things at a very young age, when children of Nate's age were not allowed to consume pornography.

Figure 5 shows Cassie Howard about to have sex with her partner or with men who have been her lovers. Although Cassie rejected her partner's invitation to make a sex video, she still did it because she didn't want to feel alone. She wants to have someone she loves with her. This could be due to Gus' minimal role in Cassie's life. Not only that, Cassie was also exposed to Gus' life of drug abuse.

## Conclusion

In the Euphoria Season 1 series, researchers found 5 markers that represent the relationship between father and fatherless child. These five signs have a domino effect on life and shape the characteristics of Nate and Cassie. The domino effect is a chain reaction that occurs when one event triggers a series of similar, related, or connected events (study.com, 2022).

### A. Nate Jacobs:

- Has uncontrollable anger, especially on LGBT matters
- Exposed to sex at a young age
- Lives in the same house with his father but hardly ever speaks
- Cold expression when dealing with matters concerning his father
- Resents his father for trying to cover up his sexuality.

### B. Cassie Howard:

- Shy with new people, shown with an uncomfortable expression
- Has a sex tape with her partner despite her refusal to be loved
- Expresses sadness when dealing with matters concerning her father
- Received a lot of physical touch in childhood
- Looks forward to her father's presence.

## Recommendations

It is hoped that further research can present a more in-depth communication semiology because in this study researchers still have limited knowledge and time to work on it. For research that uses the Roland Barthes semiotic analysis model, it is expected to learn how to analyze it, the purpose of the analysis, and test its validity. From the Euphoria Season 1 series, it can be interpreted that the role of parents, especially fathers, in the growth and development of children has an important impact if it is not fulfilled. Based on the fatherless phenomenon that is rampant in Indonesia, it would be nice if the role of fathers in the family and child development is improved. Because this can have a negative impact and cause a domino effect when children grow up. Small things that are traumatic for children can be the basis for the formation of deviant characteristics in adulthood.

## Notes

This article is an output from Tania Bellayah Sugiatoro's thesis entitled Representation of Father Interpersonal Relationships with Fatherless Children in Hbo Serial Film Euphoria Season 1.

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## Instagram as a Media to Strengthen Generation Z's Long Distance Relationship in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** Currently, there are a lot of Generation Z's especially students, who are in long-distance relationships. To conduct a long-distance relationship, it requires commitment from the partners to maintain communication, this is based from research that shows many long-distance relationships fail due to lack of communication. With the availability of new media such as social media, long-distance communication can be easily done. Instagram is Generation Z's favorite social media application. The view of social interaction related to this research is that long-distance relationship couples use Instagram accounts to communicate with each other, exchange opinions, publicize couples by uploading photos or videos through Feeds or Instastories, and a place to find inspiration for activities that can be done during long-distance relationships or when meeting. This study aims to describe the role of Instagram social media as a facilitator and strengthener of long-distance relationships owned by student couples. By using qualitative research methods with New Media Theory, the results of this study show that Instagram social media has a role in students' long-distance relationships and can be used as a media facilitator of Generation Z's long-distance relationships.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Instagram, Long Distance Relationship, Social Media

**Citation:** Ranggabarani, A. & Gasa, F.M. (2024). Instagram as a Media to Strengthen Generation Z's Long Distance Relationship in Indonesia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1709-1718), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Interpersonal communication is a process where humans and other individuals communicate by exchanging information, opinions and expressing feelings verbally or non-verbally, face-to-face or digitally. As social beings, humans need other individuals' presence in their lives. This mutual need occurs through relationships between individuals. Needing information, understanding, opinions, and affection from others is why individuals form relationships with others.

One form of relationship between individuals is a romantic relationship, dating. Dating is a relationship where two individuals meet and do a series of activities together in order to get to know each other (DeGenova & Rice, 2005). There is a change in understanding of the concept of togetherness in a relationship, where individuals can have a relationship with a partner without physical closeness, namely a long-distance relationship (Freitas, 2004).

In Indonesia, independent research conducted by *tirto.id* shows that around 63.4% of 183 respondents stated they were in a long-distance relationship. The number of married couples in long-distance relationships is as much as 28.4%, while dating couples in long-distance relationships is 71.6%. It was also mentioned that some couples have to undergo long-distance relationships due to the need to continue their studies in other areas (Wibisono, 2016). From the reasons given by the research respondents, there are many student couples in Indonesia who are in long-distance relationships. Generally, university students are entering adulthood in the age range of 18-25 years. Based on the division of generations by Graeme Codrington & Sue Grant-Marshall, Generation Z is the generation born from 1995 to 2010 (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2004). Therefore, individuals who are currently students in 2023 can be categorized as part of Generation Z.

In order to keep a relationship, particularly a long-distance one, strong and healthy, it is important for partners to maintain good communication with one another; this is shown by research conducted in the United States, showing that there are 90% of couples break up their relationship due to lack and poor communication between the two parties. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, 7.4% of cases of ending a dating relationship were caused due to lack of communication (Amato & Previti, 2003).

The importance of communication in a relationship, especially long-distance relationships, is also shown by a 2012 research survey in Indonesia conducted by *Wolipop* involving 123 long-distance dating respondents. 49% of respondents successfully underwent long-distance dating, 38% of respondents were unsuccessful in long-distance dating due to an affair, 5% of respondents who underwent long-distance dating were hit by doubt or uncertainty and despair towards their partner, in this case, it could affect the decrease in the level of trust. In comparison, the other 10% hoped that their long-distance relationship would succeed (Rema, 2014). In addition, Coleman in 2000 states in his research that the thoughts and feelings present in long-distance relationships require an effective communication tool to create a harmonious relationship (Nisa & Sedjo, 2010). In today's world, communication technology has rapidly advanced, leading to the emergence of new forms of media like the internet and social media.

Social media is a digital platform allowing users to carry out social activities whenever and wherever needed. Research by Firda Abraham in 2014 found several benefits in social media, including making a meeting place for individuals with the same interests, increasing knowledge, and adding relationships. In addition, social interactions on social media include adding friends or relationships, seeking information, communicating, and buying and selling activities (Abraham, 2014). With the ability to use social media anytime and anywhere, it can help long-distance relationship couples to communicate effectively.

Citing from Katadata, the We Are Social survey results show that Instagram was Generation Z's most favorite social media platform globally in April 2021 (Azkiya, 2021). The result even far exceeds other social media platforms like Whatsapp and Facebook. In Indonesia alone, according to We Are Social, Instagram users in Indonesia reached 89.15 million users as of January 2023 (Mutia Annur, 2023). That number is the fourth largest in the world after India, the United States, and Brazil. As one of Generation Z's favorite media, Instagram can be used as a medium of communication by Gen Z long-distance relationship couples with a variety of features so that communication between couples is not limited to exchanging messages and voices.

Previous research by Lexie Gutzmann in 2018 proved that long-distance relationship couples use social media to strengthen their long-distance relationships. These couples feel that social media helps maintain their communication and relationships. Although long-distance relationships require various sacrifices, couples feel the benefits of long-distance relationships outweigh the sacrifices required.

Furthermore, a study by Maulidia Mulyani in 2019 revealed that when both spouses work to support their family, it often leads to one being away from home. As a result, many households adopt a long-distance relationship model. Long-distance relationships must still be carried out by utilizing social media so that the commitment of both is maintained. As a tool to communicate quickly without waiting a long time, social media is considered very helpful for communication practices in married couples who are separated by distance. Maintaining communication makes family life harmonious and maintained even in long-distance relationships. Also, fulfilling the rights and obligations of husband and wife can still be done even though it cannot be as optimal as it is not directly related.

The difference with previous research is that this study focuses on knowing how Instagram, which is Generation Z's favorite social media application, can be used as a facilitator for Gen Z long-distance couples to maintain their long-distance relationship. Moreover, Instagram offers distinctive features that set it apart from other social media platforms. As a result, it can serve as a valuable tool for providing numerous interaction options to Gen Z individuals in long-distance relationships.

## **Method**

The method used in this research is a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a research and understanding process based on a methodology that investigates social phenomena and human problems (Masrukhin, 2014).

The data sources used in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is a data source that directly provides data to researchers (Sugiyono, 2018). In this study, the writers obtained primary data through in-depth interviews, which is the process of obtaining information for research purposes through question and answer while meeting face-to-face between the interviewer and the respondent or interviewee, with or without

using interview guidelines where the interviewer and informant are involved in a relatively long social life (Sutopo, 2006).

This research interviewed five Generation Z couples with long-distance relationships, where the information was determined using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a data collection technique based on specific considerations related to the case study under study and the researcher's objectives (Sugiyono, 2018).

The selection of five pairs of informants is based on criteria that have been made by the researcher, which are:

1. Informants born in 1995-2010 (Generation Z)
2. Informants are students who have been in a dating relationship for more than one month
3. The informant has been in a long-distance relationship for more than one month
4. Informants are active users of Instagram social media for more than one month in 2023.

In addition, in this study, primary data were obtained through observation of five informant couples' activities on Instagram. The observation method is a data collection method carried out by observing and recording the things that are being investigated (Supardi, 2006).

The data analysis technique carried out in this study uses the Miles and Huberman Interactive Analysis Model, which analyzes data with three streams starting from reducing data which means summarizing. In this study, the writer carried out the reduction stage by selecting the main things from the results of in-depth interviews with five informant couples, observing the activities of five informants on Instagram social media, and studying the theoretical literature in the conceptual foundation section. Then carry out the data presentation stage by describing the descriptions in the form of descriptive narratives from the results of interviews that have been conducted with five informant couples in long-distance relationships. After all the data is collected based on the results of interviews and observations, the step taken by the researcher is to read and analyze the data obtained. The results can explain how Instagram plays a role in the long-distance relationship of Generation Z couples.

To test the validity of the data in this study, researchers used triangulation techniques so that the data obtained could be recognized for credibility. To ensure the validity of the research findings, researchers tested the validity of the data in several stages. Source triangulation is done to test the credibility of one data with other data. In this study, researchers triangulated sources by comparing data obtained by interviewing five informant couples, observing the activities of five informant couples on Instagram social media, and studying theoretical literature studies. Then triangulation of techniques to test data credibility is done by collecting data through the same source but using several different techniques. In this study, researchers triangulated techniques by conducting in-depth interviews and observing activities on Instagram media with five pairs of informants who were not different. The last stage is time triangulation, which is collecting data at different times. In this study, the writers chose to conduct interviews when the five informant couples were not busy doing activities or when there was no conflict in the informant couples. Also, observations were made when the five informant couples were doing activities on Instagram social media.

## Results

### Instagram as a medium to strengthen long-distance relationships

Every couple has routine activities to maintain and strengthen their relationship, either by meeting in person or through social media. However, for couples in a long-distance relationship, activities through social media are the only option, one of which is Instagram. The role of Instagram as a medium of communication and interaction is very helpful for them to maintain communication and strengthen the relationship despite being separated by distance. Therefore, the long-distance relationship couples in this study stated that they actively use Instagram to communicate with their partners.

With the availability of various features on Instagram, of course, these features are well used by long-distance relationship couples to interact with each other frequently. As stated by all informants in this study, the Direct Message, Reels, and Explore Feed features on Instagram are very helpful for their daily communication. Apart from using the Direct Message feature to communicate daily or sharing various Reels content or content found through Feeds or Explore Feeds, some also casually share photos or videos of their partner in Instastories.

### *Challenges Faced on Instagram and Solutions*

In a long-distance dating relationship, various efforts have been made to maintain communication and the closeness of the relationship between each other. However, in interpersonal communication, there will still be noise or challenges. The problems in this long-distance relationship interaction are considered higher than in face-to-face communication. With these obstacles, it can cause conflict in a relationship. Challenges that occur in long-distance relationship communication through Instagram can be technical problems and problems from individuals who use it.

### *Instagram as Generation Z's long-distance relationships facilitator*

According to Miles, Rice, and Barr in *Media: an introduction* 3rd edition, new media is a media that is the result of the integration or combination of several aspects of technology combined, including computer and information technology, communication networks and digital information media and messages (Flew, 2008).

Based on the characteristics of new media by McQuail, there are six characteristics, namely: (1) Interactivity, (2) Social Presence, (3) Autonomy, (4) Playfulness, (5) Privacy, and (6) Personalization (McQuail, 2010). Based on the above characteristics, the elements mentioned in this study are as follows:

1. Interactivity

All couples can respond to posts sent by other couples or respond to posts on Instagram.

2. Social Presence

Long-distance relationships certainly prevent couples from being able to meet physically to make personal contact. However, as a new media, Instagram allows couples to be present virtually.

3. Autonomy

Instagram, as a new media, gives couples the power to choose what posts they want to see and share with other users.

4. Playfulness

with the availability of a wide variety of content on Instagram, ranging from serious to funny content, Instagram can be used as a source of entertainment and fun by couples.

5. Privacy

couples can manage who can see their account and manage who can see their uploads either by creating a second private account or uploading through the Close Friends feature.

6. Personalization

every couple certainly has different preferences. Therefore, on Instagram, couples can organize and choose what content they want to use or need.

In this study, researchers used the New Media Theory. New Media Theory is a theory developed by Pierre Levy. This theory explains the development of media. New Media is online media that is technology-based, flexible & interactive, and functioning publicly and privately using the internet (Mondry, 2008). Pierre Levy says there are two views on new media theory, the view of social interaction and social integration.

The view of social interaction related to this research is that long-distance relationship couples use Instagram accounts to communicate with each other, exchange opinions, publicize couples by uploading photos or videos through Feeds or Instastories, and a place to find inspiration for activities that can be done during long-distance relationships or when meeting. Through Instagram, long-distance relationship couples can easily communicate and interact without meeting face-to-face.

This study's view of social integration is that the media is ritualized because it becomes a habit. Instagram makes long-distance relationship couples informants habitually sending each other uploads found on Instagram's Explore Feed or Reels via Direct Messages without switching to another social media application. In addition, informant couples habitually upload photos or videos of their partners through feeds or Instastories, publicly and privately, on a second account or Close Friends. Some informant couples also have a habit of seeing Direct Messages received by their partners, and there are also informant couples who decide to share accounts. Instagram creates a community with such habits by presenting related features.

## Discussion

Please use 10-point font size. Please margin the text to the justified. Manuscripts should be 1.5 times spaced. Footnotes and endnotes are not accepted. All relevant information should be included in main text. Do not

indent paragraphs; leave a 1.5 times space of one line between consecutive paragraphs. Do not underline words for emphasis. Use italics instead. Both numbered lists and bulleted lists can be used if necessary. Before submitting your manuscript, please ensure that every in-text citation has a corresponding reference in the reference list. Conversely, ensure that every entry in the reference list has a corresponding in-text citation.

Based on the study's results, long-distance couples rely heavily on social media technology to support their communication needs. This is proven by the five couples using Instagram and other social media as their communication and interaction media while running a long-distance relationship. The couples feel that social media helps maintain their communication activities and relationships because it is the only media that helps them communicate and interact with each other while carrying out long-distance relationships. As the times evolve and people's lifestyles change, Instagram currently provides various features. These features are Direct Messages (DM), Instastories, Reels, IGTV, Explore Feed, Bookmark/Save Post, and others. The availability of these features is beneficial for long-distance relationship couples to have various interaction options that can be done when communicating with their partners.

All informants in this study make Direct Messages the feature they use most often when communicating via Instagram. Interactions in Direct Messages range from exchanging regular messages to exchanging Instagram posts found on the main homepage, Explore Feed, to Reels that can help them generate a topic that can be discussed through Direct Messages. The five informants also like to use the Instastories feature, which informants usually use to upload photos or videos of their partners or upload photos or videos of daily activities that can be news for their partners without exchanging a direct message.

There are some unique interactions that can only be done on Instagram. Every long-distance relationship couple in this study uses the Collaborative Bookmark feature, which allows couples to collaborate to save uploads on Instagram. The reasons for each couple to use this feature are different, such as saving uploads together to collect references for dating places when meeting, saving video uploads or funny Reels, and items they want to buy together.

In this study, the informants conveyed a variety of challenges and problems that occur during interaction on Instagram, such as partners forgetting or being slow in replying to messages sent via Direct Messages, misunderstandings when a partner sends a relatively sensitive post such as news of a public figure's cheating, not commenting on a partner's photo or video uploads on Feeds or Instastories with compliments or others, to misunderstandings due to liking posts or exchanging DM messages with the opposite sex that one of the parties in the couple does not know. In addition, Internet connection interruptions and problems on the devices used for activities on Instagram can interfere with the communication process of each long-distance relationship partner on Instagram.

A solution is certainly needed with the emergence of conflict caused by obstacles. In this study, each couple conveyed a variety of solutions to the problems experienced while interacting on Instagram. Several couples



choose to share Instagram accounts or allow their partners to access their Instagram accounts as a solution. These couples think that being transparent can prevent problems such as lying to each other.

Another solution undertaken by all couples in this study is to be open about their feelings, for example, expressing their feelings when they see or know their partner likes posts or interacts with other people of the opposite sex. Each couple thinks that being open about their feelings can end a conflict and help each partner know what can and cannot be done when doing activities on Instagram to respect each other.

As a new media, Instagram has different characteristics from conventional media. Based on the characteristics of new media by McQuail, there are six characteristics, namely: (1) Interactivity, (2) Social Presence, (3) Autonomy, (4) Playfulness, (5) Privacy, and (6) Personalization (McQuail, 2010).

Interactivity, the Instagram application allows interaction between users, in this research, long-distance relationship couples by sending or responding to the content provided. Social Presence, Instagram as a new media helps present users virtually, which helps long-distance relationship couples feel close even though they do not meet in person. As a new media, Instagram gives couples autonomy to regulate what uploads they want to see or share with other users.

Then Instagram also has playfulness characteristics, with the availability of various kinds of content on Instagram ranging from serious to funny content. Instagram can be used as a source of entertainment and fun for couples. For privacy, Instagram provides options for couples to control who can see their account and regulate who can see their uploads by creating a private account or uploading uploads through the Close Friends feature. Couples can also apply personalization on Instagram by controlling and choosing what content they want to see, use, or need.

In this study, researchers used the New Media theory by Pierre Levy. In New Media theory, according to Pierre Levy, there are two views, the view of social interaction and social integration (Mondry, 2008).

The view of social interaction related to this research is that long-distance relationship couples use Instagram accounts to communicate with each other, exchange opinions, publicize couples by uploading photos or videos through Feeds or Instastories, and a place to find inspiration for activities that can be done during long-distance relationships or when meeting. Through Instagram, long-distance relationship couples can easily communicate and interact without meeting face-to-face.

This study's view of social integration is that the media is ritualized because it becomes a habit. Instagram social media makes long-distance relationship couples informants have a habit of sending each other uploads found on Instagram's Explore Feed or Reels via Direct Messages without switching to another social media application. In addition, informant couples habitually upload photos or videos of their partners through feeds or Instastories, publicly and privately, on second accounts or Close Friends. Some informant couples also have a habit of seeing

Direct Messages received by their partners, and there are also informant couples who decide to share accounts. Instagram creates a community with such habits by presenting related features that the couples have used in this study.

## Conclusion

The conclusion based on the results of the research and discussion above regarding the use of Instagram social media as a medium for strengthening long-distance relationship couples' relationships is:

1. As a new media, Instagram can help maintain and facilitate communication between long-distance relationship couples. In addition, Instagram strengthens the relationship that long-distance relationship couples have. Interaction that occurs on Instagram is not only limited to exchanging messages. Thanks to other features such as Explore Feed, Instastories, and others, each partner also publishes each other, exchanges opinions, and so on.
2. Each partner uses and feels helped by the features on Instagram. Therefore, long-distance relationship couples can use Instagram as one of the communication facilitators.
3. Interaction on Instagram does not always run smoothly. There are technical problems, such as connection problems, and individual problems, such as misunderstandings between couples.

## Recommendations

Academic advice for future researchers is to discuss the role of Instagram as a facilitator of long-distance relationships in more depth. Future researchers should examine the interactions carried out by long-distance relationship couples through Instagram.

## Notes

This article is an output from Ananda Ranggabarani's thesis entitled Instagram as A Media to Strengthen Long Distance Relationships for Generation Z In Indonesia.

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## Competency Training in Higher Education: Research Trends in The Last Decade

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**Abstract:** Developing relevant competencies for optimal job performance ensures graduates' professional inclusion and success in the labor market. Competency research is examined from the business contexts of higher education and with the actors involved: faculty, students, graduates, and companies. This paper reviews the research on competency-based training of the last decade. Bibliometric analysis methodologies were approached with 539 documents. As a selection criterion, only articles and conference papers were considered, and 75 were selected for a detailed examination of their content through stratified sampling. The results indicate that empirical studies predominated over theoretical ones; self-reporting and interviews were the preferred techniques; the areas with the highest number of studies were Arts and Engineering, the Exact Sciences, and the Social and Legal Sciences. It is concluded that more studies examining competencies at the graduate level in higher education are needed. From these findings, we derived a taxonomy of competencies identified by areas of knowledge, which is presented in the results.

**Keywords:** Competency-based education, Competency-based learning, Educational Innovation, Higher education, Labor market

**Citation:** García-Chitiva, MdP. & Gallardo, K. (2023). Competency training in higher education: research trends in the last decade. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1719-1745), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Developing skills for the 21st century is part of the global education agenda. Higher Education faces a challenge to identify ways to empower students to succeed in work and life (Mursid et al., 2023), among which collaborative, digital, and citizenship skills are among the main ones (OECD/Fundación Santillana, 2019; O.E.I., 2019) as pointed out in reports generated by global organizations.

There are several approaches to understanding and defining the concept of competency. For example, for Spencer & Spencer (1993), competencies are essential, habitual, and persistent characteristics of individuals

causally related to favorable performance at work. From a broader perspective, Le Boterf (2005) defines them as a set of knowledge built from experience and learning, in which the teacher is a facilitator for developing competencies, and the individual is the protagonist of his or her learning. Other perspectives define competencies as the results of complex processes derived from interaction. According to UNESCO (2007), competencies are complex skills that individuals develop through interactions in the social context of their immersion, which favor their performance in different scenarios through interactions in the social context of their immersion. Tardif (2008) refers to competencies as the interaction of complex processes involving different types of knowledge (knowing how to be, knowing how to do, knowing how to know, and knowing how to live together), which allow people to develop in a critical and creative sense, contributing to the construction of the social fabric. Finally, the OECD (2012) states that competencies are a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be learned, extended, and strengthened over time and that facilitate people's performance in different domains involving cognitive, technical, and social-emotional competencies. However, for several years now, some researchers have warned about the dissonance of the term and the potential confusion that can arise between different epistemological bases and interpretations of the subject (Gervais, 2016; Khan & Ramachandran, 2012). The problem of polysemy affects more than just the definition. The existence of a deeper problem is noted, related to the lack of commitment or decision-making when it comes to positioning oneself concerning competencies: what they are, how they are defined, how they are operationalized, and how they are evaluated from the educational perspective (Díaz-Barriga Arceo, 2012).

On the other hand, precise knowledge of the challenges faced by professionals preparing to enter the labor market still needs to be developed. Labor and employability regulatory agencies, for example, Singapore (Skills Frameworks, n.d.) and the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.), have put forward options to build bridges between the professional competence seen in higher education and what the labor market wants in jobs, the profiles requested and the evaluations for the preparation of potential collaborators.

This dialogue between the university and the labor market has allowed an exchange of perceptions on the importance of competency training for the professional future of graduates. For example, (Succi & Canova, 2019) and soft (Marin-Zapata et al., 2021), the relationship between the development of transversal competencies in the university and the needs seen from the perspective of employers, under the idea of counting on the development of the competencies required in the labor supply, allows graduates to face an increasingly competitive and changing world. Other disciplines discuss the development of transversal competencies from the perspective of students and teachers, including scientific, computational, creative, information management, innovative thinking, communication enhancement, and digital competencies, the latter due to the massification of online learning (Wannapiroon et al., 2022). In addition, other approaches address learners' personal competencies (e.g., self-knowledge, self-management, self-learning), as addressed by (Tsvetkova et al., 2021). More generally, other approaches examine the type of privileged soft competencies and their emphasis on professional training, mainly in graduate programs (Garcia-Chitiva & Correa, 2023).

Due to the broad and varied framework from which competencies are explained, this paper addresses the

perspective of Belchior-Rocha et al. (2022). These authors explain competencies as an integration derived from the mix of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that people require for their effective performance. These competencies are instrumental (*e.g.*, retrieving information, analytical thinking), soft competencies (*e.g.*, cooperation, leadership), systemic (*e.g.*, system orientation, methodological), and specific or technical (*e.g.*, research, business skills).

In the above works, the intention to analyze the relevance of developing competencies from different areas, actors, and levels is evident. However, the variety of conceptual and methodological approaches presents a dispersed panorama that makes it difficult for policymakers, university leaders, professors, and researchers to identify taxonomies, implementations, successful educational practices that can be replicated, and lessons learned. Therefore, this paper contributes to responding to and analyzing this gap. We propose three questions to analyze this inattention: What are the characteristics of the research on competencies (productivity, relevance per citation, region, and disciplinary area), and the main conceptualizations used in the studies? How are competencies evaluated? What competencies are most frequently analyzed in higher education studies and industry, and to what type are those?

Given the above, this study had three objectives: (1) present the state of research on the competency approach through global indexes to characterize the competencies stipulated in higher education and job training and identify the conceptual approaches used; (2) understand the different research and assessment methodologies employed to provide new knowledge on the subject; and (3) identify the different types of competencies used in higher education and job training, in the areas of health sciences, social and legal sciences, architecture, engineering, arts and humanities, and multidisciplinary approaches in the trends found in the last decade.

## Method and materials

To identify scientific publications on competencies from the last ten years, we used the search terms "competency" OR "competence" AND "higher education" AND "labor market" in the SCOPUS database, searching the title, abstract, and keywords of the documents published from 2013 to 2023. We downloaded the data in January 2024 in .bib format and we obtained 536 documents, distributed as follows:

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample of documents analyzed with the Bibliometric methodology.

Type of document	Quantity
Article	399
Book	2
Book chapter	32
Conference papers	14
Revisions	17
Total	514

We analyzed the data using two strategies to answer the three questions guiding the present work. The first was a bibliometric analysis (Salas et al., 2018) of the metadata of the 536 documents. This process employed the Bibliometrix library (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and bibliometric techniques (Serafin et al., 2018) using the total number of documents to answer the bibliometric part of the first question: What are the characteristics of the research on competencies (productivity, relevance per citation, region, and disciplinary area), and the main conceptualizations used in the studies? In this first step, we examined the papers for the number of publications per year, most relevant documents by the number of citations, The volume of documents published per area of knowledge, most cited documents per area of knowledge, Countries with the highest number of publications and the thematic trend of publications in the overall sample and by disciplinary areas.

Subsequently, we identified the documents' areas of knowledge: Medicine and Health Sciences (M-HS), Social and Legal Sciences (SS-LS), Architecture and Engineering (A-E), Arts and Humanities (A- H), Sciences (S) and Multidisciplinary (M).

For the second analytical strategy, we defined two inclusion/exclusion criteria. The first criterion focused on identifying the most relevant documents by number of citations in each area by year. Documents without citations were excluded. Only four documents were selected for each year from 2013 to 2023 when there was a sufficient number of annual publications; otherwise, we selected only those with at least one citation from those available in each area.

The second criterion concerned the relevance of the studies to answer the research questions and the objective that guided this work. Documents whose title and abstract were unrelated to the three questions and the objective were excluded. After this selection, the sub-sample of documents consisted of 75 documents.

Finally, to answer the following research questions, we defined categories to analyze the content of the documents as follows:

Table 2. Research questions and content analysis categories.

Questions	Categories of analysis
What are the characteristics of the research on competencies (productivity, relevance per citation, region, and disciplinary area), and the main conceptualizations used in the studies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitions of competency</li> <li>• Primary theoretical and/or normative references for defining the concept of competency</li> </ul>
How to evaluate competencies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of the studies that analyzed competencies empirically</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanisms employed to assess student performance in competency-based programs</li> </ul>
<p>What characteristics do the competencies have, and which ones are analyzed in higher education and training for work settings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Characteristics of the competencies analyzed in higher education training processes.</li> <li>Characteristics of the competencies analyzed in the training processes for jobs</li> </ul>

**Results**

**First strategy: results of bibliometric analysis**

The bibliometric analysis examined the overall scientific production by years, knowledge areas, and the trend and thematic evolution of publications between 2017 and 2023. Figure 1, panel A, shows that publications on the subject, in general, increased annually. The highest points reflect that 79% of the publications appeared since 2017 and the remaining 21% in the previous four years. This is relevant considering the growth of research on the topic in that time span; panel B shows the ten most cited articles (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Jerrim & Macmillan 2015; Morley et al.,2018; José Sá & Serpa 2018; Shopova, 2014; Börner et al., 2018; Hernández-de-Menéndez, 2020; Roulin & Bangarter, 2013; Figueredo, Biscala & Teixeira, 2017; Vila, 2014).

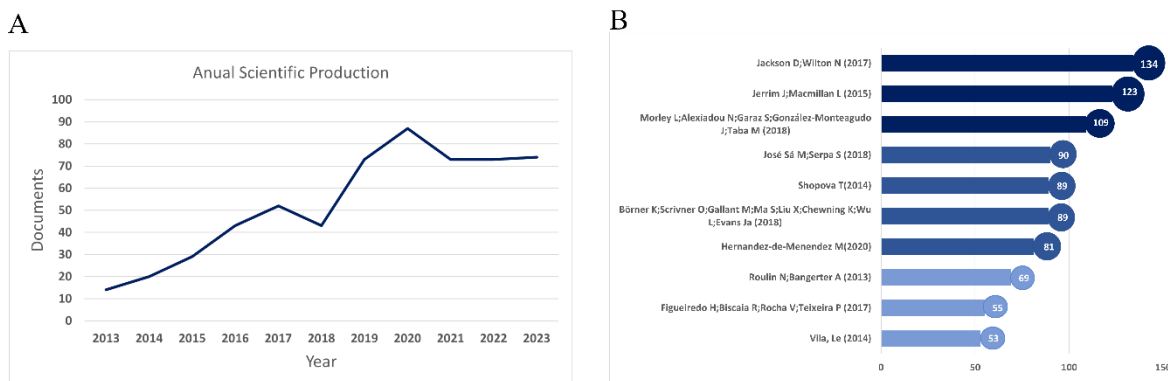


Figure 1. Scientific production by year (panel A) and the ten most relevant documents by number of citations (panel B).

In panel C of Figure 2, area A-E stands out for the number of publications and the sustainability of the study on the topic over the decade compared to SC, SS-LS, A-H, M-HS, and M. SS-LS peaked in 2016, fluctuated in the other years, and grew exponentially in publications on the topic from 2022. The scientific production of SC showed significant growth between 2018 and 2022.

Panel D shows that SS-LS papers had higher citation frequencies than the others, with citations reaching triple digits. In the other disciplines, A-H papers had outstanding citation activity, peaking in 2015. On the other hand,

there was a visible decline in citations for papers in all areas from 2020 onwards.

Finally, Panel E shows that Spain had a more significant number of publications than other countries. The level of production in this country increased throughout the decade analyzed. Countries such as Ukraine, Portugal, and Poland also stand out. Science has evolved collaboratively; Panel E reflects this dynamic of joint work and publication, identifying Spain with a high level of collaboration in scientific publication with countries from different continents.

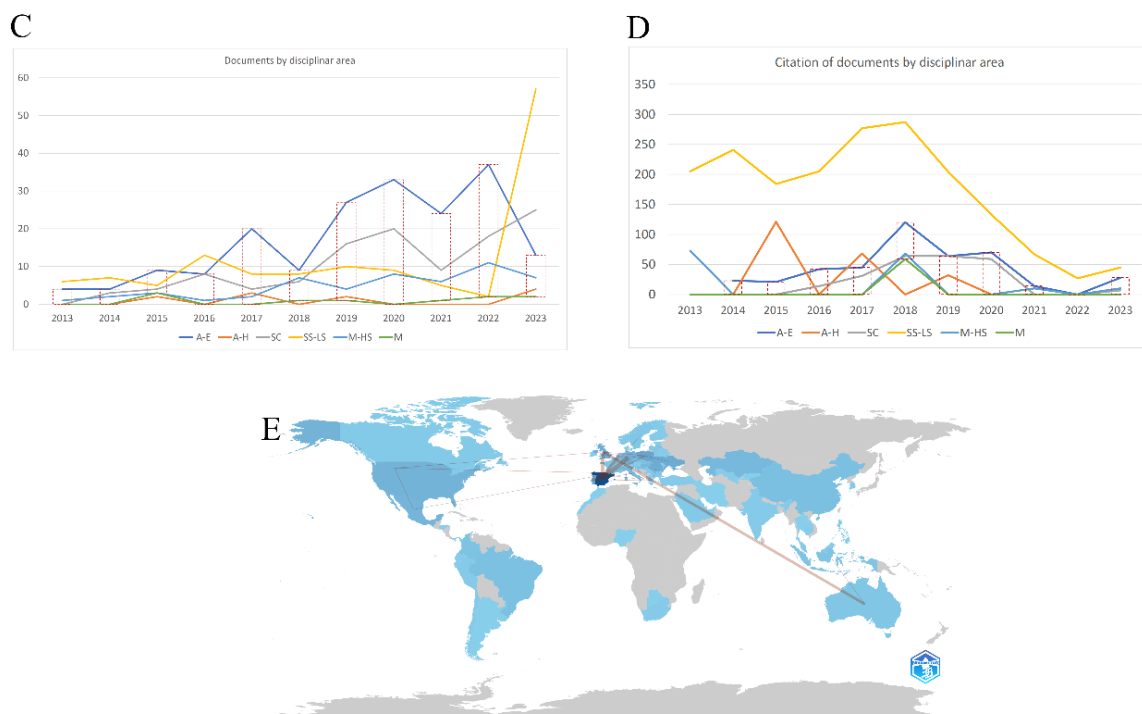


Figure 2. The number of papers published between 2013 and 2023 by area (panel C), citations obtained in the papers by area (panel D), and countries with the highest scientific production and an indication of their collaborative relationships (panel E).

Figure 3 shows the evolution of the most relevant thematic trends, defined by the frequency of keywords used by the authors. From 2013 to 2020, there were 14 topics related to the competency-based approach. The studies were mainly focused on Higher Education. Studies on active learning, emotional intelligence development, key competencies, human capital, graduate employability, and engineering education were less frequent.

From 2020 to 2023, the study topics were reduced to 12. However, studies on competencies, e-learning, professional development, and curriculum, among others, came to be analyzed in conjunction with the labor market. In this sense, the study of competencies went from focusing only on theoretical disciplinary development to a more practical understanding of the workplace.

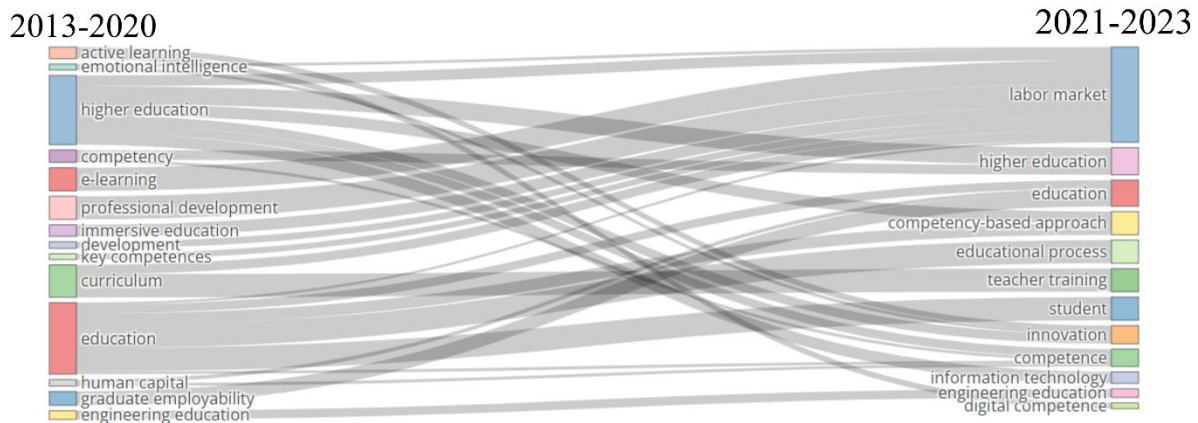


Figure 3. Trends and thematic evolution of the publications analyzed per the keywords in English defined by the authors.

*Second strategy- content analysis: results according to categories of analysis*

This section presents the content analysis results of the 75 documents selected. The results are presented according to the research questions to make this report more dynamic.

Question 1: What are the characteristics of the research on competencies (productivity, relevance per citation, region, and disciplinary area), and the main conceptualizations used in the studies?

Table 3 summarizes the studies that explicitly mention the definition of competencies in three ways: in the sense of a general explanation of the concept, as a definition of specific or disciplinary competencies, or as transversal, generic, or soft competencies. It was found that 48% of the documents in the sample explicitly referenced a definition of competency. The remaining studies addressed the subject, identifying relevant competencies for vocational work training and employability and defining the relevance of some competencies in a specific disciplinary area (e.g., problem-solving competencies in engineering, innovation competencies, etc.). Some analyzed competencies from results previously obtained in international projects. In this case, such research used data from applied scales and perception questionnaires in projects exploring competencies for employability in previous years (e.g., REFLEX, HEGESCO). Most definitions of competencies appeared and discussed theoretical developments.

In addition, we could identify the recurrent sources used to define or conceptualize the term "competencies" in the studies analyzed. Tables 3 and 4 present the primary references describing the concept of competency at a general level and its specific expressions in disciplinary and cross-cutting aspects.

Table 3. Common definitions of competence in the analyzed studies

Typologies of	Common definitions of competence	Studies
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**definitions of  
competence**

<p>About the concept of competency in general</p>	<p>Capacity to apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to use in concrete and complex situations to solve problems and make decisions effectively.</p>	<p>(Fragoso- Luzuriaga, 2015); (Gil-Galván et al., 2021); (Monteiro et al., 2021); (Quendler &amp; Lamb, 2016); (Jackson &amp; Wilton, 2017); (Teo, 2023); (Qu, 2023); (Castro Pais et al., 2023) (Figueiredo et al., 2017); (Ornellas et al., 2019); (Prikshtat et al., 2020); (Almeida de Camargo Pereira &amp; Felicetti, 2023); (Michavila et al., 2018); (Munkácsi &amp; Krisztina, 2023); (Colombo &amp; Marcato, 2023); (Mayombe, 2024); (Kuznetsova et al., 2023); (Pažur Aničić et al., 2023); (Bakhmat, 2023); (Tominc &amp; Rožman, 2023). Jerim &amp; Macmillan, 2015); (Gora et al., 2019); (Martínez-Argüelles et al., 2023); (McGowan et al., 2023); (Herrmann et al., 2023); (Thorne et al., 2023)</p>
<p>On the concept of specific competency or discipline</p>	<p>The set of capabilities, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values enabling individuals to perform tasks and solve problems effectively. Effective in specific work situations.</p> <p>The set of skills and knowledge that people acquire or learn through education and training enabling them to perform effectively in the labor market and society in general.</p> <p>Knowledge and technical skills required to develop a professional activity.</p>	<p>(Stuss et al., 2019); (Bartual Figueras &amp; Turmo Garuz, 2016); (Valencia-Arias et al., 2023)</p>
<p>On the concept of cross-cutting, transversal or generic</p>	<p>Digital competencies as essential transversal knowledge in all disciplinary areas.</p>	<p>(Shopova, 2014); (Torres- Coronas &amp; Vidal-Blasco,</p>

competency, or soft skills	2015; (Konovalova et al., 2023); (Kulikova et al., 2023)
Combination of transversal competencies that provide a solid foundation for further learning	(Stuss et al., 2019); (Li & Valerievna, 2023); (Niyazova & Niyazov, 2023)
Ability to perceive opportunities for change, generate new ideas for the work environment, and compare the potential value of new ideas vs. adopting existing ideas	(Vila et al., 2014)

Within the organized authors and projects was a high level of activity by European bodies such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Commission, as well as projects such as Tunning and HEGESCO. Undeniably, the work of the different interest groups residing in this continent to advance solidly in this issue is for the development of the citizens of the 21st century. Mexico is also involved with its projects, although to a lesser extent.

Table 4. Primary reference sources used to define the concept of competence in the documents analyzed between 2013 and 2023.

	Organizations, entities, and projects	Studies
Organizations	OECD (2005, 2006, 2019) Definitions and selection of competencies and executive reports on skills and employability.	(Figueiredo et al., 2017); (Prikshat et al., 2020); (Almeida de Camargo Pereira & Felicetti, 2022); (Tominc & Rožman, 2023)
	Unesco (2002, 2005) Model of Competencies	(Gil-Galván et al., 2021); (Almeida de Camargo Pereira & Felicetti, 2022); (Thorne et al., 2023)
	European Commission (2002; 2006; 2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2013; 2014; 2018; 2020) Adult literacy guidelines and reports on crucial competencies for lifelong and life-wide learning, improving living and working conditions, and strategies for smart growth, sustainability, and inclusion	(Quendler & Lamb, 2016); (Ornellas et al., 2019); (Prikshat et al., 2020); (Gil-Galván et al., 2021); (Goulart et al., 2022); (Martínez-Argüelles et al., 2023); (Munkácsi & Krisztina, 2023) ;

(Castro Pais et al., 2023)

	World Economic Forum (2016; 2018) Papers on the future of jobs.	(Monteiro et al., 2021); (Almeida de Camargo Pereira & Felicetti, 2022); (Goulart et al., 2022); (Castro Pais et al., 2023)
	International Labour Organization (ILO). Gap in skills enabling individuals to become employed	(Mayombe, 2024)
Entities	National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) Occupational Information Network (O*NET)	(Martín Del Peso et al., 2013); (Almeida de Camargo Pereira & Felicetti, 2022); (Colombo & Marcato, 2023)

In addition to identifying the sources from which the definitions emerge, we also distinguished the typologies referred to when addressing the subject of competencies. These appear in only three of the articles reviewed.

Table 5. Types of competencies mentioned in the studies.

Competencies typologies	Studies
Scientific, practical, cross-cutting, and career (Allen, 2009)	(Monteiro et al., 2021)
Instrumental, interpersonal, and professional competencies (Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. González, J., & Wagenaar, R., 2003)	(Pujol-Jover et al., 2022)
Key competencies in education for sustainable development (Wals, A.E.J., 2012). Employability skills (Suleman, L., 2016). Skills for a Digital World (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2016). Skills for a Digital World). Digital competencies (Popova, S., Koroleva, E., Efremova, M., 2023).	(Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2019); (Konovalova et al., 2023)
Competencies for lifelong learning (Lifelong et al., 2007). Key competencies for lifelong learning: European reference	

framework. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities)

Knowledge-skills-attitude (KSA)(Myers et al., 2004) (Munkácsi & Krisztina, 2023)

Knowledge, Skills, Work activities, Work styles (O\*NET, 2023) (Colombo & Marcato, 2023)

Data Literacy (Ridsdale et al. 2015; Heidrich et al. 2018; Etsiwah, 2021), Future Skills (Ehlers, 2020; Binkley et al. 2012; Freise 2018) (Herrmann et al., 2023)

Intercultural competencies (Thomas et al., 2008) (Li & Valerievna, 2023)

## Question 2. How are competencies evaluated?

To answer this question, we analyzed the content of the methodological detail of the 76 selected studies. The results led to identifying two measurement trends in the documents. On the one hand, we found studies that measured or developed some intervention to assess competencies; on the other hand, we identified studies that examined the characteristics and progress of competencies from a theoretic perspective.

Concerning the studies that developed some intervention or measurement, we found 32 studies reporting measurement instruments in the defined research methodology. These studies' samples included students, graduates, professors, and business people. Among the characteristics of these studies, eleven collected purely qualitative data through interviews and focus groups. On the other hand, 14 of these works were quantitative, with a tendency to conduct mainly descriptive and correlational studies. There were also three quantitative studies using different methodological approaches: an S.E.M. model, a repeated-measures model, and a case study. Finally, four mixed studies involved quantitative analyses predominating over qualitative ones. Table 6 shows details.

Table 6. Types of studies and characteristics of competencies measurement.

Type of Study	Instruments or techniques used	Sample/ Participants	Studies
Qualitative/ Descriptive	Interviews	Entrepreneurs	(Roulin & Bangerter, 2013);
		Teachers	(Bartual Figueras & Turmo Garuz, 2016);
		Students	(Priksht et al., 2020); (Gil-Galván et al., 2021);
		Graduates	(Monteiro et al., 2021); (Almeida de Camargo



		Representatives of state entities	Pereira & Felicetti, 2022); (Mayombe, 2024); (Herrmann et al., 2023); (Kuznetsova et al., 2023)
		People from: public administration, research institutes, professional and business associations, social associations, policy consultancy, international cultural exchange and international cooperation.	
Qualitative/Descriptive/Combined Techniques	Interviews Focus groups. Topic review Checklists Participatory Co-Design (PC-D)	Students Graduates Teachers Employers	(Ornellas et al., 2019) ; (Okolie et al., 2020); (Hora, 2020); (Jelonek & Urbaniec, 2019); (Stuss et al., 2019); (Rebelo et al., 2023); (Khasanova et al., 2023); (Munkácsi & Krisztina, 2023); (Castro Pais et al., 2023); (Valencia-Arias et al., 2023)
Quantitative/Descriptive/Combined with other designs: Comparative correlation.	Questionnaire Survey Project surveys and their data (REFLEX; OECD	Students Graduates	(Shopova, 2014); (Vila et al., 2014); (Jerrim & Macmillan, 2015); (Teo, 2023); (Tominc & Rožman, 2023);
Multivariate Experimental Quasi-experimental	Adult Competencies (PIAAC)) Questionnaire	Students	(Camacho-Miñano & Del Campo, 2015); (Monteiro et al., 2021); (Jackson & Wilton, 2017);(Figueiredo et al., 2017) ; (Herrera et al., 2017); (Michavila et al., 2018);

	Survey		(Wang et al., 2018); (E M Akhmetshin et al., 2019); (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2021); (Martínez-Argüelles et al., 2023); (Li & Valerievna, 2023); (Pažur Aničić et al., 2023)
Quantitative/ Exploratory	Text mining, Network analysis - centrality	Professional training programs Offers published in job portals	(Börner et al., 2018); (Qu, 2023); (Colombo & Marcato, 2023); (McGowan et al., 2023); (Bakhmat, 2023); (Kulikova et al., 2023)
Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis			
Quantitative/S.E.M. Analysis - Equation Modeling structural	Questionnaire	Students	(Gora et al., 2019)
Quantitative/ Transversal/Repeat ed Measures	Survey	Students Graduates	(Pujol-Jover et al., 2022)
Quantitative/Case Study	Checklists	University representatives, Company representatives	(Coccoli et al., 2015)
Mixed/Descriptive combined with other designs: correlational, experimental, Interpretive	Questionnaire Interviews	Students Employers University managers	(Martín Del Peso et al., 2013); (Torres-Coronas & Vidal-Blasco, 2015); (Kaminska et al., 2017); (Vasiljeva et al., 2019)

Twenty studies did not use measurement processes. For this study, we decided to characterize and analyze the studies that did not involve measurement to understand their methodologies and purposes. The findings led to identifying two types of studies that did not include the measurement of competencies: Theoretical-critical analytical, and Methodological proposal for the development of a conceptual model.

First, we found that the theoretical-analytical studies focused on the following topics:

- Importance of developing transversal competencies: socioemotional competencies and emotional intelligence (Fragoso-Luzuriaga, 2015).
- Relevance of digital skills and critical thinking in college students (Kozorez et al., 2020).
- Developing a model that integrates transversal and disciplinary competencies (Goulart et al., 2022).
- Proposal for a framework for lifelong learning competencies for work demanded by the labor sector and professional updating (Quendler & Lamb, 2016).
- Understanding the challenges of European higher education in disciplinary and cross-disciplinary training and work certifications (Pavlin & Svetlik, 2014).
- Analysis of the connection between translation and interpreting skills development and the labor market (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017).
- Analysis of the use of technological tools for teaching and evaluating transversal competencies in Higher Education (José Sá & Serpa, 2018).
- Relationship between labor market introduction and vocational training of competencies in the framework of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Grossman et al., 2017).
- Development of competencies and skills in digitalization and the knowledge economy of the labor market (Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2019).

Studies that were critical-analytical and theoretical reviews.

- Development of professional disciplinary competencies in engineering, design, and use of technological tools (Ivanov et al., 2018).
- Soft and job skills training in Higher Education (Zighan & EL-Qasem, 2021).
- Model designs for training competencies starting with labor sector needs (Medina et al., 2020).
- Relationship between employability and perceived transversal skills training in graduates (Belchior-Rocha et al., 2022).
- Industry 4.0 Context Analysis and training of specific and transversal competencies (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020).
- Analysis on European research on the labor market, STEAM skills development, and lifelong learning in the contemporary context of the technological revolution and companies' digitalization (Piatkowski, 2020).
- Propose a new Unified Credential Framework (UCF) and competencies training for the model to ensure that all post-secondary education is practical and straightforward (Thorne et al., 2023).
- Generate a reference guide with recommendations on the best educational methods to develop ethical, communicative, self-monitoring, and evaluation competencies in healthcare professionals (Niyazova & Niyazov, 2023).
- Development of proposed solutions to improve digital skills among forestry personnel (Konovalova et al., 2023)

Finally, Achcaoucaou et al. (2014) proposed a model to develop transversal and occupational competencies in university students. Heymann et al. (2022) proposed a method based on competency framework documents and reports such as DeSeCo (2002), European Commission (2006), OECD (2012), and theorists such as Le Boterf (1994), Spencer and Spencer (1993), among others.

Question 3. What competencies are most frequently analyzed in higher education studies and industry, and to what type are those?

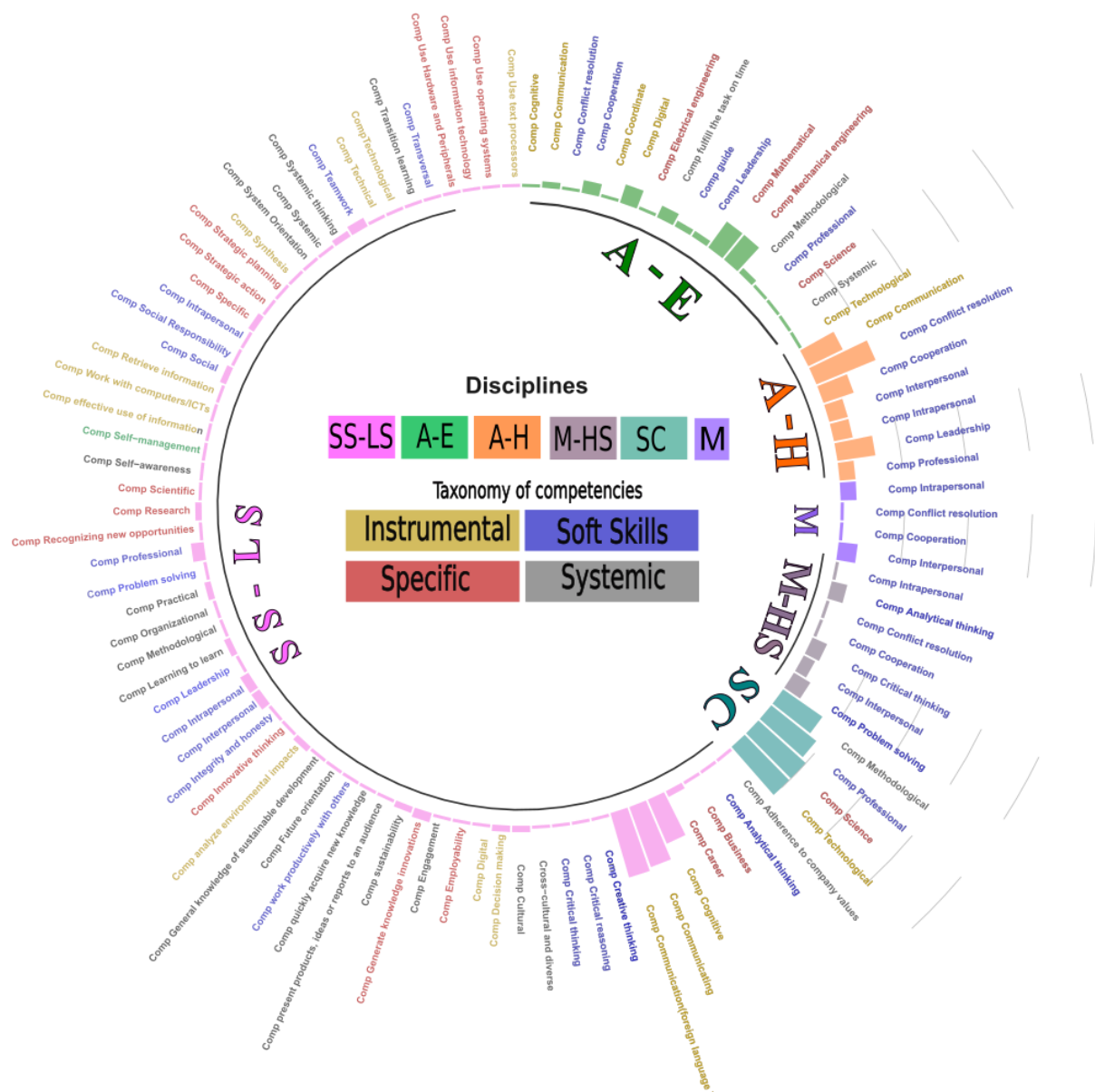


Figure 4. Taxonomy of Competencies analyzed in six disciplinary areas.

In the 75 studies examined in the contain, we identified that instrumental competencies such as communication, technological, and cognitive were mainly developed in SS-LS, A-H, and SC. In addition, the development of

soft skills, such as problem-solving, leadership, critical thinking, and teamwork, were the most evaluated competencies in the 75 studies. The areas of M-HS and A-H were the ones that most developed soft competencies. Instrumental competencies (e.g., use of information, technological), and specific competencies (e.g., mathematical, strategic action) are analyzed more intensely in the SS-LS and A-E areas. Something similar happened with systemic competencies (e.g., transitory learning, systemic thinking, practical), which are developed to a greater extent in the SS-LS area. Figure 4 presents the distribution of competencies by discipline area.

## Discussion

We highlight four points based on the analysis and its conclusions. The first refers to the role of organizations such as UNESCO, the OECD, the World Bank, and the I.B.E., among the main ones, and the influence of their definitions of competencies on research on the subject. Adopting these guidelines as confirmation of the descriptions and operationalizations of competencies corresponds to the worldwide incidence of these organizations' educational and economic systems studies. This is precisely where competency-based education is located, at the intersection of training and job placement.

The second refers to the relevance of developing and training competencies to respond to global challenges because it does not refer to particular regional or national situations. In this work, we have identified a marked trend towards the training of soft and instrumental competencies. This allows us to establish this growing tendency to examine soft competencies, as previous works have done in postgraduate programs (García-Chitiva & Correa, 2023). This indicates that higher education institutions and the labor market need global references to orient their perspectives and strategies (McKeown, 2020).

A third point that emerges from the results is the significance of training in professional and labor competencies in the last decade. The growing and increasingly focused orientation towards strengthening human capital is evident, even surpassing the analysis on the development of disciplinary competencies addressed in previous decades (Malinowski, 1993). Training critical and decisive individuals with competencies that enable them to innovate, work in teams, communicate assertively and effectively, self-manage, and lead groups, to mention some of the competencies desired in the labor market, is a challenge discussed in global agendas.

In addition, this review allowed us to identify a taxonomy that considered six areas of knowledge with four specific emphases of competency analysis (instrumental competencies, soft competencies, specific competencies, and systemic competencies), where soft and instrumental competencies predominated. This finding shows a clear shift in research on competencies in higher education towards the formation of human capital, professionals with sufficient competencies to interact in their environment and effectively use the disciplinary knowledge they develop in university education. Likewise, the advent of artificial intelligence with tools such as ChatGPT and other emerging technologies further anticipates this trend in the future (García-

Peñalvo, 2023).

A fourth and final point refers to the current conceptualization of competition, which has become polysemic. The concept does not have a single definition because its meaning varies according to the disciplinary approach from which it is analyzed and operationalized. However, it is pertinent to note a reflection derived from the study: the polysemy of the concept of competence is necessary to strengthen the curricular, instructional, and functional characteristics and needs of each area of knowledge. Innovating from this particularity could enhance the work using the competency-based approach. This innovation accepts the plurality of definitions and taxonomies based on the needs of each field of study and the continuous improvement for a measurement that goes beyond the participants' perceptions.

Among the data collection techniques, self-reports, standardized surveys such as REFLEX and HEGESCO, interviews, and focus groups received priority in the studies analyzed. These mechanisms inquired about the opinions of students, graduates, faculty, and employers about the competencies trained, required, and needed. However, this approach reveals a methodological gap. We suggest using instruments such as rubrics, portfolios, observations, and qualitative approaches for a comprehensive understanding of the development of competencies in students and graduates.

Likewise, we identified unexplored gaps in the study on the subject. These may reveal themes in future studies on competencies in vocational education. For example, it would be opportune to investigate the development of competencies with individual factors, such as cognitive styles, learning styles, and self-regulation, and the incidence of this relationship with teaching methods and the performance of graduates in the labor field. Following this idea, (Salas, 2014) concluded with the need to analyze how universities can add value to the training of their students by ensuring that teaching, learning, and assessment methods can improve the development of competencies relevant to the labor market.

Another aspect to highlight concerns the context in which competencies are researched. The involvement of employers in the analyses is evident. The studies analyzed reflect the need to take advantage of employees' diverse skills at a personal and individual level, reinforcing the importance of improving companies' organizational cultures through continuous training (Hora, 2020).

The studies were conducted in the university professional setting and focused on examining the possible elements associated with developing competencies and success in employability through analyzing behavior and personal and intrapersonal factors. They also reviewed the competencies that lead to efficient teamwork (Herrera et al., 2017), a valuable indicator. Previous works have shown the benefits of collaborative learning in professional training (García Chitiva, 2020; García-Chitiva, 2021), reflected in the competence developed by professionals about to enter the labor market. This is useful for further work to be carried out in baccalaureate and postgraduate programs. It is worth highlighting this last aspect since most of the works were developed in the context of higher education in bachelor's degree programs; it is worth examining in more detail the

development of competencies in graduate programs, as suggested by (Garcia-Chitiva & Correa, 2023).

## Conclusion

This study has focused on the last decade, showing significant changes in forming professional and labor competencies. These changes are oriented to the demands of the business world of the 21st century. Companies seek professionals with specialized knowledge and consolidated interdisciplinary and soft skills. Thus, one of the challenges for higher education and the labor market is to reconfigure the curricula formulated from the perspective of training for and throughout life, which includes solid disciplinary training that is situated and coherent with the needs of the context at all educational levels, and that strengthens the development of competencies for self-management, collaborative work, critical thinking, and positive leadership, among others. It is clear that, although there are references that allow analyzing and operationalizing competencies, it is necessary to understand them from their contextual nature. The tasks associated with professional and job training within the various disciplinary areas demand different competencies from individuals. Therefore, it is relevant to recognize the type of competencies that characterize such contextual frameworks in each case to identify appropriate ways to enhance, evaluate, and measure their level of development.

Research on competencies needs to be more widely developed at the technical and graduate levels. It is necessary to address this need in these populations, considering that the emphasis on competencies is dynamic and aligned to the needs of the social context and that the learning and development of competencies should be sustainable and guaranteed throughout life.

The results and discussion allow us to understand that the linkage process required to strengthen the transition from higher education to the labor market based on competencies is in its early stages. If the trend shows that the topic of employability is currently of interest for educational research at a higher level, with 26% of the articles reviewed related to the academic field and the labor market, an increase in scientific production is expected in the coming years, which will clarify and contextualize efforts on both sides.

The work presented here also allowed us to understand the different practices used to measure the level of performance of educational institutions and the labor sector. Undoubtedly, much remains to be done in terms of metrics. At present, it is still complex to advance in the use of instruments and evidence to strengthen evaluation systems that allow us to issue more precise results on the level of performance beyond perception. We hope to see more solid proposals in the coming years.

This study also derives from a suggestion emanating from the tendency to generate spaces for permanent updating on different topics. In this specific case, it would be important that organizations and institutions dedicated to research and the generation of models or principles on competencies could generate observatories from which to document and review progress on the subject by area of knowledge. Some observatories, such as



the one dedicated to the engineering discipline in Mexico (Mexico, n.d.), could be a reference for future initiatives that favor a better understanding of training demands and the labor market.

## Recommendations

In this study, only articles from one database (Scopus) were analyzed due to researchers' ease of access to this information source. It is recommended that subsequent studies interested in replicating this study extend the observations with studies obtained from other databases.

## Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the financial and technical support of Writing Lab, Institute for the Future of Education, Tecnologico de Monterrey, Mexico, in the production of this work.

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## Inside-Outside: A Local Theory for Strengthening Deprived Schools' Ecosystems and Enhancing Teacher Practices

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**Abstract:** This study proposes a local theory called "Inside-Outside" to strengthen a deprived school microsystem. The theory aims to reduce the cycle of ignorance in schools with poor infrastructure facilities, large groups of students, located in high-crime areas, children from low-income families with low levels of schooling, and families unable to support students with school tasks at home, thereby leaving the learning process entirely to teachers, who must bridge the technological and pedagogical institutional gaps. This qualitative study was based on empirical findings and followed the educational design research methodology. Fieldwork was conducted with third- and fourth-grade students and teachers in an urban school in an impoverished area in Honduras. The theory contributes to improving teachers' practices by considering students' socioeconomic contexts, limited access to digital tools, and engagement with non-profit organizations to compensate for insufficient family and government support. Inside-Outside theory serves as a comprehensive framework for transformative educational practices that empower educators and uplift students in resource-constrained settings.

**Keywords:** deprived schools, local theory, low-income families, impoverished areas, digital tools

**Citation:** Rivera García, M.I. (2024). Inside-Outside: A local theory for strengthening deprived schools' ecosystems and enhancing teacher practices. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024—International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1746–1769), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

This study was conducted in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in a school situated in Rivera Hernandez, a socioeconomically challenged neighborhood that is under gang control. Many children in this neighborhood are forced to abandon their education due to poverty and limited opportunities. In fact, the mean number of years of schooling in Honduras from 2013 to 2023 (no data reported in 2020) was 8.9 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2023). According to the World Bank's Human Capital Index (2023), "A child born in Honduras today will be 48 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health." These data are a faithful reflection of what happens in the school and neighborhood where we conducted this study.

Educational design research (McKenney & Reeves, 2019) has been instrumental in the researcher's efforts to develop a comprehensive theory derived from classroom experiences with students and teachers. By analyzing data collected between 2015 and 2019, during the researcher's doctoral studies at Aalborg University in Denmark (Rivera, 2019), the researcher refined a local theory which goes beyond technology and pedagogy considerations. It accounts for the challenging contexts that children face in socioeconomically deprived educational settings. With support from a non-profit organization, Zamora Terán Foundation, providing technology, traditional pedagogy was transformed into an active approach that employed problem- and project-based learning (PBL) approaches. Teachers were integral to this process, receiving training in the new pedagogical model and contributing to the lesson prototype development.

Since pedagogy and technology do not independently address the issues faced by students, the need to integrate external elements to strengthen the microsystem arises. The proposal for a local theory emerges from this premise. This study introduces a local theory termed "Inside-Outside" that was designed to fortify an underserved school's microsystem. Originating in a disadvantaged area in a public school characterized by violence and poverty, this theory bolsters education in high-poverty contexts by establishing a secure school environment for students and teachers. Developed by synthesizing the theoretical frameworks, with insights from educators and students, and input from school administrators, this theory was crafted via meticulous observation of processes and the application of various methodologies to comprehend challenges and opportunities (Rivera, 2018a).

The researcher's motivation to present this theory stems from a desire to meaningfully contribute to the educational experiences of children in similar circumstances to children in Rivera Hernández. Following educational design research (EDR), the researcher shaped this theory and addressed the complex needs of students in educational settings (Rivera, 2019).

### Theories Underpinning Inside-Outside Local Theory

Student-centered learning has emerged as a pivotal approach in the education landscape, placing learners at the forefront of the educational process. This paradigm shift is underpinned by the contributions of pioneering educators who championed the ideals of experiential learning, cognitive development, and the importance of social interactions in the learning process (Rivera, 2018b).

Table 1. Educational theories to sustain the Inside-Outside components of the local theory

Authors	Main Student-Centered Characteristics	Key Concepts
John Dewey (1916)	Learning by doing  Experiential learning	- Experiential learning - Teaching to live in society -Real-life experiences

	Teaching to live in society	"'To learn from experience' is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence" (Dewey, 1916/2007, p. 117)
Maria Montessori (1914)	Importance of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning about the materials and tools used in the classroom</li> <li>- Importance of teacher observation in understanding children's needs</li> </ul> <p>"My method is scientific, both in its substance and in its aim. It makes for the attainment of a more advanced stage of progress, in directions no longer only material and physiological" (Montessori, 1914/1964, p. 8)</p>
Jean Piaget (1929)	Stages of cognitive development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children discover knowledge</li> </ul> <p>"The child's convictions are the product of a reaction influenced but not dictated by the adult" (Piaget, 1929, p.28)</p>
Lev Vygotsky (1978)	Zone of proximal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scaffolding: children learning with the assistance of adults or other peers</li> <li>- Learning as a social process</li> </ul> <p>"That children's learning begins long before they attend school is the starting point of this discussion. Any learning a child encounters in school always has a previous history"(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84)</p>

The local Inside-Outside theory draws on the foundational principles and insights of prominent figures in student-centered learning, as elucidated in the Table 1. Each educator—Dewey (1916), Montessori (1914), Piaget (1929), and Vygotsky (1978)—has contributed unique perspectives and concepts that inform the Inside-Outside framework. From Dewey’s emphasis on experiential learning and societal engagement to Montessori’s focus on the role of environment and observation, these key characteristics are woven into the fabric of the Inside-Outside approach. Likewise, Piaget’s stages of cognitive development and Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development and scaffolding principles serve as guiding pillars for understanding the dynamic interactions between learners, educators, and the learning environment in the Inside-Outside framework. The Inside-Outside theory integrates these insights to create a holistic and adaptive learning ecosystem that empowers students to thrive in diverse educational settings.

The theory endeavors to break the cycle of ignorance manifests when children from impoverished backgrounds

face limited access to quality schooling due to factors such as poverty and poor infrastructure. This lack of access perpetuates a cycle wherein these children are unable to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome their circumstances. Schools confronted with various challenges, such as having inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding in classrooms, being located in high-crime areas, and serving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who have limited access to educational resources and parental support. In addition to addressing pedagogical aspects, this theory draws on the insights of educators who seek to not only transform teaching methods but also impact the broader environment hindering student learning. Therefore, Inside-Outside theory, it is grounded in the principles of prominent theorists who advocate for systemic changes to uplift educational practices and mitigate the barriers faced by students.

Table 2. Educational theories that influence the outside components of Inside-Outside the local theory

Theory	Key Concepts
Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasizes the multiple layers of influence on human development</li> <li>- Considers internal and external factors impacting education</li> <li>- Addresses the interconnectedness of individuals with their social and physical environments</li> </ul>
Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1970)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocates for education as a tool for liberation and social transformation</li> <li>- Emphasizes participatory, student-centered learning</li> <li>- Critiques oppressive educational structures</li> </ul>
Activity Theory (Engeström, 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasizes the role of social interactions and cultural context in shaping cognitive development</li> <li>- Leverages peer support networks and community involvement to scaffold students' learning experiences</li> <li>- Recognizes the importance of social interaction and collaborative learning in educational settings</li> </ul>

By integrating perspectives from scholars such as Bronfenbrenner, Freire, and Engeström, the Inside-Outside theory aims to create an inclusive and supportive educational ecosystem, bridging the gap between technological advancements and pedagogical approaches. This holistic approach acknowledges the interplay between socioeconomic factors and educational outcomes and strives to empower both students and educators as they navigate complex social contexts.

This article aims to develop a local theory called Inside-Outside that draws from insights gained from a specific school experience situated in a deprived area, Rivera Hernández neighborhood in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. The objective of this proposal is to use this theory to strengthen the educational microsystem in disadvantaged settings.

**Method**

This study used EDR as its methodology (McKenney & Reeves, 2019), since it integrates theory and practice. It allows the researcher to achieve two goals: providing theoretical insights into the challenges faced by underprivileged schools in impoverished areas and implementing practical solutions to improve the quality of education at the micro level.

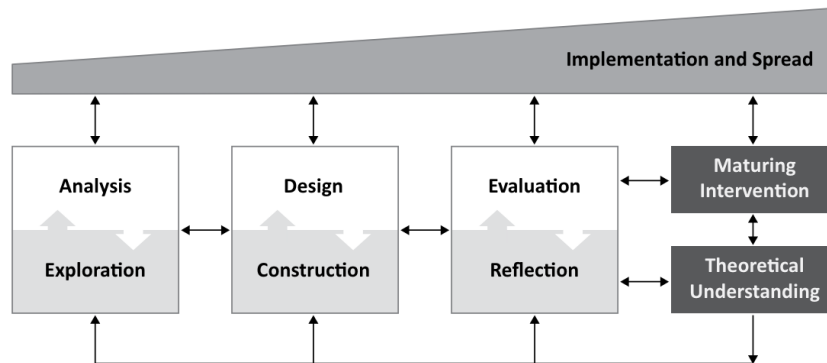


Figure 1. Generic model for conducting design research in education

The flexibility EDR of enables researchers to pursue their goals in real-world contexts by collaborating with key stakeholders, such as teachers, school authorities, students, and technology providers. The generic model EDR provides helps organize, manage, and classify collected data. This generic model allows for the creation of local theories (see Figure 1), with the empirical evidence collected and literature review (Gyamfi, 2014; Mckenney & Reeves, 2019).

Table 3. Main aspects for conducting educational design research (EDR)

Phase	Approach	Key Methods
Analysis and Exploration	Conduct literature review and problem orientation	- Literature review - Visual anthropology (Collier & Collier, 1986)
	Collaborate on artifact production	- Informal meetings
	Select research methods	- Participant observation
	Understand context through fieldwork	- In-depth interviews
Data Gathering and Analysis	Utilize qualitative methods for data collection and analysis	- Classroom observation
	Identify intangible factors influencing research issue	- Survey of students
	Identify decision-makers	- In-depth interviews of principal and authorities
Design and	Reflect on inputs from previous phase	- Future workshop (Jungk &



Construction		Müllert, 1987)
	Generate ideas for design	Brainstorming
	Identify needs for prototype design	-Team work
	Develop prototype	-Classroom design
Evaluation and Reflection	Test prototype through evaluation	- Implementation in class
	Reflect on implementation	- Interviews teachers and students

As McKenney and Reeves explain, "in educational design research, local theory is produced when limited manifestations of a certain phenomenon are studied (e.g. several iterations of one basic intervention are studied in just a few classrooms)" (p. 40). This approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers and constraints within a specific ecological context. Local theories are described as "relatively humble," using a quote from Cobb et al. (2003, p. 9).

### Unit of analysis

In this study, the unit of analysis comprises a school environment situated in an underprivileged area that is controlled by various criminal gangs and characterized by a high crime rate. The daily routines for both students and teachers involve commuting under risky conditions. The researcher sought to comprehend the external context, particularly the challenges encountered by individuals in the vicinity of the school during their daily commutes.

The researcher also delved into the internal dynamics of the school environment, focusing on teachers and students interacting in their typical setting, examining school infrastructure, and assessing technology use in the classroom. To obtain comprehensive insights, the researcher listened to students and teacher experiences and perspectives. engaged with teachers and students, listening to their perspectives and experiences.

The data collection methods included visual anthropology, participant observation, surveys, interviews, and future workshops, a technique to find solutions in a collaborative way (Vidal, 2006). These diverse approaches facilitated a thorough exploration of external and internal contexts, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities present.

To analyze the collected data, the researcher utilized the Theory of Constraints (TOC) framework (Goldratt, 1990), activity theory (Engestrom, 1989), and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1970). Using this analytical approach the researcher identify the primary constraints hindering the implementation of PBL using information and communication technology (ICT) in a public school operating in an impoverished area. Through this analysis, this study uncovered key barriers and proposed strategies to overcome them, ultimately enhancing educational practices in the school environment.

## Results

Through observation using a semi-structured questioner, the researcher observed third-grade, and found that 6 out of 10 of Freire's contradictions were employed. The study identified several problems with the teacher–student dynamics, as articulated using Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970).

This study identified several key issues with the traditional teaching approach: a one-way flow of information from teacher to student, leading to passivity among students; an imbalance in knowledge distribution, with the teacher as the sole authority; a lack of active student participation, hindering critical thinking development; deficient dialogue and collaboration opportunities in the classroom; an overreliance on teacher discipline and control, limiting student autonomy; and a troubling imbalance in the learning process, where students are treated as passive recipients rather than active participants.

Table 4. Main contradictions studied based on Freire (1970)

<b>Teacher–Student Contradictions (Freire, 1970)</b>	<b>Identified Problems</b>
The teacher teaches and the student is taught	Traditional teaching approach and student passivity
The teacher knows everything, and the student knows nothing	Excessive dependence on the teacher to transmit knowledge
The teacher thinks and the student is thought	Lack of active student participation
The teacher talks and the student listens docilely	Lack of dialogue and collaboration in the classroom
The teacher disciplines and the student is disciplined	Excessive dependence on teacher discipline and control
The teacher is the subject of the learning process, and the students are mere objects	Students viewed as passive recipients, expected to absorb and memorize the information the teacher provides without active engagement or critical thinking

The findings highlighted significant problems inherent in traditional teaching methods, as elucidated by Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. These issues include a one-way flow of information from teacher to student, resulting in student passivity; an overemphasis on the teacher as the sole authority of knowledge; a lack of active student participation, hindering critical thinking development; lack of dialogue and collaboration opportunities in the classroom; an excessive reliance on teacher discipline and control; and a troubling imbalance in the learning process, where students are relegated to passive recipients rather than active participants.

Table 4 shows the identified contradictions and their associated problems, which highlights the need for transformative pedagogical approaches that prioritize student engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative learning.

#### *External environment*

The external environment's impact on school performance becomes evident, highlighting traditional disciplinary approaches' insufficiency in the classroom. There was a recognized necessity for children to develop self-discipline by fostering intrinsic motivation toward integration into society, rather than through punitive measures. The emphasis lies in enabling students to comprehend their reality, cultivate self-confidence, and nurture a positive self-image, empowering them to effect transformative changes in their circumstances.

Beyond the provision of technology, there arises an urgent call to aid children in emancipating themselves from the shackles of poverty and insecurity. Drawing inspiration from Freire (1970, p. 66), liberation is perceived as praxis—an amalgamation of action and reflection aimed at transforming the world. Thus, a genuine commitment to liberation rejects both the mechanistic view of consciousness as an empty vessel and the imposition of banking methods of domination in the guise of liberation.

The researcher selected TOC as their analysis methodology because it offers thinking process tools specifically designed to tackle constraints unearthed during the research process. TOC revolves around three pivotal questions geared toward overcoming system constraints. First, "What to change?" demands a comprehensive grasp of the process areas in need of improvement and the identification of core issues. Second, "To what to change to?" entails considering feasible and easy-to-implement solutions. Third, "How to cause the change?" entails actively engaging participants in the quest for solutions.

The constraints were identified and delineated by a comprehensive analysis of data collected via future workshops with teachers, observations using Freire's contradictions, and the examination of two cases utilizing activity theory. These constraints fall into two main categories: technological and pedagogical. Technological constraints encompass issues such as weak Internet connections, inadequate equipment maintenance, and insufficient hardware and software protection.

Pedagogical constraints include limited teacher training, reliance on traditional teaching methods, and large class sizes with inadequate support. These challenges significantly impact instructional delivery and student engagement, preventing obstacles to the implementation of innovative teaching approaches. Additionally, factors related to student children's well-being, such as nutrition and school–community relationships, further compound these challenges. Addressing these constraints is imperative for fostering an environment conducive to quality education and the successful integration of ICT and pedagogy in the classroom.

According to Goldratt (1990), a system constraint is "nothing more than what we all feel to be expressed by

these words: anything that limits a system from achieving higher performance versus its goal." TOC is a "management philosophy, which emerged in the early 1980s. The development of TOC is credited in the main to Goldratt, an Israeli physicist who has had a remarkable impact on the business world, especially in the U.S." (Mabin & Balderstone, 2000, p. 1).

Table 5. Main constraints identified by following the Theory of Constraints (TOC) (Goldratt, 1990)

Constraint Type	Description
Technological	Weak Internet connection provided by a private company, inadequate equipment maintenance, lack of protection for hardware and software, and insufficient power connectors
Pedagogical	Limited pedagogical training for teachers, persistent use of traditional teaching methods, and large class sizes without assistants
Children's Well-being	Lack of emphasis on children's nutrition, limited school–community relationships, and an inability for students to take XO computers home due to safety concerns

These constraints are categorized into two main types: physical and non-physical. Physical constraints encompass issues such as inadequate equipment maintenance, a lack of appropriate furniture, insufficient power connectors, limited access to quality Internet connections, and a lack of maintenance resources. Non-physical constraints include limited pedagogical training for teachers, persistent use of traditional teaching methods, large class sizes without assistants, and a lack of emphasis on children's nutrition. Addressing these constraints is crucial for creating an environment that is conducive to effective teaching practices and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students.

Table 6. Types of constraints identified based on Goldratt (1990)

Constraint Type (TOC)	Description
Physical	Inadequate equipment maintenance, a lack of appropriate furniture, insufficient power connectors, limited access to quality Internet connections, and a lack of resources for maintenance
Non-Physical	Limited pedagogical training for teachers, persistent use of traditional teaching methods, large class sizes without assistants, and a lack of emphasis on children's nutrition

Using evaporating cloud representation to summarize the answer to what to change in the classroom during this research (TOC).

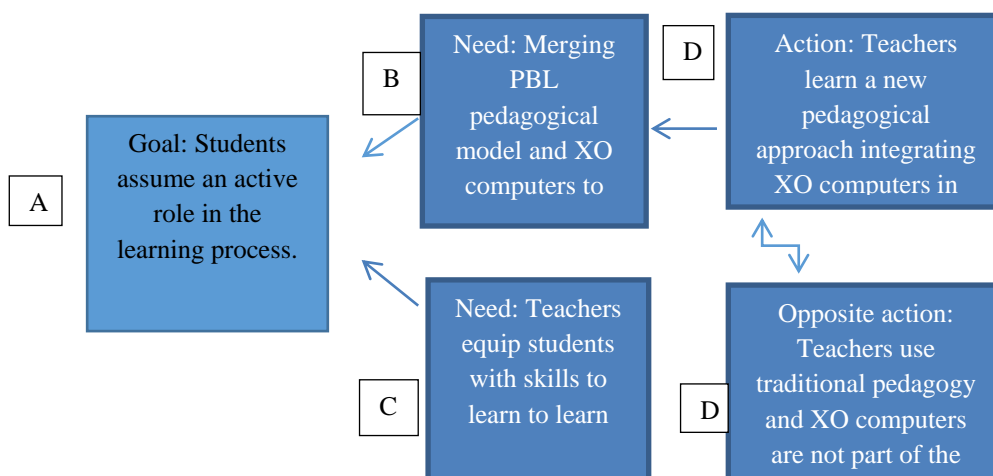


Figure 2. Using evaporating cloud to respond: "What to change in the classroom?"

As Figure 2 illustrates, the essence of the change can be synthesized as follows: The aim is to enable students to become active participants in the learning process by integrating the PBL approach with the use of XO computers, thus promoting student-centered learning. Furthermore, the objective involves equipping teachers with the training necessary to impart students with the essential skills required to confront the challenges of the 21st century while also resolving the tension between traditional and nontraditional teaching methods (Rivera, 2020).

*Future workshop*

A future workshop is a participative approach that empowers the participants and promotes critical thinking, teamwork, and democratic principles (Vidal, 2006). A future workshop is appropriate for developing countries in which democracy is weak and freedom of speech is risky, so participants might be afraid to speak about their views. Future workshops were created with the intent of democratizing participation and seeking joint solutions to problems (Jungk & Müllert, 1987).

In this case, the participants were 25 elementary school teachers who had XO computers available for teaching in the classroom. The researcher facilitated the workshop, guiding the participants through the different phases and working with staff from the Zamora Terán Foundation (ZTF), the school's main provider of XO computers and technical support. I followed the steps for the future workshop method (see Table 7).

Table 7. Future workshop developed with schoolteachers (Jungk & Müllert, 1987)

Phase	Teacher Role	Main Outcome
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Preparation	Collaborator and contributor	Identification of opportunities and constraints related to introducing problem/project-based learning (PBL) using computers in suburban schools
Critique	Participant and discussant	Identification and discussion of limitations of utilizing XO computers and teacher-oriented pedagogy, highlighting challenges related to technology, pedagogy, infrastructure, and student performance
Fantasy	Visionary and creative contributor	Creative expression of aspirations and dreams for an ideal educational environment through drawings and discussions, envisioning improvements in infrastructure, teaching methods, technological resources, and student well-being
Implementation	Decision-maker and evaluator	Selection of implementable solutions to address identified constraints, active participation in evaluating proposed ideas, considering factors such as feasibility, practicality, and potential impact

*Pedagogical model developed with practitioners*

The pedagogical model depicted in Figure 3 emerged from the empirical testing of prototypes in the classroom, which were shaped collaboratively by students, teachers, and researchers. The primary objective is to cultivate 21st-century skills through student-centered learning and empowering children in impoverished areas to break the cycle of generational ignorance by acquiring essential soft skills to thrive in a digital society. Constraints were identified during this process.

Key Steps for Designing a Pedagogical Model for Economically Challenged areas:

1. Construct prototypes to bridge the techno-pedagogical gap
2. Test prototype lessons in the classroom
3. Design a student-centered pedagogical model that considers the Inside-Outside microsystem
- 4.

In this pedagogical design, the teacher–student relationship is horizontal, and teachers employ scaffolding strategies to support learners. Teachers honor individual learning styles and serve as facilitators who provide in-classroom coaching and feedback. Students are integral members of a learning community who engage in active, collaborative relationships characterized by mutual support, respect, and assertive communication.

This methodology promotes experiential learning, with students solving real-world problems relevant to their disadvantaged contexts. Initially students develop projects using the scientific method, leveraging ICT for self-directed learning and honing 21st-century skills to fortify the Inside-Outside microsystem they inhabit. Assessments are formative, with teachers and peers offering feedback, and learners engaging in self-assessment to reflect on their learning journeys, achievements, and challenges.

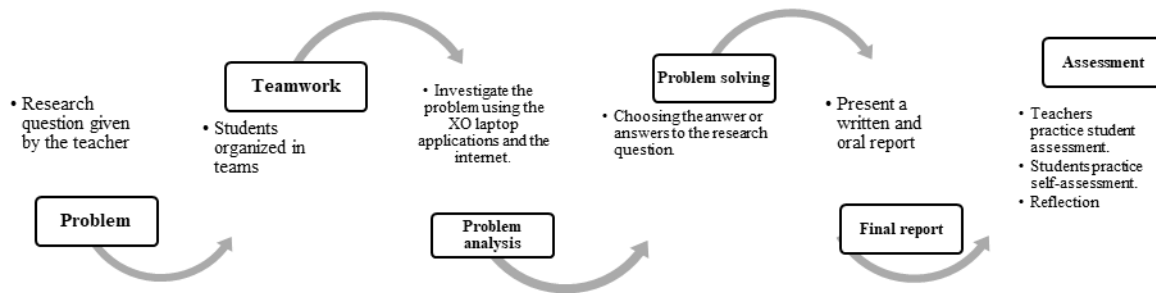


Figure 3. Pedagogical design model resulting from empirical testing in the classroom

*Unfolding the intervention*

The pedagogical model proposed by teachers who underwent PBL training and utilized XO computers was implemented in the classroom and analyzed using activity theory as part of its development.

Two cases were developed, with one involving third graders and the other involving fifth graders. The study participants were teachers who received five days of training in PBL principles and XO computers during an earlier research phase. During this training, the teachers designed a prototype lesson to test. The classroom implementation of the prototype lesson spanned five days, although it was originally planned to cover three days. The lesson plan required more time than anticipated, this led to adjustments in the implementation timeline.

*Case 1—Third graders*

The morning session teacher for third graders, who worked from 7 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday, served a large class (48 students) and taught all subjects. She chose her Spanish class to participate in the present study, intending to improve the students' reading skills. This teacher volunteered to implement a lesson design integrating PBL principles and XO laptops.

The teacher asked the students to take the computers out of the lockers. The students could not take the computers home because the school was in a dangerous area, and the students might be robbed of their computers if they travel with them. The teacher waited until all students had their computers ready to work, which took about 20 minutes, because some students needed to charge their computers' batteries, and there were not enough electrical outlets (see Figure 4).

The teacher organized the students into groups of six to nine, wrote the names of the members of each group on the whiteboard, and asked the student groups to arrange their desks in a circle. Then, the teacher asked the students to create a story and use the XO laptops to search for images and information, read information, and write their stories. The students used Tux Paint to draw, and they used the XO cameras to record interviews (see



Figure 5). Each group's final product was a story they read aloud in front of the class (see Figure 6).



Figure 4. Children charging laptop batteries



Figure 5. Students using Tux paint and recording interviews



Figure 6. Students giving oral presentations

According to activity theory, the object in this context would be the improvement of third-grade children's reading skills in the Spanish class. The outcome would be the strengthening of 21st-century skills, such as teamwork, public speaking, creativity, and problem-solving. The division of labor involves students organizing for teamwork, working peer-to-peer, building knowledge, and teachers acting as facilitators.

The community includes XO providers (such as the ZTF), teachers, students, and administrative staff. The rules establish that students are active learners at the center of knowledge, teachers motivate students to research, and XO is incorporated into the lesson plan. This follows a student-centered approach, where active participation, peer collaboration, and the use of technology to enhance learning are encouraged. This analysis can help

strengthen the Inside-Outside local theory by providing a deeper understanding of how the pedagogical model is implemented and how it contributes to the development of key skills in students.

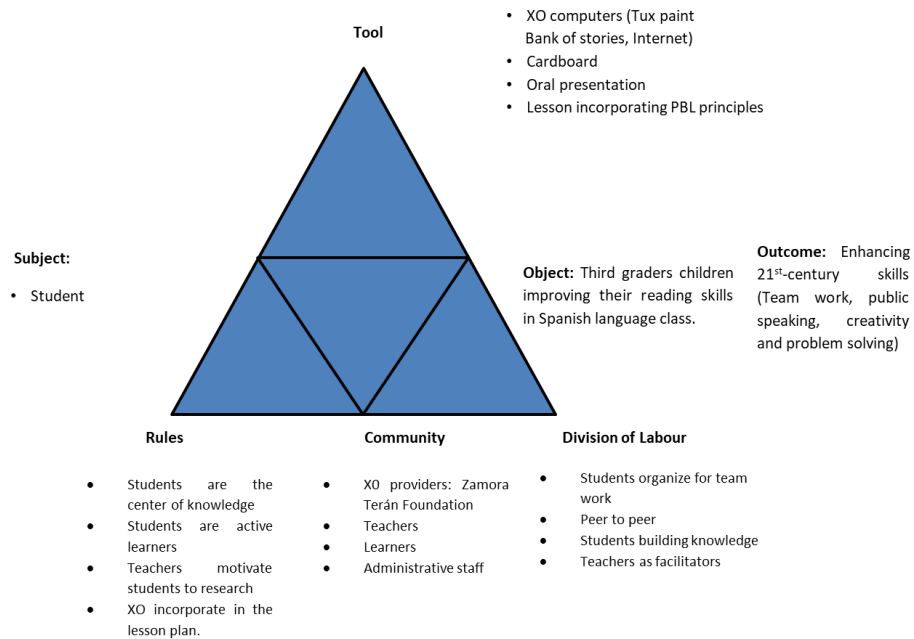


Figure 7. Activity system for student-centered learning for third graders

Case 2—Fifth graders

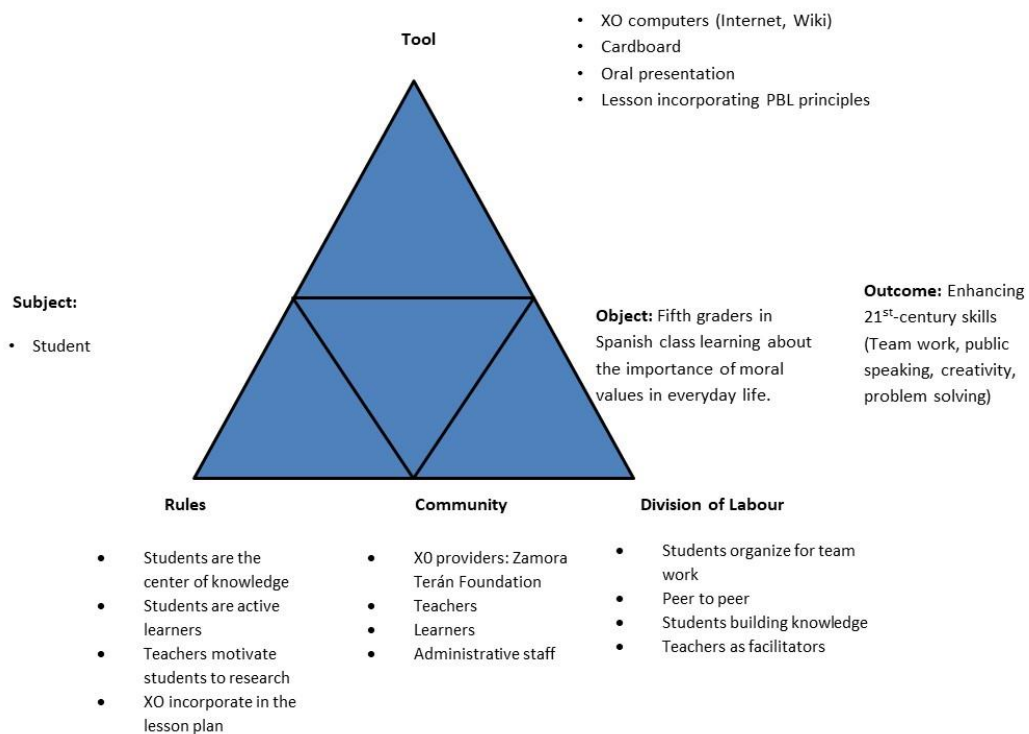


Figure 8. Activity system for student-centered learning for fifth graders

The next implementation experience was with fifth graders. The fifth-grade teacher taught all subjects to 40 children in the morning session, Monday through Friday. She volunteered to participate in the implementation after taking the introductory PBL workshop during an earlier research phase. She chose to develop a Spanish-class lesson using PBL principles and to integrate XO computers as a tool to mediate the process of learning by researching and working in teams.

According to activity theory, the use of various tools—including XO computers (with Internet and Wikipedia access), cardboard, oral presentations, and a lesson incorporating PBL principles—intends to achieve the object of fifth graders in a Spanish class learning about the importance of moral values in everyday life.

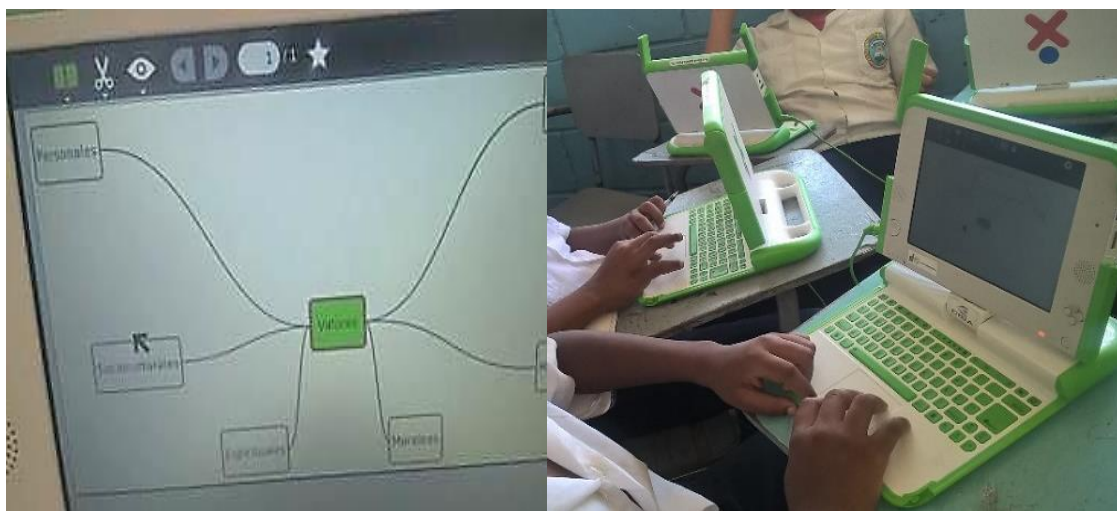


Figure 9. Students working on mental maps and exploring the application independently



Figure 10. Students preparing for an oral presentation

The outcome of this activity is the enhancement of 21st-century skills, such as teamwork, public speaking, creativity, and problem-solving. In terms of the division of labor, students organize themselves for teamwork, collaborate peer-to-peer, and collectively build knowledge. Teachers play a facilitator role, guiding and supporting students in their learning process. The community involved in this activity includes XO providers (such as the ZTF), teachers, students, and administrative staff. Each member of the community plays a vital role in supporting and facilitating the learning process.

The rules established for this activity emphasize that students are at the center of knowledge, encouraging active participation and learning. Teachers are tasked with motivating students to engage in research, and XO computers are incorporated into lesson plans to facilitate learning activities. The subject of this activity is the students themselves, who are actively engaged in the learning process while utilizing various tools and resources to develop important skills and knowledge related to moral values and 21st-century competencies.

*From classroom prototype lessons to a local theory*

A class pedagogical prototype may be insufficient for addressing all the challenges and limitations identified in the research context for the following reasons:

**Challenge Complexity:** The challenges faced in the classroom environment often extend beyond purely pedagogical concerns. They may involve external factors, such as community dynamics, infrastructure limitations, or socio-economic disparities, that cannot be adequately addressed solely within the classroom.

**System Interconnectedness:** The issues affecting education are often interconnected with broader societal, cultural, and economic systems. Attempting to address these challenges solely in the classroom may overlook critical factors that influence pedagogical interventions' effectiveness.

**Resource Limitations:** Classroom-based interventions may be constrained by limited resources, both in terms of physical infrastructure and human capacity. Relying solely on internal resources may not provide the breadth and depth of support necessary to effect meaningful change.

**Need for Holistic Solutions:** Effective solutions to complex educational challenges often require a holistic approach involving multiple stakeholders and resources. A class pedagogical prototype may represent only one aspect of a larger solution, necessitating the involvement of external actors and resources to achieve comprehensive outcomes.

This pedagogical design's methodology asserts that children learn by doing—solving real problems aligned with the demands of their underprivileged contexts. From an early stage, children can develop projects using the scientific method and the appropriate use of ICT for self-directed learning and developing 21st-century skills to strengthen the Inside-Outside microsystem in which they live and study. The assessment process is formative, teachers and peers provide feedback, the learner also practices self-assessment, reflecting on their own learning achievements and struggles.

The pedagogical design in Figure 11 puts students at the center of learning—as most generic PBL models do. However, what distinguishes this model from others are the requirements to be aligned with the Inside-Outside microsystem to consider the student children's underprivileged context when designing and implementing classroom lessons, and to keep in mind ways to contribute to breaking the circle of ignorance.

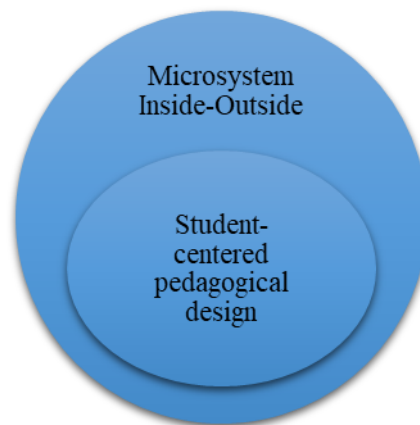


Figure 11. Pedagogical design aligned with the Inside-Outside microsystem

*Process for building the Inside-Outside microsystem local theory*

First, begin by thoroughly examining the external and internal contexts to understand the challenges students face in their neighborhood and family environments. Assess the infrastructure, technology, and teaching practices in the school.

Second, identify the constraints that hinder the application of PBL in this specific landscape. Recognize the prevalence of traditional, top-down teaching methods and the impact of external factors, such as gang-controlled neighborhoods, on student safety and attendance.

Third, develop the Inside-Outside microsystem concept to address the absence of support from the national government and limited family involvement in education. Inside the classroom, rely on NGO and peer support to fill the gaps left by the government and families. Outside the classroom, encourage children to share their newfound knowledge with their families and communities and positively impact their surroundings.

Fourth, develop a comprehensive implementation strategy for the Inside-Outside microsystem. Collaborate with NGOs to obtain iclassroom resources and support, foster peer support networks, and implement initiatives to encourage knowledge sharing beyond the school environment.

Fifth, continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Inside-Outside microsystem. Assess changes in student engagement, academic performance, and community involvement over time. Adjustments should be made as necessary to ensure the continued success and sustainability of the microsystem.

Finally, consider the Inside-Outside microsystem's long-term impacts on student empowerment and community development. By liberating students from systemic barriers and fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and empowerment, the microsystem has the potential to create lasting, positive change in both individual lives and communities.



By integrating the activity theory framework with the Inside-Outside microsystem theory, a robust theoretical foundation is established for understanding and promoting educational innovation within diverse sociocultural contexts.

Table 8. Aligning Inside-Outside theory with activity theory to validate how it works in the field

Element	Description
Subject (Inside)	Refers to the students and teachers actively participating in the implementation phase. They engage in classroom activities and act as agents of change within the community.
Tools (Inside)	Encompasses physical resources (such as XO computers), pedagogical approaches, and support systems. These tools empower students and teachers to effectively navigate the educational landscape.
Object (Inside)	Aligns with the goal of testing prototype lessons in two classes. It extends beyond classroom boundaries to include empowering students with skills and knowledge that transcend traditional academic domains.
Rules (Inside)	Encompasses guidelines for classroom conduct and principles of equity, inclusivity, and collaboration. These rules promote a student-centered approach to education and foster senses of belonging and mutual respect.
Division of labor (Inside-Outside)	Delineates the roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, and community stakeholders in advancing educational goals. Emphasizes collaborative partnerships and shared accountability for achieving positive outcomes.
Community (Outside)	Represents the broader community beyond institutional boundaries, including the school, foundations, neighborhoods, and families.
Outcomes (Outside)	Encompasses the desired goals of enhancing students' 21st-century skills and fostering positive social change. These outcomes transcend academic achievement and include empowerment, resilience, and community engagement.

Activity theory provides an analytical framework that helps the practioners to understand how educational activities and practices interrelate with internal and external systems in a learning environment. By aligning the Inside-Outside microsystem theory with activity theory, people can examine how internal (within the classroom) and external (outside the classroom) factors interact to influence the educational process and student development. This alignment seeks to validate the Inside-Outside microsystem theory by demonstrating how it integrates with a broad, established theoretical framework in the field of educational research. By providing empirical evidence of the Inside-Outside microsystem theory's validity and relevance, its credibility and utility in understanding and improving educational practices in specific contexts are reinforced by seeking validation from the scientific community.

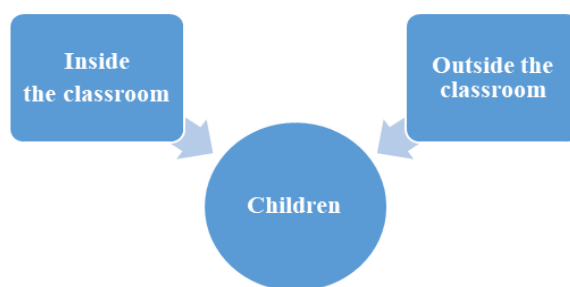


Figure 12. Inside-Outside microsystem to support children's education

The process begins in the classroom, where the assistance of NGOs compensates for the absence of support from the national government, and the involvement of teachers and peers substitutes for the lack of family support. A supportive classroom environment serves as a foundation for further growth and development. This supportive ecosystem also extends beyond the confines of the classroom, as students share their newfound knowledge, positively impacting not only their families but also the communities in which they reside.

Table 9. Description of each component of the Inside-Outside local theory

Component	Description
Inside (Classroom)	<p>Students work collaboratively in a supportive peer-to-peer environment.</p> <p>Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through problem-solving activities and providing support as needed.</p> <p>Use of XO computers and educational software provided by NGOs supplements classroom learning.</p> <p>Integration of traditional school supplies for self-learning and discovery among peers.</p>
Outside (Community)	<p>NGOs provide external support, resources, and expertise to enhance educational opportunities.</p> <p>Engagement with community dynamics, including local organizations, businesses, and social networks, fosters meaningful connections between classroom learning and real-world contexts.</p> <p>Collaboration with families to empower parents as partners in education and leverage family support systems supports students' academic journeys.</p> <p>Addressing neighborhood challenges, such as safety concerns and socioeconomic disparities, create supportive learning environments that meet students' needs and foster positive outcomes.</p>
Student in the Center	<p>Students are placed at the center of the learning process, actively engaging in collaborative problem-solving and hands-on activities.</p> <p>Emphasis on student agency, allowing learners to become part of the education process.</p>



## Discussion

When delving into the intricacies of the Inside-Outside microsystem local theory, it becomes apparent that the theory embraces both the internal and external facets of the educational landscape. This comprehensive perspective acknowledges the interconnectedness of factors in the classroom environment and those beyond its physical boundaries.

Internally, the Inside-Outside theory focuses on classroom dynamics, emphasizing the importance of supportive teacher–student relationships and the use of innovative pedagogical approaches. According to Ryberg et. al (2010), PBL development can vary in terms of who has more control in the classroom. This control, akin to a sound control panel, is used to modulate or regulate situations as needed. In some cases, such as in primary education settings, teachers may exert greater intervention, as students require more support from teaching staff and their families or community environments.

Externally, the Inside-Outside extends beyond the classroom to encompass broad community and societal contexts. This includes understanding neighborhood dynamics, familial challenges, and institutional infrastructure, as Luckin (2010) highlighted. By considering these external factors, the theory seeks to address the systemic inequalities and structural barriers that hinder educational progress for marginalized communities.

By integrating activity theory into the Inside-Outside microsystem local theory analysis, it was acknowledged how these internal factors interact with broad societal, cultural, and economic systems and shape students' learning experiences inside and outside the classroom. The ZTF is a prominent example of a contribution from an external dimension (Outside) supporting an internal dimension (Inside), as the Inside-Outside theory proposes. By providing free technology and training for the school educational center, the foundation addresses the material and technological needs of the students and strengthens the entire educational environment.

This external collaboration facilitates the implementation of innovative educational practices and the development of additional resources, ultimately enriching the internal educational process. The ZTF exemplifies how external partnerships can strengthen and enrich the internal educational microsystem, which supports the fundamental premise of the Inside-Outside theory. Overall, the Inside-Outside microsystem local theory represents a holistic approach to educational intervention that recognizes the interconnectedness of internal and external factors and seeks to create meaningful change at both levels.

## Conclusion

The Inside-Outside theory is a comprehensive framework for transformative educational practices that empower educators and uplift students in resource-constrained settings. The theory improves teachers' practices by considering students' socioeconomic context, limited access to digital tools, and engagement with non-profit

organizations to compensate for the lack of family and government support.

The pedagogical design and microsystem in which the Inside-Outside theory aligns and works, respectively, are interdependent. Inside the classroom, students develop a strong sense of belonging, work in teams for peer-to-peer supportive interactions, try to solve real-life problems affecting their context (with guidance from their teachers, who act as facilitators), and develop problem-solving skills. They can use computers or other technological devices provided by NGOs (in the absence of government support), the Internet and offline educational software, and traditional school supplies (e.g., notebooks, cardboard, etc.) for independent and peer-supported learning.

The pedagogical model also has impacts outside the school; for example, students develop projects related to issues affecting their communities, and they bring home new knowledge and experiences to share with their families and communities. In most cases in this particular setting, expecting that children will receive academic support at home from their illiterate relatives is unrealistic; most children cannot complete their homework independently if they do not understand the assignment, and no one at home can help them. One way to narrow this gap is to allow children to take computers home and use them as a pedagogical resource. However, this strategy is currently impossible, because students' neighborhoods are dangerous and their lives could be jeopardized if someone wanted to steal a computer.

## **Recommendations**

Prioritizing the cultivation of supportive teacher–student relationships and implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches within the classroom is imperative. Educators should focus on creating inclusive and engaging learning environments in which students feel empowered to explore and learn, fostering a sense of belonging and collaboration among all members of the educational community.

Recognizing the significance of students' socioeconomic contexts, particularly in resource-constrained settings, is crucial. Additional support and resources should be provided to students facing poverty-related challenges, limited access to digital tools, and a lack of familial support for academic tasks. Efforts should be made to ensure that every student has equitable access to educational opportunities and resources.

Collaboration with external stakeholders, including non-profit organizations—private companies committed to social responsibility, and community foundations—should be encouraged to supplement internal support structures within schools. Partnerships should be forged to address systemic inequalities and provide resources to marginalized communities. Through collaboration, educators and external organizations can create comprehensive support systems for students and communities.

Advocating for PBL approaches is essential for enabling students to tackle real-world issues affecting their

communities. Educators should guide students in problem-solving activities that integrate technology, traditional learning tools, and collaboration with peers. This approach enhances academic learning and fosters critical thinking and practical skills that are essential for real-world success.

Strategies should be explored to provide safe access to educational resources (such as computers and digital tools), especially for students from dangerous neighborhoods. Initiatives that allow students to take resources home or provide secure access within the community should be considered. Ensuring safe access to resources is vital for promoting equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Implementing systems for ongoing monitoring and evaluation is essential to assess interventions' effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Data-driven insights should be used to refine strategies and ensure that educational practices align with the goals of the Inside-Outside microsystem local theory. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are critical for maintaining the effectiveness and relevance of educational interventions over time.

## Acknowledgments

I extend my appreciation to the teachers, students, and administrators of Centro Básico Padre Claret for their invaluable cooperation and participation. Their dedication to educational innovation and commitment to improving outcomes for students in disadvantaged settings have been instrumental to this study's success. I am deeply grateful to ZTF for their generous support and collaboration throughout this endeavor. Their commitment to providing technology and training to educational centers in impoverished areas has significantly impacted the lives of students and educators alike.

I also want to thank Dr. Thomas Ryberg and Marianne Lykke, as well as Dr. Lone Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Dr. Ellen Christiansen from Aalborg University, Denmark, for their kind support and encouragement of my ideas. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Universidad Tecnológica Centroamericana (UNITEC) in Honduras, and particularly to Dean Ana Rettally, Postgraduate Faculty, for providing the essential resources that facilitated the completion of this study.

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## Blockchain Education in Honduras: Assessing Cryptocurrency Understanding in Universities

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**Abstract:** The study focused on analyzing the knowledge and application of cryptocurrencies in undergraduate programs across public and private universities in Honduras. Given the increasing relevance of cryptocurrencies in the global financial landscape. The primary objective was to assess the level of knowledge and application of cryptocurrencies among students in administrative programs, distinguishing between universities and specific courses. The research followed a documentary and field methodology with a mixed approach. Surveys and semi-structured questionnaires targeted students, faculty, and departmental authorities. The questionnaires covered demographic aspects, levels of knowledge, information sources, work experience, real investments, and participation in practical laboratories. The results unveiled a detailed overview of cryptocurrency knowledge and application in the university setting, identifying significant differences between universities and courses, and offering a contextualized understanding. Furthermore, the experiences and perceptions of faculty and departmental authorities regarding integrating cryptocurrencies into education were analyzed. It was concluded that over 50% of the student population in administrative careers was familiar with and utilized cryptocurrencies. Recommendations included the imperative need to integrate cryptocurrency content into academic programs and provide continuous training for faculty and administrative staff. This study provided a robust foundation for comprehending the then-current state of cryptocurrencies in the university environment.

**Keywords:** blockchain education, cryptocurrency, financial education, undergraduates

**Citation:** Rivera García, M.I. & Vásquez Flores, I.M. (2024). Blockchain Education in Honduras: Assessing Cryptocurrency Understanding in Universities. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science (pp. 1770-1786), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Technological advances drive innovation in business. 150 years ago, the telegraph spurred a revolution in the financial world, as it was used by businessmen to transmit stock prices in the United States, having a more

commercial use, unlike in Europe, where it was primarily used as a social medium. (Du Boff, 1980). In the mid-20th century, bankers introduced credit cards and ATMs, which transformed the world of money from paper to plastic. (Bartolomé & Lindín, 2019).

The combination of technology and finance is known as financial technology or Fintech. (Budiarti et al., 2021). In an interconnected world, with rapidly developing companies investing in providing customers with immediacy and confidence in their transactions, the use of the Internet is the most common, contrary to the last decade of the 20th century, which witnessed the foundations that disruptively merged the way things were done in the financial world. Pioneers bet on disruptive technologies; in 1995, Wells Fargo saw the great potential of the Internet. (Anderson & Guo, 2020) It's important to understand that “every time consumers use PayPal, Apple Pay, or Google Wallet, they are using a Fintech” (p.9 Carballo et al., 2021).

### **Fintech in the Latin American region**

Together in Latin America, there are approximately 2,482 companies considered fintech, and worldwide there are around 11,000. The leading countries in Latin America are: Brazil, with 771 companies, representing 31% of the market, followed by Mexico with 512 companies, 21%; Colombia with 279 and Argentina with 276, accounting for 11% each, and Chile with 179 companies representing 7% of the market. These five countries concentrate the largest fintech investment (Findexable, 2021).

The Central American region presents significant challenges: Honduras has 25 companies, Guatemala has 31, Panama has 16, Nicaragua has barely 3, and El Salvador has 14. These country-specific data represent only 5% of the market, with Costa Rica slightly ahead of the other countries in the region with 44 companies, which is equivalent to 2% (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo et al., 2022).

The Chinese made a great leap by turning e-commerce into something natural in 1999, laying the groundwork for companies like Alibaba that set the stage for what is now known as e-commerce. (Schmuck & Benke, 2020). The traditionally conservative banking sector took an unexpected turn in England, where in 2005, the first branchless bank emerged. What economic liberals have long awaited is decentralized banking. In 2009, the decentralized cryptocurrency Bitcoin emerged in the financial market, which is still in use today. (Wright, 2008).

Fintech and cryptocurrencies are closely intertwined in various aspects. On one hand, fintech have emerged as cryptocurrency exchange platforms, offering users the ability to buy, sell, and store digital assets more conveniently and easily. Additionally, some fintech have integrated cryptocurrencies into their international payment and remittance systems, facilitating faster and more economical transfers on a global scale. Furthermore, the use of cryptocurrencies in crowdfunding and collective financing has enabled projects to efficiently obtain funds from a global audience with lower costs. On the other hand, fintech are actively exploring how to utilize blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies in areas such as decentralized lending



(DeFi) and the tokenization of traditional assets like real estate or stocks, opening up new investment opportunities and democratizing access to financial markets. This convergence between fintech and cryptocurrencies is rapidly transforming the financial landscape, offering innovative solutions and promoting financial inclusion on a global scale. Ever since the Chinese made a significant leap by making e-commerce a natural phenomenon in 1999, with companies like Alibaba, e-commerce has become a permanent fixture. (Schmuck & Benke, 2020). On the other hand, what has long been yearned for by the most economically liberal is starting to become a reality as the transition to decentralized banking begins, with the emergence of the cryptocurrency Bitcoin in the financial market in 2009, which is still in use (Wright, 2008).

The first country in the world to recognize Bitcoin as a legal tender is El Salvador, in 2021. Decree-Law 057 of 2021, known as the Bitcoin Law, establishes: "Bitcoin as legal tender, without restrictions and with unlimited liberating power in any transaction and under any title that natural or legal persons, public or private, need to carry out." (BBC, 2021). On the other hand, in Honduras, a statement was issued by the National Banking and Insurance Commission (CNBS) warning the general population about the use of cryptocurrencies as legal tender: "Any individual problems arising from the use of transactional platforms and traders of 'virtual currencies', such as Bitcoin, outside the financial system, are solely the financial user's risk, as they are not regulated by Honduras' legal framework"(CNBS,2024).

The types of digital payments in Latin America and the Caribbean (Carballo et al., 2021) 42% through mobile payment and electronic wallets, 33% through payment gateways, which "transmit encrypted information to the acquiring bank processors of the merchant," and payment aggregators or payment facilitators, 9% through mobile point of sale (mPOS), 7% through international remittance and transfer platforms, 5% through cryptocurrency payment platforms, and 4% through other methods.

### *Rise of Blockchain and Cryptocurrencies*

Cryptocurrency relies on blockchain technology for its operation, and blockchain provides a secure and decentralized method for conducting and recording digital transactions. It was proposed by Satoshi Nakamoto in 2008. Cryptocurrencies use blockchain to ensure security, transparency, and decentralization of transactions. Blockchain eliminates the need for intermediaries such as banks or financial institutions, as all transactions are verified and recorded by a decentralized network of nodes. (Nakamoto, 2008)

The relationship between fintech and blockchain is marked by a mixture of benefits and risks. On one hand, blockchain technology offers a revolutionary opportunity to streamline and democratize financial services, with faster, safer, and more economical transactions at an international level, as well as the automation of processes through smart contracts. Decentralized identity management and asset tokenization promise greater security and liquidity in financial markets (El Koshiry et al., 2023).

However, these advancements also bring considerable challenges. Technical complexity and lack of regulation

may hinder widespread adoption, while security gaps could expose users' sensitive data to risks of hacking and theft. The volatility of certain cryptocurrencies raises concerns about financial stability and consumer protection (Faturahman et al., 2021). Therefore, addressing these challenges effectively is essential to fully harness the transformative potential of the relationship between fintech and blockchain.

*Teaching cryptocurrency and blockchain in university*

The presence of cryptocurrencies in the world's major economies has created a significant opportunity for various startups in the industry, leading to a massive demand for digital assets. This new market has contributed to the development of more job and educational opportunities, among other things. (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2017).

"For universities with appropriate blockchain facilities, professors, students, and budget, it is feasible to readjust the entire curriculum system to cultivate comprehensive talent in blockchain. For example, University College London (UCL), one of the main partners of UBRI, has developed several blockchain and FinTech curriculum plans and has proposed some master's programs based on these " (Feng et al., 2022).

Renowned universities and educational institutions worldwide have incorporated aspects of emerging technologies such as blockchain and cryptocurrencies into their curricula. Below are some examples in Table 1.

Table 1. American and European Universities Teaching about Cryptocurrencies and Blockchain

University	Course	Description
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	Blockchain and Money	It covers the fundamentals of blockchain technology, the economics of cryptocurrencies, and the potential applications of blockchain in the financial industry.
	MIT Blockchain Strategy Program	Certification program designed for business leaders who wish to understand the potential impact of blockchain technology on their industries and learn how to implement blockchain solutions in their businesses.
Stanford University	Bitcoin and Cryptocurrencies	It covers the technical aspects of cryptocurrencies and blockchain, as well as the economic and legal implications of these technologies.
	"Crypto Currencies: Bitcoin and Friends"	Designed for professionals in the financial and technological industries who wish to gain a deeper understanding of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology.

New York University (NYU)	Blockchain and cryptocurrencies	It provides a comprehensive overview of the essential concepts of blockchain, the technology used to enable fast, secure, and transparent transactions, and discusses smart contracts, consensus mining, and the key advantages of blockchain technology.
University of California, Berkeley	Berkeley Center for Law and Business	It is a business and law program that covers various topics, but emphasizes the technical and economic aspects of blockchain technology, as well as the legal implications of these technologies.
	"Blockchain Fundamentals Professional Certificate"	Certification program designed to help students gain a basic understanding of blockchain technology and its potential applications in various industries.
University of Oxford	"Blockchain Strategy Programme"	It covers the business implications of blockchain technology and its potential impact on various industries.
	The Economics of Cryptocurrencies	It covers the legal and regulatory aspects of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology, as well as their potential impact on global economic policy. ( <a href="https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/the-economics-of-cryptocurrencies">https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/the-economics-of-cryptocurrencies</a> )

Table 1 was compiled using information gathered from the official websites of various consulted academic institutions. (Berkeley University, 2024; MIT University (a), 2024.; MIT University (b), 2024; New York University, 2024; Oxford, 2024.; Stanford University, 2024.)

The teaching of cryptocurrencies and blockchain at the university level has become a topic of great relevance in the educational sphere, driven by the growth and importance of these digital assets in the world's major economies. Various renowned educational institutions, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University, New York University (NYU), University of California, Berkeley, and University of Oxford, have integrated aspects of these emerging technologies into their curricula.

#### *First steps in Latin American universities*

In Latin American universities, formal education on cryptocurrencies and blockchain is led by one of the most prestigious universities in Latin America, the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM), which in 2021 launched a postgraduate program in Financial Engineering that incorporates topics such as cryptocurrencies and blockchain (UNAM, 2024). However, prestigious universities in South America have also introduced these topics into their curricula and have even created master's programs that directly address these topics, such as the

case of Fundação Getulio Vargas, a university with a strong reputation (UNAM, 2024).

In Argentina, the University of Palermo offers two courses related to Blockchain and cryptocurrencies. The first is an online study program called "Blockchain Development," which prepares developers and programmers to build decentralized applications on the Ethereum platform. The second course, titled "New Technologies: FinTech and Crypto Assets," provides an updated overview of FinTech and cryptocurrencies, aimed at entrepreneurs and professionals interested in understanding the fundamentals of the crypto asset world. On the other hand, the University of CEMA (UCEMA) offers a diploma in Blockchain and cryptocurrencies aimed at students from various backgrounds with no previous knowledge in the field, with the aim of analyzing the characteristics and potential of blockchain technology.

In the Central American region, Honduras was the first country where a higher education institution committed to implementing and educating on cryptocurrencies and blockchain. The National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazán (UPNFM) signed an agreement with the founder of Blockchain in Honduras (UPNFM, 2022).

Given the relevance of this topic, this study focused on analyzing the knowledge and application of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology in undergraduate programs offered by two private universities and one public university located in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. The main objective was to assess the level of knowledge and application of cryptocurrencies and blockchain among students enrolled in the programs.

The research questions:

1. What is the overall level of knowledge of students about cryptocurrencies, differentiated by university?
2. What is the proportion of cryptocurrency application on test platforms, both globally and by university, and how does this percentage vary by major?
3. What is the proportion of cryptocurrency investment globally and by university, considering variables such as gender, age, major, and work experience?

## Methods

This research was framed within the scope of basic, documentary, and field research, adopting a mixed approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative components to obtain a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the subject under study. The main instruments used were a survey directed at students and a semi-structured questionnaire designed to interview teachers and responsible individuals in the area. The research design was non-experimental, observing phenomena in their natural environment. With a descriptive approach, it aims to provide a detailed and systematic view of the level of knowledge and application of decentralized finance in the context of undergraduate administrative careers.

## Hypothesis

Regarding the hypotheses, it was proposed that more than 50% of the population in administrative careers have knowledge about cryptocurrencies and apply them in their financial activities, while the null hypothesis suggests the opposite. The variables considered include the level of knowledge and application of cryptocurrencies, the university, the career, the department, the city, work experience, investment rate, gender, and age.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Less than or equal to 50% of the population in administrative careers have knowledge about cryptocurrencies and apply them in their financial activities.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): More than 50% of the population in administrative careers have knowledge about cryptocurrencies and apply them in their financial activities.

## *Unit of Analysis*

The population under study consisted of a total of 441 individuals. Sample selection was based on convenience criteria and did not follow a probabilistic approach. A total of 91 responses were obtained from students who were in the final semester of their respective careers. Thirteen professors participated in the survey.

Table 2. Unit of Analysis

University	Programs	Public or Private
UNAH-VS	Bachelor's in Business Administration and Management	Public
UNAH-VS	Bachelor's in Public Accounting and Finance	Public
UNITEC	Bachelor's in Finance and Economics	Private
UNITEC	Bachelor's in Industrial Management	Private
CEUTEC	Bachelor's in Business Administration	Private
CEUTEC	Bachelor's in Public Accounting and Finance	Private

## Results

### Data analysis and findings

In this section, the obtained results, both quantitative and qualitative, are presented and analyzed in detail. A comprehensive review and understanding of the findings are provided, covering both numerical data and qualitative aspects to offer a complete insight into the study.

The results regarding the knowledge variable, as illustrated in Figures 1 revealed that 60.0% of students and 76.9% of professors claimed to have basic knowledge about cryptocurrencies. The professors participating in this study have more than ten years of experience in teaching at the higher education level.

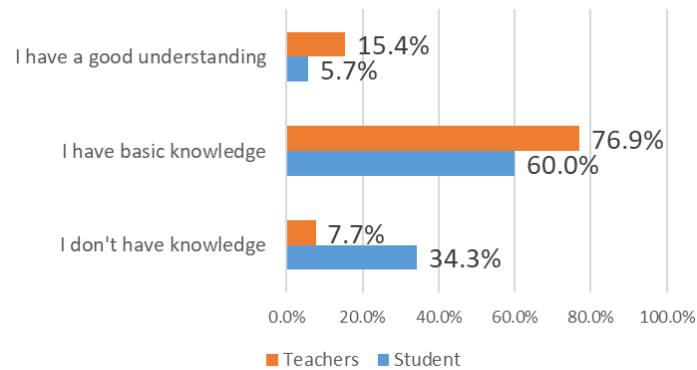


Figure 1. Global Knowledge: Student and Teachers

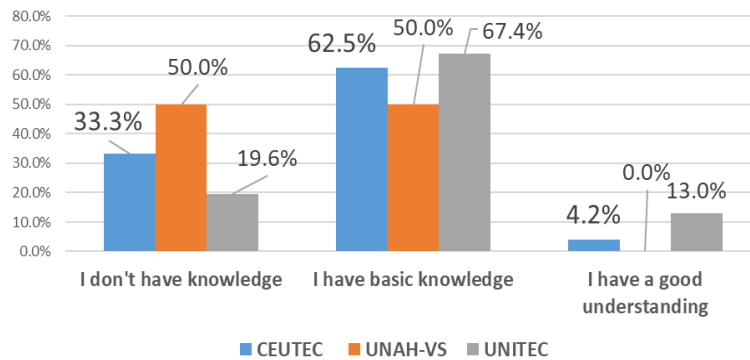


Figure 2. Knowledge by universities

On the contrary, 34.3% of students reported "not having knowledge," compared to 7.7% of teachers who shared a similar viewpoint. The remaining 5.7% of students and 15.4% of teachers claimed to have a good understanding. The Figure 2 shown students with basic knowledge, 67.4% are from UNITEC, 62.5% from CEUTEC, and 50.0% from UNAH-VS. This indicates that each university moves at its own pace.

According to the data shown in Figure 3, a lower percentage of students (36.7%) have used test platforms compared to those who have not used them (63.3%).

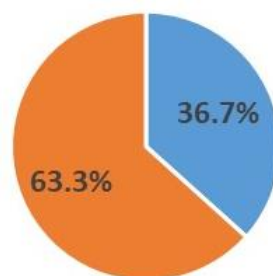


Figure 3. Practice platform usage

The students who have used test platforms are 84.8% from UNITEC, 15.2% from CEUTEC, and 0.0% from UNAH-VS because it is not included in the curriculum due to the lack of regulation on cryptocurrencies within the country, stated the Head of the Department of Business Administration and Public Accounting and Finance at said university. Students have not been as actively involved in using these tools in their academic units.

Tabla 3. Test platform usage

University	Test Platform Usage (%)	Observations
UNITEC	84.8	Highest usage among students for test platforms
CEUTEC	15.2	Lower usage compared to UNITEC
UNAH-VS	0.0	No recorded usage due to absence of cryptocurrency regulation.

The Finance and Economics program has utilized test platforms the most (57.6%), followed by Industrial Management (27.3%), both of which belong to Unitec and Public Accounting and Finance (15.2%) is a program offered by Ceutec.

As shown in Figure 4, a significant proportion of both students (66.7%) have not invested money in cryptocurrencies, while 22.2% are considering it, and 11.1% have already done so. It is worth noting that among the students who have invested, they stated that they have done so with values of less than \$500 dollars in 80.0% of cases, and the remaining in the ranges of \$501 to \$1,000.

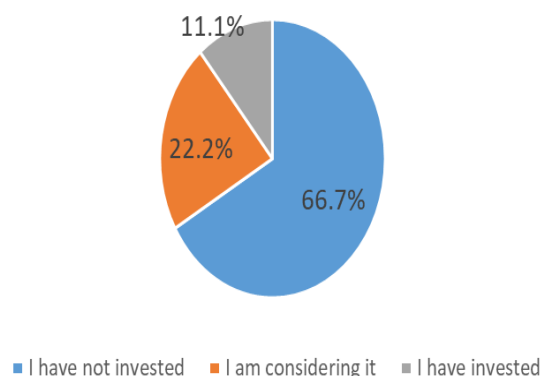


Figure 4. Global investment

The data presented in Table 4 provide a detailed insight into the involvement of students who have invested in the cryptocurrency market and reveal significant patterns that may influence the adoption and understanding of these emerging technologies in the university setting.



Table 4. Investment Profile and Demographic Factors in University Students

Demographic variable	Percentage of the sample
Investment by university	
Unitec	80%
Ceutec	20%
Program	
Finance and Economics	60%
Industrial Management	30%
Public Accounting and Finance	10%
Gender	
Female	60%
Male	40%
Age	
21 to 25 years	60%
26 to 30 years	20%
Over 35 years	20%
Investments in dollars	
Less than \$500	80%
More \$500 a \$1,000	20%
Work experience	
No experience	20%
Less than 5 years	40%
Between 5 and 10 years	20%
More than 20 years"	20%

As shown in Figure 5, students expressed mixed feelings regarding the use of cryptocurrencies, as they believe that the negative perception of the topic, lack of regulation in Honduras, and market volatility are the main challenges they face. There is widespread uncertainty among students because cryptocurrencies are a relatively new topic in Honduras. Despite their concerns, there is also a clear desire among students to learn more about cryptocurrencies and blockchain to maximize their potential in both academic knowledge and investment endeavors.

On the other hand, Figure 6 shows that the majority of professors have expressed that they have taught about cryptocurrencies briefly, while a minority have addressed the topic in more depth. Additionally, more than a third of professors have not included anything about cryptocurrencies in their curriculum, but they are

considering doing so.

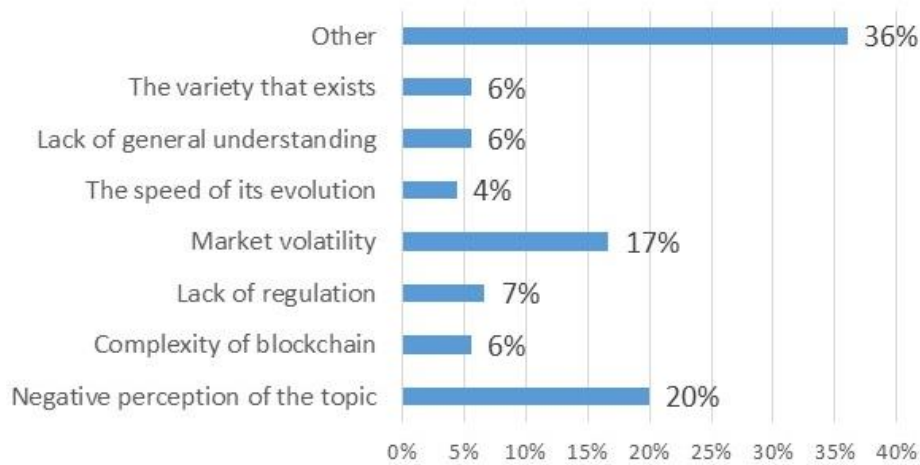


Figure 5. Challenges in using cryptocurrencies

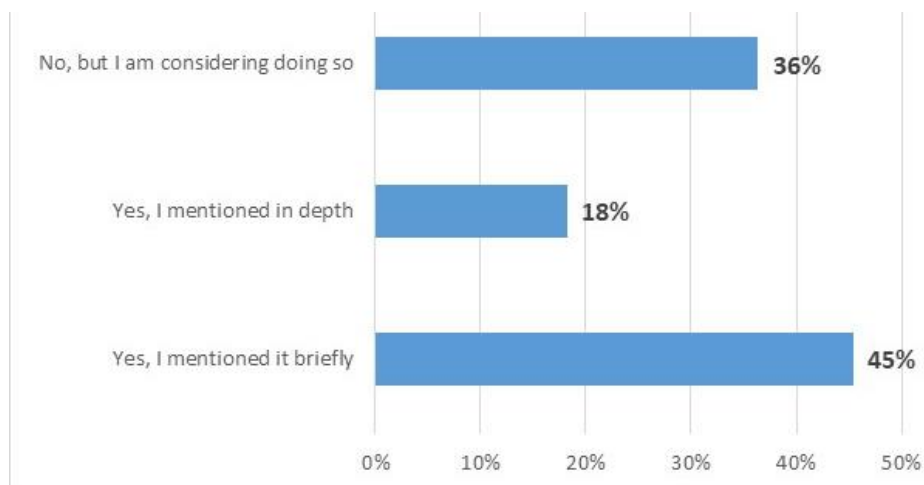


Figure 6. Teaching about cryptocurrencies

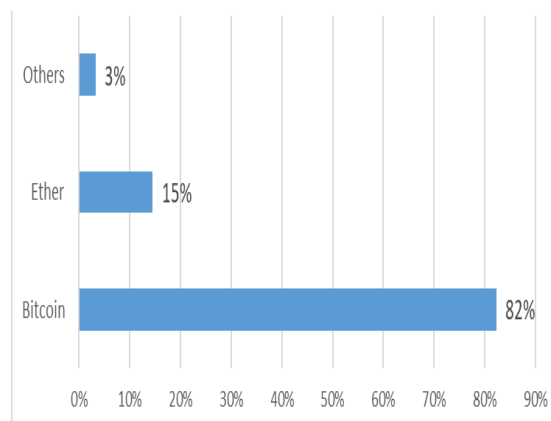


Figure 7. Cryptocurrencies that students are familiar with

It is important to note that according to this study, the most well-known cryptocurrency among students is Bitcoin, followed by Ether, as shown in Figure 7 which were created in 2009 and 2015, respectively. Students are unsure if the topic is clearly defined in their classes, as most of them mention that they first heard about cryptocurrencies through social media, and secondly at their university, as shown in Figure 8.

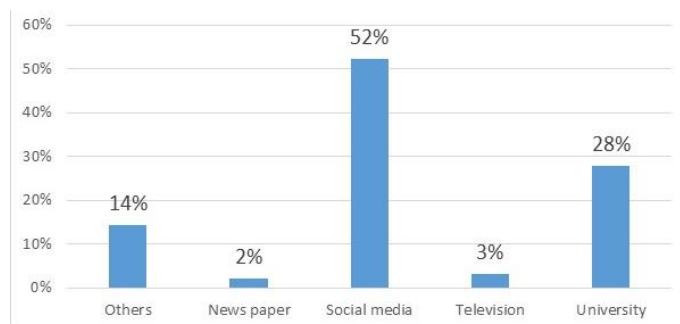


Figure 8. Where did you hear for first time about cryptocurrencies?

### Qualitative Analysis

Professors acknowledge the critical importance of educating students on the responsible use of this type of non-traditional investment, while highlighting associated risks and fostering informed adoption. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on the urgent need to establish clear regulations governing the use of decentralized finance in general, and specifically in the realm of cryptocurrencies, as noted by the Head of the Finance and Economics Program at Unitec. Overall, professors agree that the use of these tools can serve as a catalyst for generating new ideas, expanding financial understanding, and exploring different perspectives in the academic sphere, always maintaining careful attention to the inherent risks involved.

During interviews conducted with six program directors from various university centers (as shown in Figure 8), a certain degree of apprehension regarding the integration of cryptocurrencies into the teaching-learning process is revealed. However, there is also a unique opportunity to delve deeper into knowledge about cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology, which could open up new educational perspectives and approaches in the university setting.

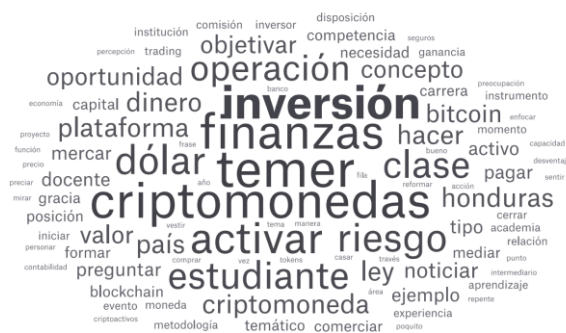


Figure 8. Visualizing data (Atlas.ti)

## Discussion

The study highlights the different levels of knowledge, usage patterns, attitudes, and perceptions of students and teachers towards the use and application of cryptocurrencies in administrative career settings in San Pedro Sula. Overall, there is a growing trend towards long-term adoption, driven by motivations related to experimentation with these assets, where confidentiality, transaction traceability, and blockchain security are predominant features.

Universities are slowly entering into education and training through the use of test platforms that allow for simulations or practices without risking real money. According to the study, teachers feel responsible for including the topic in some of their classes with a critical focus, highlighting both the risks and benefits (Faturahman et al., 2021).

En Honduras, unlike El Salvador (Alonso et al., 2024) , the government is not actively promoting the use of cryptocurrencies. This lack of promotion creates uncertainty, particularly regarding the inclusion of cryptocurrencies in university curricula.

## Conclusions

There is a growing interest among both students and teachers in understanding more about cryptocurrencies and their applicability in educational and financial contexts. In an increasingly digitized world, cryptocurrencies have emerged as a relevant study topic for understanding their underlying technology and exploring their implications in the global economy and personal finances.

However, in Honduras, the lack of regulation represents a significant challenge for the widespread adoption of cryptocurrencies in the university environment. This regulatory uncertainty can create uncertainty among educational institutions and students, making it difficult to integrate these topics into curricula and research activities.

Despite these concerns and obstacles, there is an evident desire among students to deepen their knowledge of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology. They recognize the disruptive potential of these innovations in various fields, from banking to supply chain management, and are eager to explore how these technologies can offer new opportunities both in academic settings and in personal investment strategies. The pursuit of this knowledge not only enhances their understanding of the modern financial world but also prepares them to adapt to a constantly changing economic landscape and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

It was concluded that more than 50% of the students and teachers who participated in the study were familiar with the basic concepts of cryptocurrencies and used practice platforms. In the case of teachers, it was inferred

that they also knew about it since they used them in their classes.

Based on the data, it can be inferred that the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted, indicating that more than 50% of the population in administrative careers have knowledge about cryptocurrencies and apply them in their financial activities.

## **Recommendations**

Comprehensive training programs are essential for seamlessly integrating cryptocurrency education into teaching and learning practices. Both teachers and students must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the evolving landscape of digital finance. Fortunately, there's a strong interest among educators and learners alike in exploring the use and application of cryptocurrencies.

Investing in ongoing education and training initiatives is paramount. Regular workshops, seminars, and professional development opportunities will keep educators updated on the latest trends and best practices in cryptocurrency usage and regulation. Collaboration with industry experts and organizations can provide valuable insights and real-world examples.

Moreover, educational institutions should actively support the integration of cryptocurrency-related topics into existing curricula. This includes developing standardized course materials, case studies, and interactive learning modules. By fostering collaboration across disciplines such as finance, economics, computer science, and law, students can gain a holistic understanding of cryptocurrencies.

Furthermore, ethical considerations should be emphasized throughout the educational process. Encouraging discussions on topics like financial literacy, risk management, and social impact will promote responsible cryptocurrency usage. By instilling ethical decision-making skills, students will be better equipped to engage in cryptocurrency-related activities with integrity.

In summary, by providing comprehensive training programs, investing in ongoing education initiatives, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, educational institutions can empower students to navigate the complexities of the digital finance landscape responsibly and ethically.

## **Study limitations**

While insightful, the findings of this study are not conclusive. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, it is imperative to increase the sample size and ensure representation from a wider spectrum of professors and students.

Expanding the sample size will facilitate a more robust exploration of perspectives and experiences related to the use and application of cryptocurrencies in university settings, encompassing diverse academic contexts and viewpoints.

Additionally, the absence of regulatory frameworks in Honduras regarding these crypto assets poses a significant limitation. Cryptocurrencies are viewed as non-traditional investments within decentralized finance, and the lack of regulation adds complexity to their integration into educational settings.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to the directors and professors of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (Valle de Sula), with special recognition to Dr. Carlos David Coca Singh and Master Juan Carlos Reyes Reyes, who lead the Administration and Business Generation, and Public Accounting and Finance programs, respectively. We also extend our thanks to the Universidad Tecnológica Centroamericana (UNITEC), to Master Leonidas Abel Guevara, director of the Finance and Economics program, and to Dr. Renata Bulnes, director of the Industrial Administration program. Also, we appreciate Centro Universitario Tecnológico (CEUTEC), to Master Josue Roberto Álvarez Tejada, Head of Public Accounting and Finance, and to Master Kelly Alexandra Rodríguez Gallardo, Head of the Administration program. Additionally, we acknowledge the support of the dean of the Postgraduate Faculty of Unitec, Master Ana Rettally, for providing the necessary resources to conduct this study.

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# Priority Ranking of Indicators of Effective Inclusive Education Using WPM Method Based on Perception of School Stakeholders: A Case of Delhi

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**Abstract:** Around 25% of India's population requires universal accessibility for independent and dignified living, highlighting the urgency of prioritizing "accessibility and inclusion" for sustainable development. In urban areas, equitable resource distribution, aligning with the Right to the City, is crucial, with education being central. Ensuring education rights promotes social justice and inclusion, striving for equitable access to quality education as per UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 and India's National Educational Plan 2020. This study examines fundamental indicators for effective inclusive education (IEIE) in Delhi's primary schools, focusing on inclusion of children with disabilities (CwDs) into mainstream education and determining their ranking. Conducted in 51 primary schools, a survey involved stakeholders rating indicators on a five-point Likert-type scale. Statistical analyses using the weighted product model (WPM), a prevalent multi-criterion decision-making method, highlighted the importance of IEIE indicators and identified barriers like inadequate infrastructure hindering access to education, particularly for CwDs. The results consistently highlight stakeholders prioritizing qualitative aspects of inclusive education, challenging the notion that financial support is paramount, especially in countries like India. The findings advocate for better inclusive education facilities, enhanced integration of CwDs, and increased awareness among school stakeholders, necessitating collaborative efforts for creating inclusive urban educational environments.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, Indicators ranking, Primary schools, Children with disabilities, WPM analysis

**Citation:** Kumar, U., Banerji & H., (2024). Priority Ranking of Indicators of Effective Inclusive Education using WPM Method based on Perception of School Stakeholders: A Case of Delhi. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science (pp. 1787-1800), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

India, renowned as the largest democracy, faces numerous hurdles in providing educational opportunities for over 200 million children aged six to 13 (Social & Rural Research Institute, 2014). According to the 'Education

at a Glance, 2018' report by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, dropout rates in India average 4.13% for primary, 4.03% for upper primary, and 17.06% for secondary students. Among the critical challenges is the dropout rate of approximately 47 million children with disabilities (CwDs) out of the 301.4 million unenrolled or dropout children. The Census of India 2011 indicates that 1.05% of school-age children (2.13 million) have disabilities, with 28% (588,000) not attending school, notably with 44% of CwDs facing complex activity limitations and functional challenges. Despite the implementation of inclusive education policies like Education for All (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan- SSA, 2001), Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016, and National Education Plan (NEP) 2020 over the last two decades, a comprehensive, practical approach to implementing inclusive education principles remains challenging. As emphasized by Jomon Mathew (2017), factors such as poverty, limited accessibility, and the scarcity of inclusive schools significantly contribute to school dropout rates in India. Promoting inclusive education is vital for enhancing the involvement of individuals with disabilities in society, starting from the primary level.

The efficacy of inclusive education for children with disabilities (CwDs), relies not only on factors like school size, location, and amenities but also on indicators of effective inclusive education (IEIE) within the school setting. Various scholars have emphasized the importance of IEIE in facilitating the integration of CwDs into mainstream schools. These studies encompass works such as "Measuring Concerns about Integrating Education in India" (Sharma & Desai, 2002), "Measuring Indicators of Inclusive Education" (Loreman et al., 2014), "The Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale" (Lozano et al., 2022), "Development of a Set of Indicators for Inclusive Education in Europe" (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009), and "Enabling Inclusive Education in Hong Kong" (Forlin & Rose, 2010). Essential elements of inclusive schooling encompass adequate funding, comprehensive teacher training, public awareness, and cultivating a positive mindset (Aziz, 2018). Belappurkar et al., (2013) highlight the significance of comprehending laws and policies related to CwDs' inclusion, while the Harmonized Guidelines 2021 emphasize the importance of establishing an accessible built environment in India.

Various research endeavors have utilized diverse Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) methodologies to evaluate rating data and prioritize attributes, including the Weighted Product Model (Goswami et al., 2020; Ahsan, & Indawati, 2019; Chourabi et al., 2019), Ranking of Attributes (Sahoo et al., 2022; Şahin, 2020), the RIDIT method applied to Likert scale surveys used for the selection of quality attributes (Pradhan, 2009), RIDIT method to Likert scale surveys used for a review on teacher training programs in Turkey (ŞENER, & Taner, 2020), application of RIDIT analysis to Likert scale surveys' (Biswal et al., 2011; Wu, 2007), best project selection by using TOPSIS analysis (Dodangeh et al., 2009), ranking efficient units in data envelopment analysis (DEA) by using TOPSIS method (Lotfi et al., 2011), application of TOPSIS to determine the ranking order of the private universities (Wang et al., 2022), and priority on qualitative attributes of transfer facility (Sadhukhan et al., 2015). However, the impact of these analytical techniques on the prioritization of inclusive education has not been extensively examined.

Regrettably, the execution of effective inclusive education in urban Indian mainstream schools faces notable shortcomings. There's a paucity in efforts to gauge the current status of these schools regarding the perceived importance of diverse aspects of inclusive education by all stakeholders (including; teachers, principals, special educators, staff, parents, and students), not just teachers as in prior studies (Sharma, & Desai, 2002; Lozano et al., 2022) also neglecting the aspects of accessibility of building and infrastructure. This study aims to bridge this gap by evaluating the significance of various dimensions of inclusive education in regular schools, particularly in integrating children with disabilities (CwDs), while considering inputs from all stakeholders. In countries like India, where financial constraints are prevalent (Aziz, 2018; Sanjeev & Kumar, 2007; Mathew, 2017), prioritizing essential inclusive education resources is vital for narrowing the gap effectively. The prioritization of domains and indicators would provide valuable insights for government officials and school administrators to make informed decisions and implement impactful measures to enhance accessibility and inclusion for individuals with disabilities in schools. These prioritized criteria also hold significance for policymaking, strategic planning, and budget allocations aimed at fostering the development and management of inclusive schools across India. Hence, this study also aims to rank indicators for effective inclusive education (IEIE) based on their perceived importance by all stakeholders in primary schools in Delhi.

## Method

### Variables (Indicators Selection)

Globally, researchers emphasize the significance of various indicators in effective inclusive education (IEIE). These metrics include 'academic teaching and learning,' covering class size, teaching methods, and curriculum (Aziz, 2018; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Mutisya, 2011). Additionally, the 'availability of appropriate support' involves administrative assistance, the prevalence of disabilities among students (Gupta, 2016), financial support (Aziz, 2018), policies, and student-teacher ratios (Belappurkar et al., 2013). Furthermore, 'availability of appropriate facilities' encompasses services like therapeutic care centers, paraprofessional staff (Mutisya, 2011), resources for accessible features, specialized training (United Nations, 2006), and vocational training (Lozano et al., 2022). 'Teacher's education and training' includes their background, teaching experience, training for children with special needs (CWSN), equipment proficiency, and awareness of universal design of learning (Bhatnagar, & Das, 2013; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

'Teacher's attitude' involves their demeanor and awareness/sensitization to disabilities (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Mutisya, 2011). 'Socio-cultural aspects' encompass parental/community involvement and mutual respect among students with/without disabilities and teachers (Mutisya, 2011). Lastly, 'infrastructure and built environment accessibility' covers entry, movement, washroom access, way-finding, academic space, extracurricular activities, and digital infrastructure (Harmonized Guidelines of 2021; RPWD ACT 2016; Belappurkar et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2004; Mutisya, 2011). Additional indicators were derived from literature and expert opinions, refined through a pilot survey and Fuzzy Delphi analysis.

*Questionnaire Development Process*

A paper-based survey questionnaire was developed to gather insights from primary school’s stakeholders in Delhi. The process involved selecting indicators of effective Inclusive Education (IEIE) from literature, refining them through a Focus Group Discussion with experts, validating indicators via fuzzy Delphi method and Wilcoxon signed rank test, and constructing the questionnaire. The survey sought opinions on the importance of 33 IEIE identified through Fuzzy Delphi analysis, rated on a five-point Likert-type ordinal scale (Likert, 1932) from Very High Importance [5] to Very Low Importance [1]. An excerpt of the survey questionnaire is presented below (see Figure 1).

Indicator 1: Class - Size

Description: The total number of students in a class.

How important do you think is indicator -1, in enabling effective inclusive education considering the inclusion of children with Locomotor disabilities in mainstream regular school.

This survey is designed to collect school stakeholder's responses in terms of the importance of various indicators of effective inclusive education on a five-point Likert-type ordinal scale (Likert 1932). The scale consists of a five-point Likert-type classification with responses labeled as - Very High Importance (5), Important (4), Relatively Important (3), Low Importance (2), and Very low Importance (1).

1      2      3      4      5

Very Low Important                        Very High Important

Figure 1. Excerpt of the survey questionnaire.

*Data Collection*

The study focuses on major Indian cities, primarily tier 1 and above, with Delhi as the primary area of interests (Tier 1 cities in India are major urban centers that drive economic and social development and has a population

of 1 lakh and more). Data gathering took place in Delhi's primary schools (only public schools) spread across its 12 zones, with the "central" zone chosen randomly to ensure unbiased representation. Stakeholders from 51 primary schools participated in interviews and surveys from March to May 2022 to explore effective inclusive education models. Participants were briefed on the survey's objectives, and their completion signaled informed consent. The study involved various stakeholders, including teachers, principals, special educators, staff, and students with or without disabilities, ranging from nursery to fifth grade. Utilizing the Yamane's formula, the study determined the appropriate sample size for survey research based on a known population size (N= 19848) and a finite population.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}, \quad \text{where, } n = \text{sample size, } N = \text{population size, and } e = \text{margin of error,}$$

In Delhi's primary schools, there are 939 teachers in total for nursery and KG classes. For grades first through fifth, there are 17,374 teachers. The number of principals is 1,535, (Chettri & Ghosh, 2022). The total count of teachers and principals (i.e., population size - N) is as follows:

$$\text{Population size (N)} = 939 + 17374 + 1478 + 57$$

$$\text{Population size (N)} = 19848$$

$$\text{so, sample size (n)} = 19848 / 1 + 19848 \times (0.05)^2$$

$$\text{sample size (n)} = 392.09$$

Out of the planned 492 participants from 51 primary schools (consisting of 421 regular teachers, 20 special educators, and 51 principals), 481 individuals (97.7%) actively engaged in the survey. Collected data underwent digitization and coding. During processing, respondents assessed all aspects of IEIE, resulting in 481 complete responses after excluding incomplete observations. With a sample size of 392 school stakeholders, statistically deemed acceptable, the study accounts for the diverse stakeholders currently engaged in primary schools (Chettri & Ghosh, 2022).

#### *Assessment of Response Reliability of the Data*

To evaluate the reliability of data responses, a statistical analysis employing Cronbach's alpha coefficient was conducted on the importance of indicators of Inclusive Education (IEIE). Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), a measure denoted by the Greek letter  $\alpha$ , assesses the internal consistency of summed rating scales (Cronbach, 1951). Widely accepted, it gauges item consistency within a scale by evaluating the correlation among responses to survey questions (Cronbach, 1951; Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004). The resulting Cronbach Alpha value for the overall data was 0.895 (see Table 1), categorized as 'Good' ( $0.80 \geq \alpha \geq 0.89$ ), surpassing the 0.70 threshold (see Table 2). This outcome validates the reliability and validity of the survey data (see Table 1), affirming the questionnaire's effectiveness in capturing these indicators.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient test to assess response reliability of data.

VARIABLES	VALUES	Internal Consistency
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Number of Items (K)	33	Formula ( $\alpha$ ) = $K/K-1 * [1-(\sum s^2y/\sum s^2x)]$
Sum of the item variance ( $\sum s^2y$ )	45.8266	
Variance of total score ( $\sum s^2x$ )	347.8369	$\alpha= 0.895$
Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	0.8953	
Reliability Level	<b>Good</b> as ( $0.80 \geq \alpha \geq 0.89$ )	

Table 2. Range of Cronbach's alpha coefficient with corresponding reliability levels.

Range of Coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
' $\alpha$ ' > 0.90	Excellent
0.80-0.89	Good
0.70-0.79	Acceptable
0.60-0.69	Questionable
' $\alpha$ ' < 0.59	Unacceptable

### Data Analysis

Considering the central goal of this study to prioritize indicators of effective inclusive education (IEIE) based on the perspectives of school stakeholders, it is crucial to apply methods suitable for managing comprehensive rating data. While a conventional user ranking based on mean scores is prevalent, it lacks efficacy for Likert-type data due to mean limitations as a measure of central tendency. Therefore, the study recommends the use of Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) techniques designed for such data to ensure a more accurate analysis. Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) methods are increasingly recognized as valuable tools for analyzing intricate real-world problems because they can assess various alternatives based on different criteria, aiding in selecting the most suitable option (Chung & Ng, 2016). These methods may involve identifying the best alternative, ranking alternatives to determine critical factors, assessing deviations from accurate alternatives, establishing relationships among alternatives, or determining criteria weights for optimal solutions. MCDM techniques not only identify optimal alternatives but also highlight less important ones, aiding decision-makers in selecting the best solution. Methods like the Weighted Sum Model (WSM) and Weighted Product Model (WPM) are utilized to assign weights to criteria for decision-making assistance (Sahoo et al., 2022). The WPM was chosen due to its compatibility with Likert-type scale ordinal data, extensive previous use in attribute ranking, and greater efficiency in problem-solving compared to other methods, particularly in subjective contexts (Atmojo et al., 2014; Adriyendi, 2019). This approach facilitates estimating the relative importance of IEIE and their subsequent prioritization.

### Weighted product model (WPM)

The Weighted Product Model (WPM), an extension of the Weighted Sum Model (WSM) (Bridgman, 1922; Miller & Starr, 1969; Triantaphyllou & Mann, 1989), functions similarly to the WSM but employs



multiplication instead of addition. Each alternative is assessed against others by multiplying ratios, one per criterion, raised to the power of its weight (Bridgman, 1922; Miller & Starr, 1969; Triantaphyllou & Mann, 1989; Triantaphyllou, 2000; Tofallis, 2014). Known as dimensionless analysis, the WPM's structure removes units of measure, enabling its use in both single and multi-dimensional Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM). It benefits from utilizing relative values rather than absolute ones (Atmojo et al., 2014). To employ the WPM method, certain steps need to be followed (Adriyendi, 2019):

Step 1: Construct weighted normalized decision matrix R"

$$R'' = \begin{bmatrix} r_{11}^{w_1} & r_{12}^{w_2} & \dots & r_{1n}^{w_n} \\ r_{21}^{w_1} & r_{22}^{w_2} & \dots & r_{2n}^{w_n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ r_{m1}^{w_1} & r_{m2}^{w_2} & \dots & r_{mn}^{w_n} \end{bmatrix}; \sum_{j=1}^n W_j = 1 \quad (1)$$

Step 2: Calculate the score  $S_i^{WPM}$  of each Indicator

$$S_i^{WPM} = \prod_{j=1}^n r_{ij}^{w_j}; \text{ where } i=1,2,3, \dots, m \quad (2)$$

Step 3: Select the Best Indicator  $BI^{WPM}$

$$BI^{WPM} = \max S_i^{WPM}; \text{ where } i=1,2,3, \dots, m \quad (3)$$

## Results

Within the WPM approach, the weight is integrated into the performance rating as an exponent. The rankings of indicators are derived from WPM scores (see Table 3). WPM scores, denoted by  $S_i^{WPM}$ , serve as an index, where a value closer to 1 signifies greater indicator importance. The indicators of effective inclusive education (IEIE) ranking outcomes from WPM analysis are outlined below (see Table 3).

Table 3. Score  $S_i^{WPM}$  and priority ranking of each indicator..

Indicators	$S_i^{WPM}$	Ranking
1 Class-Size	0.727	10
2 Teaching Strategies	0.684	17
3 Curriculum w.r.t. CWSN	0.724	11
4 Student-Teachers Ratio	0.831	4

5	Administrative support	0.671	20
6	Participation in Co-curricular activities	0.623	28
7	Enrolment of Children with Special Needs	0.808	6
8	Are you a differently-abled /special child	0.870	1
9	Type of disability- you belong	0.815	5
10	Severity of disability	0.865	2
11	Inadequate financial support	0.659	23
12	Policies_ implementation of inclusive education	0.669	21
13	Availability of Therapeutic care center	0.722	12
14	Availability of Paraprofessional Staff	0.674	19
15	Availability of Resources	0.629	27
16	Availability of Special training for Teachers	0.692	16
17	Availability of Vocational training facilities	0.721	13
18	Educational Qualification	0.644	25
19	Teaching Experience	0.644	26
20	Trained /Untrained w.r.t. CWSN	0.838	3
21	Proficient in operating Special Devices	0.620	30
22	Awareness about UDL	0.709	15
23	Teacher's Attitude (Negative/ Positive)	0.599	31
24	Awareness & Sensitization w.r.t. disability,	0.575	32
25	Parents/ Community Involvement	0.565	33
26	Acceptability & Mutual Respect	0.622	29
27	Accessibility to Site Entry and School Premises	0.717	14
28	Accessibility to Vertical and Horizontal Movement	0.769	7
29	Accessibility to Wash and Other Facilities	0.729	9
30	Accessibility to Exit, Way-Finding and Communication	0.666	22
31	Accessibility to Academic Spaces	0.732	8
32	Accessibility to Extra-Curricular Activities	0.677	18
33	Accessibility to Digital Infrastructure	0.653	24

Note: Here, ' $S^{WPM}$ ' represent the WPM score of a respective indicator, Ranking: rank of the indicator with the closer the ' $S^{WPM}$ ' score value to 1, the higher the rank.

## Discussion

According to the results of the WPM analysis (see Table 3), specific qualitative indicators are notably prioritized by stakeholders in schools. These indicators mainly center on student characteristics, highlighting the importance of identifying students and their disabilities. These include factors such as whether they are differently-abled/special children ( $s = 0.870$ ), the severity of their disability ( $s = 0.865$ ), the type of disability

they have ( $s = 0.815$ ), and the enrolment of children with special needs ( $s = 0.808$ ). Additionally, attributes concerning teachers are considered vital, including the training status of educators regarding children with special needs ( $s = 0.838$ ), the student-teacher ratio ( $s = 0.831$ ), class size ( $s = 0.727$ ), and curriculum concerning CWSN ( $s = 0.724$ ). Furthermore, indicators related to accessibility, such as vertical and horizontal movement ( $s = 0.769$ ), access to academic spaces ( $s = 0.732$ ), and access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and other facilities ( $s = 0.729$ ), are also deemed significant. Therefore, the WPM analysis indicates that the most crucial IEIE encompass factors associated with students with disabilities, teacher-related attributes, and accessibility-related indicators targeted at overcoming barriers within school premises and structures.

According to the WPM analysis, indicators of moderate importance encompass various aspects such as the presence of a therapeutic care center ( $s = 0.722$ ), availability of vocational training courses and facilities within the school ( $s = 0.721$ ), accessibility to site entry and school premises ( $s = 0.717$ ), awareness about universal design for learning (UDL) ( $s = 0.709$ ), availability of special training for regular teachers and staff ( $s = 0.692$ ), teaching strategies ( $s = 0.684$ ), accessibility to extracurricular activities ( $s = 0.677$ ), availability of paraprofessional staff ( $s = 0.674$ ), administrative support ( $s = 0.671$ ), policies regarding the implementation of inclusive education ( $s = 0.669$ ), and accessibility to exit, way-finding, and communication ( $s = 0.666$ ). This suggests that indicators related to facilities, support services, resources, infrastructure, the accessible built environment, and policies regarding inclusive education implementation are considered moderately important based on their relative significance in the analysis.

According to the WPM analysis, it is noteworthy that stakeholders assign lower importance to various indicators, including inadequate financial support ( $s = 0.659$ ), accessibility to digital infrastructure ( $s = 0.653$ ), teacher's educational qualifications ( $s = 0.6443$ ), teaching experience ( $s = 0.6436$ ), availability of resources to implement accessible features into the school ( $s = 0.629$ ), participation of CWSN in co-curricular activities ( $s = 0.623$ ), acceptability & mutual respect between students and teachers ( $s = 0.622$ ), proficiency in operating special devices & equipment used by CWSN ( $s = 0.620$ ), teacher's attitude (negative/positive) ( $s = 0.599$ ), awareness & sensitization regarding disability ( $s = 0.575$ ), and parents/community involvement awareness ( $s = 0.565$ ). This finding contradicts the common assumption that financial support, teacher's education, teacher's experience, awareness & sensitization regarding disability, and parent's/community involvement are pivotal factors for the inclusion of CwDs in inclusive education, particularly in developing nations like India. Notably, many primary schools (only public schools) only have one special educator per school to aid CWSN, and the enrolment of these students is relatively low in existing schools. This could explain why stakeholders do not prioritize these indicators as highly important compared to the aforementioned ones. The reduced significance attributed to financial support, teacher's education, teacher's experience, awareness & sensitization regarding disability, and parent's/community involvement, especially considering the significantly low enrolment of CwDs in primary schools, likely indicates a lack of enthusiasm among stakeholders (teachers, principals, special educators, etc.) in actively advocating for the inclusion of CwDs in these schools, as these indicators necessitate their direct involvement and commitment.

## Conclusions

This research provides valuable insights into the importance of IEIE for promoting the inclusion of CwDs in primary schools in Delhi, India. The results indicate that stakeholders prioritize qualitative indicators concerning students, teachers, resources, and accessibility, while allocating less emphasis on financial support (see Table 3). Typically, in developing countries like India, there tends to be a focus primarily on the financial and administrative aspects of inclusive education, sometimes overlooking the qualitative dimension crucial for CwDs' inclusion. The findings emphasize the need to enhance accessibility around schools and give due consideration to qualitative aspects.

The outcomes highlight the current lack of attention to certain indicators such as awareness and sensitization regarding disability, parental/community involvement, teacher's attitude (positive/negative), mutual respect between students and teachers, participation of CWSN in co-curricular activities, proficiency in operating special devices & equipment used by CWSN, teacher's educational qualifications, and teaching experience. Conversely, indicators such as student characteristics (including whether they are differently-abled/special children, their type of disability, severity of disability, and enrolment of children with special needs), student-teacher ratio, trained/untrained educators regarding CWSN, awareness about UDL, class size, curriculum, accessibility to academic spaces, accessibility to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and other facilities, availability of therapeutic care centers, and availability of vocational training courses and facilities in school hold greater significance in the context of CwDs inclusion. This discrepancy may arise from the various types of disabilities encompassed within CwDs, including locomotor disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and speech and language disability as per the RPWD ACT 2016 India, necessitating heightened attention and care compared to typically abled children. Consequently, there is a justified need to enhance the awareness of school stakeholders regarding the needs and requirements of CwDs in the context of their inclusion in regular schools. The rankings of IEIE obtained through the WPM method underscore the importance of IEIE and advocate for additional research in this domain.

## Limitation and Future Research Scope

Specifically, there is a necessity to create an evaluation framework for assessing the present condition of these indicators within mainstream schools, aiming to enhance the enrolment of CwDs. This study provides a scientifically validated foundation for the deliberate choice of indicators of effective inclusive education (IEIE) concerning the integration of CwDs into regular primary schools (public schools). This research focusing solely on primary schools.

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## Academic and Career Advising: Factors of Success and Opportunities for Institutional Improvement

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**Abstract:** The paper investigates the intellectual traditions that underscore the assumptions of academic and career advising, toward an understanding of what it means to advise college students and the pedagogical ramifications of this understanding. The discussion articulates the driving forces that stand behind a university model that goes beyond course registration and degree explanation. The intention is to inspire new thoughts on the applications of a flipped Academic and Career Advising model that centralizes a desired understanding and exploration of the needs of the 21st. century labor market and the expectations of college graduates. The paper explores the success factors of an advising model that is integral to the university academic programs and consistent with a student-centered teaching paradigm, while exploring the potential it holds for several audiences such as students, faculty, theorists, and policy makers. The discussion ends with a consideration for adding an online advising component to enhance the existing model.

**Keywords:** Academic advising, Constructivist advising, Institutional improvement

**Citation:** Elgeddawy, M., Abouraia, M., & Magd, M. (2024). Academic and Career Advising: Factors of Success and Opportunities for Institutional Improvement. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1801-1808), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Over the last 20 years or so, the discourse of academic and career advising (A&CA) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has been narrated many times by various stakeholders such as educators, advisors, students, researchers, and decision makers. Each narrative highlights some points while vailing others. Considerably, all the narratives congregate that the story is worth discussing and reflecting upon. Yet the available literature on academic and career advising reflects a myriad of perspectives and deals with both types of advising (academic

and career advising) as discrete entities and divisions. Also, different researchers and stakeholders contextually define A&CA differently. Rarely, do you find a university that combines both types of advising in one division. This conceptual paper calls for perceiving both types of advising (academic and career advising) as one entity. The assumption taken in this paper is that both types of advising are interrelated and interdependent so much so that you cannot separate one from the other (Schoeman & Bezuidenhoud, 2021)

There is much literature around academic advising that relates its assumptions to epistemology with its focus on how we know what we know and what knowing is (Antoney, 2020). Epistemologically, academic and career advisors focus on the what and the how of the advising process. In other words, the focal point on how we should advise and what advising is all about. Perceived as such, academic advising is no more than registration advising with a focus on an in-depth understanding of advisees' exploration of their degree and study plans. The truth of the matter is that this is an oversimplification of the advising process.

The understanding that this paper is promoting perceives academic and career advising from an ontological perspective with a focus on what it means to advise and the ramifications of this understanding. Also, ontologically speaking, we cannot separate the way we advise from the way we teach, and the way students learn. In other words, we cannot operationally define the advising process without reflecting on the teaching, learning, and assessment model that is adopted in a certain context.

This paper is premised on the assumption that teaching, learning, and assessment that are grounded on a constructivist philosophy contributes to college students' academic and professional success (Friedensen, et.al. 2024). Our teaching methodology values a flipped learning process. We do not perceive ourselves as the only trusted source of knowledge. We believe that students are not empty vessels waiting for us to be filled with information (Amini, et al. 2018). We perceive students as an integral part of the teaching, learning and assessment process. Accordingly, there should be consistency between the way we teach and the way we advise. In other words, since we flipped the teaching and learning process, we must flip the advising process too. Advisees are active participants. Before they come to the advising session, they should explore what concerns their academic and professional career.

Ontologically, academic and career advising is a collaborative, give and take process, where both the advisor and the advisee co-explore and co-develop a glocalized understanding of what it means to grow at the academic and professional levels. Glocalization as a concept and practice allows advisors and advisees to promote global perspectives related to academic and career development issues with local insights. The following section explores further the intellectual traditions of a proposed model that merges academic and career advising. The proposed model centralizes the core principles of glocalization and a flipped learning and advising process.

Glocalization is a concept that integrates global best practices in the field of advising with a local understanding of the socio-cultural context in which the advising process takes place. The proposed Glocalized Academic and Career Advising Model (GA&CAM) draws upon several intellectual traditions such as Vygotsky's social

constructivism, narrativism, connectivism, Bakhtin's dialogism and complexity theory that inform its practice.

### **Vygotsky's Social Constructivism and the Intellectual Traditions of the proposed GA&CAM**

The GA&CAM draws upon Vygotsky's social constructivism and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1962). According to Vygotsky's ZPD, for effective advising to take place, both the advisor and the advisee should be dynamically engaged in goal-oriented social interactions of growing difficulties, which contribute to the cognitive development of both parties. "Development in thinking is not from the individual to the socialized, but from the social to the individual" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 20). According to this line of thinking, academic and career advising represent a unified framework that underscores the nature of the advising practice as a developmental, cognitive and learning process. This type of understanding inspires advisors to instill higher thinking skills in their advisees. The advising, from this perspective, puts a premium on exploring learners' prior knowledge, experience, and future goals. It emphasizes advisees' autonomy, and self-actualization in learning and career development within a well-thought out ZPD process. By incorporating this strategy, Vygotsky (1978) indicates: For learning to take place, social interactions should be within the Zone of Proximal Development (known as ZPD), the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86).

#### *Narrativism and the Intellectual Traditions of the proposed GA&CAM*

Another philosophical approach that underpins the intellectual discourse of the GA&CA proposed model is narrativism. The GA&CA process concerns a story that needs to be explored and learned about. Narrative theorists would say in this regard that storytelling has the aptitude to use relatable examples that shape advisees' identities and career trajectories. According to this type of understanding, advising is an impactful process that allows student advisees to construct and reconstruct coherent narratives while reflecting on past experiences, and developing future horizons (Bryson, et al. 2023).

#### *Connectivism and the Intellectual Traditions of the proposed GA&CAM*

Connectivism is another school of thought that underscores the intellectual traditions of the proposed Globalized Academic and Career Advising Model. Connectivism as a philosophy suggests that human understanding is built on connecting what we need to know to what we already know. The proposed GA&CA model facilitates this process. It allows both the advisor and the advisees to collaboratively develop a global understanding of the academic and professional environment with a local insight. Connecting the global with the local allows student advisees to develop a new horizon of understanding their needs in relation to the demands of the global and local labor markets and other intellectually different stakeholders.

#### *Complexity Theory and the Intellectual Traditions of the Proposed GA&CAM*

The dynamic nature of academic and career advising can further be understood through the lens of complexity theory, which emphasizes the intersection and interdependence of factors impacting learning and career paths. Complexity theory implies that there is an interconnectedness among the parts of structured systems to the extent that the component of one system can impact the components of the other (Nayager & de Klerk, 2024). According to this theoretical discourse, both types of advising are closely interconnected so much so that you cannot uproot one from the other. There is always a dynamic interaction between the components of the two systems. Knowledge of one type necessitates knowledge of the other and the vice-versa. Embracing the principles of complexity theory allow student-advisees to develop adaptability, flexibility, self-authorship, and development (Iatrellis, et al.2023).

#### *Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Intellectual Traditions of the Proposed GA&CAM*

The glocalized academic and career advising discourse also centralizes Bakhtin's dialogic theory (1990), where the advising process is grounded on dialogue within a safe and engaging advising environment. Bakhtin's principles of dialogism contributes to an understanding that it is through dynamic, goal-oriented dialogic interactions that a shared, diverse, intercultural, glocalized and negotiated meaning between the advisor and the advisees can be constructed and reconstructed.

All in all, taken together, social constructivism, narrative theory, connectivism, complexity theory, and Bakhtin's dialogism provide a solid theoretical framework for a glocalized, academic and career advising approach. These theories embrace principles such as autonomy, social interactions, narrative construction, and a differential and referential understanding of the self in relation to the different intellectual Other.

Taken together, incorporating insights from these theories represent the knowledge of the glocalized flipped academic and career advising model, which centralizes an understanding and exploration of the skills needs of today's labor market and the expectations of university students. The proposed GA&CA model puts an emphasis on engaging both the advisor and the advisees in co-developing an understanding of industry-specific competencies that meet the evolving needs of the labor market. The proposed GA&CA model enables advisees to: develop a lifelong learning mindset that is adaptable to the ever-changing demands of the labor market, experience data-driven decision making, take charge of their educational and professional journeys, and self-assess their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement and career readiness. Glocalization, as a concept and practice, makes the advising process a public, interpretive and situated learning experience through which both the advisor and the advisee co-explore effective strategies that prepare student advisees for their academic and professional career in global and local settings. The following section explains further the discourse of the proposed A&CA model.

#### *The Publicity, Interpretivism, and Situatedness of the GA&CA Discourse*

The discourse of the GA&CA is public, interpretive, and situated. As a public act, the discourse of the GA&CA indicates that it presupposes the existence of other stakeholders who are dynamically engaged directly and indirectly in the advising process. Advising, as such, is a communicative public act. When advisors communicate with their advisees, the meaning that is socially constructed is an outcome of dialogic and communicative interactions according to Bakhtin (1986 ) theory. A glocalized advising act values Bakhtin’s dialogism, where the focus is on advancing communicative interactions between advisors and advisees. In other words, the GA&CA is not a monolithic, or static act, but an engaging, dynamic, and public dialogue between student advisees and other stakeholders. According to this line of thinking, the advising act requires three types of knowledge: knowledge of our minds (advisors), knowledge of advisees’ minds, and knowledge of the shared world. The following figure depicts the triangulated relationship of the three knowledge entities.

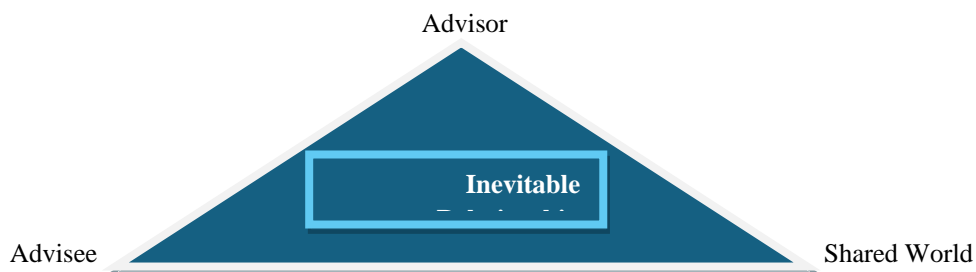


Figure 1. Public Nature of the GA&CA

This means that our interaction with our advisees in relation to objects and experiences in the world is what generates meaning. That said, the concept of the GA&CA, as a public act, centralizes the integration of Bakhtin’s dialogic communicative interactions. Advising would fail if advisors have no idea about the minds of the advisees and the world they share with them. The act of advising (academic and career advising) is a dialogic enterprise of communicative interactions among three types of knowledge : knowledge of the self-knowledge of the other and knowledge of the world. The proposed glocalized academic and career advising model embraces three types of knowledge, which constitute a robust foundation for both the advisor and his/her advisees to explore their roles in academic and career decision making. Glocalized advising practices, per se, provide access to diverse experiences and knowledge related to career exploration and social learning.

On the other hand, the discourse of the GA&CA requires continuous interpretation on the part of the advisor and the advisee of what surround them in the world. The third principle of the proposed GA&CA indicates that both the advisor and the advisee are situated. Both depend on their situated conventions, values, and beliefs in understanding each other. Being situated implies that we always already lean on our socially constructed beliefs in making sense of other people’s values. When the advisor and the advisees communicate, each draws on his/her previously constructed beliefs to interpret and understand the other. When they communicate, their prior constructed values and beliefs come into play.

Communicative interactions between them open up the likelihood of understanding each other’s constructed

inner world in relation to the outside world. The GA&CA process, by itself, is an act of interpreting the word and the world within a certain context at a certain point in time. In other words, the act of interpretation is place and time bound.

In much the same way of Bakhtin, Vygotsky's social constructivism informs the principles of the GA&CA approach. According to Vygotsky's (1978), the advising act is first social and then personal. The social view of the GA&CA requires both the advisor and the advisees to dynamically get engaged in life-contextualized communicative interactions and enterprises of growing difficulties. In so doing, students' knowledge of their academic and professional career can't be created autonomously, but through social interactions. This line of thought speaks of the advising act as a contextualized social practice and a dynamic outcome of social interactions. The advising process, through the lens of Bakhtin and Vygotsky's concepts, as such, is a dynamic and developmental social act that is shaped and determined by the socio-cultural beliefs and values that profile each individual entity.

Accordingly, the proposed GA&CA model, while enacting the principles of dialogism and social constructivism, it perceives the advising process as a developmental social act that goes beyond the time-honored boundaries of separating the local from the global. A glocalized approach to academic and career advising motivates advisees to explore and interpret the boundaries of their constructed knowledge in relation to the boundaries of their advisor's worldviews. This type of academic and career advising discourse opens new other horizons that make student advisees make sense of their world and the world of the different intellectual Other. Advising, therefore, is a process of meaning making and an outcome of a triadic association among the world of the advisor, the world of the advisees and the events and experiences in the world.

The discourse of the GA&CA promotes an understanding that to advise is to enable advisees reflect on their past to improve their present and forecast a rewording professional future. The principles of the GA&CA perceive both the advisor and the advisee are always already in an on-going interpretive mode of being-in-the world with others who are by necessity different. Therefore, to advise is to intelligibly interpret one's world in relation to the world of the different other. The Other in an advising context can be future employers, decision makers or any other stakeholders. It is the advisees' intelligibility that provides meaning to their academic and professional understanding. As an intelligible act, advising requires the presence of two communicants ( advisor and advisee), and an object or experience in the world. The interpretations that both the advisor and the advisee have of the external experiences are generative, situational, provisional and can change overtime. So, it cannot be codified or schematized.

In conclusion, the proposed flipped glocalized academic and career advising model speaks of :

- relating glocalization principles to advisees' career goals,
- exploring global opportunities with a local insight,
- and facilitating advisees' access to global communities to discuss global challenges with a local insight.



Significantly, the GA&CA proposed model is consistent with a flipped constructivist teaching, learning and assessment approach which emphasizes:

learning-by-doing,

inquiry-based learning,

project-based learning,

and competency-based performance and assessment.

Figure 2 depicts the flipped act of both learning and advising.

### A Proposed Flipped Teaching – Learning –& Advising Model

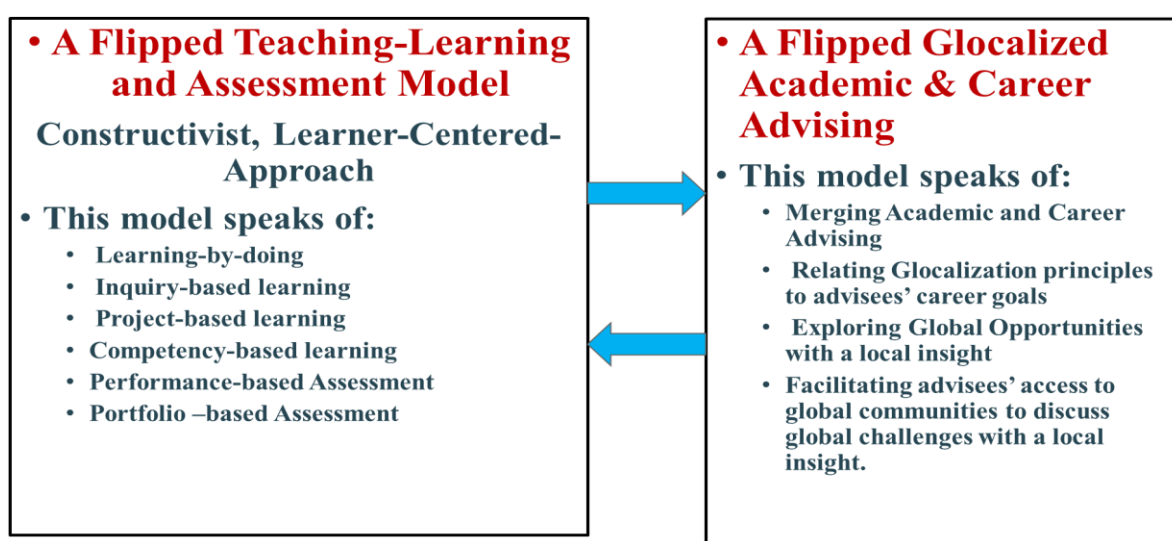


Figure 2. Flipped Act of both Learning and Advising

All in all, the proposed glocalized academic and career advising model is deeply rooted in the intellectual traditions of Bakhtin and Vygotsky which emphasize the social and collaborative nature of learning and advising. Also, theoretical concepts from the narrative theory indicate that storytelling plays a role in shaping advisees' identities and career paths. The advising practices that value these theories put high priority on advancing knowledge of the self, knowledge of the other and knowledge of the world. This type of understanding has the potential to achieve institutional improvement in this domain through the development of an online version of the proposed GA&CA model.

#### *An Online GA&CA for Institutional Improvement*

The model goes beyond course registration and degree explanation. The intention is to inspire new thoughts on the applications of a flipped online Academic and Career Advising model that centralizes an understanding and exploration of the needs of the 21st. century job market and the expectations of college graduates. The model demonstrates the importance of establishing a pedagogical consistency between the advising model and the learner -centered teaching-learning paradigm of the university. The flipped online academic advising model

should be an effective and easy tool to use and a helpful consulting instrument that eases students' access to academic advisors where they can discuss their academic works and professional career goals (Thottoli, et al. 2024). A virtual academic and career advising system (VACAS) would allow both the advisor and advisee to interact synchronously or asynchronously through videoconferencing or chatting facilities.

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## Towards Modern Teaching and Effective Learning of Cybersecurity

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**Abstract:** Based on an exhaustive study from 2001–2003 involving 14 high schools in the EU, a definition of the educational content and the aligned methodology for high school levels was developed for two areas—cyber safety and cybersecurity—with the aim of improving the knowledge and skills of students and their teachers. Available sources, including video platforms, quizzes, presentations, educational games and hands-on sources for practical exercises, were evaluated and included in the developed fiches with educational content. The paper describes the results of the study based on the evaluation of the acceptance of the method and the content by the students and with an assessment of the achieved learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** cybersecurity, cyber safety, high schools, Europe, game-based learning, Capture the Flag contest.

**Citation:** Blažič, B.J., & Blažič, A.J. (2024). Towards Modern Teaching and Effective Learning of Cybersecurity. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1809-1821), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Today's young population is changing its internet habits very quickly in response to considerable societal, market and technological innovation. They are frequently engaged with online videos, music, gaming, and messaging. In general, their internet use is broadly positive, contributing to the building of digital skills. When enjoying the benefits of the internet, it is important to be aware of the potential risks and to apply safety precautions, as young people now have internet access at a very early age. Studies claim that cybersecurity education should be applied in schools because there are many benefits if a school is able to offer cybersecurity education (ENISA, 2020) since the adult participants in seminars organized on the market are reluctant to spend time and money. Schools should provide programs on cybersecurity topics to larger communities, as cybersecurity education is changing the minds of individuals and contributing to a safer digital environment. According to Amankwa (Amankwa 2021), schools in the USA are provided with grants and financial allocations from the federal government to ensure support for implementing cybersecurity education. In addition, camps dedicated to cybersecurity topics are regularly organized for high school students each year

(Chen and He, 2021). One example is the GenCyber (GenCyber, 2015) summer camp, which is organized for teachers and students within an NSA/NSF support program. However, a study based on a systematic literature review of more than 20 very relevant papers reported that a well-designed curriculum in cybersecurity education at the K-12 level could successfully motivate students at this level to pursue cybersecurity pathways and careers, but today, such a curriculum is still missing (Jerman Blažič B. and Jerman Blažič A., 2022). Recommendations for addressing cybersecurity topics or curricula examples in the educational programs of European high schools are lacking, as was proven by a survey involving high school management in 14 European countries in 2021 (Caulkins et al., 2022). Digital skills, including the cybersecurity skills built through cybersecurity programmes, are understood to represent a combination of abilities, knowledge and experience that enables an individual to successfully complete a task when working in a digital environment and using digital services as well as being safe. The lack of sufficient attention given to acquiring cybersecurity knowledge by European children and young people has a negative impact on the capacity of a modern, digitized society and young people has a negative impact on the capacity of a modern, digitized society capable of efficiently reacting to the increasing number of cybercrimes (Adams and Makramalia, 2017). The problem addressed in this paper is twofold: a lack of appropriate educational content for EU high school students and a lack of teachers with knowledge and understanding of cybersecurity topics, content and skills. In this paper, both problems are addressed with teaching materials and delivery methods in line with the modern pedagogical approach. Acquiring cybersecurity skills requires an ICT background and knowledge that must be regularly updated to ensure the adoption of technological advances. The demands for new learning methods are now more pressing than ever, especially regarding the need to introduce and upgrade educational methodology at the high school level. Several studies have shown (Angafor et al., 2020; Dragon et al.) that even education and training in universities in several areas, including ICT, dedicated to preparing high school teachers are still very technocratic, and the educational approach is not promoted in line with the requirements for sustainable education and modern teaching (Burns et al., 2013; Cybersecurity4Europe, 2022). The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a short overview of related previous work on the subject by summarizing the results of an online survey among European high school students and teachers that provided information about the missing content in cybersecurity education, the desired educational methods for material delivery, and the methods that supported the preparation of the classes. Section 3 describes the implementation of the developed curriculum and the selected learning sources. In the same section, the organization and the course for the contest of Capture the Flag are briefly described. The last section discusses the approach applied and the experiences collected. The last section introduces the recommendations and the concluding remarks.

## **Related works and identified needs**

In this paper, **cyber safety** is understood as the means of protecting users from harmful online content. It concerns the emotional and psychological impact of what is seen, read and heard online. Being cyber safe means meeting appropriate standards of behavior in the content the users put on the internet, knowing how to avoid harmful interactions online, and being equipped to seek help in the case that an unexpected result occurs.

Examples of cybersafety incidents include cyberbullying, sexual harassment, exposure to hate speech/inappropriate content (violent, sexual, etc.), leakage of sensitive information, personal abuse, etc.

**Cybersecurity** is understood as the means of protecting data, systems and assets on the internet. It refers to the physical and software operation of the networks and computers over which the internet is delivered. Cybersecurity is described as well as the process, state, or activity in which communication systems and information are protected from modification, unauthorized access or exploitation.

Examples of cybersecurity incidents include the following: the entry of viruses into the system, the denial of service by connected systems, hacked and abused accounts/profiles, man-in-the-middle attacks (in which an attacker has access to the communication channel and can see and modify the information exchange), misuse social engineering (in which a person tries to acquire user or company credentials by asking simple questions), phishing (receiving access to a user's or company's credentials in a financial institution and stealing money, encrypting data and requesting payment to unencrypt data and other important information). Issue received additional attention when the problem of a labor force lacking cybersecurity skills was detected almost everywhere. The number of missing labour force with cybersecurity skills was estimated to be approximately 3 million workers globally, according to cybersecurity workforce studies carried out in 2018 and 2019 (Jerman Blažič, 2022). High schools in EU were found to not offer cybersecurity education in their computer science programs. The study of the issue provided the information that gamification of the cybersecurity topics can help in the education of the European youth. Training solutions, including games in the area of cybersecurity, have proven their capacity to raise awareness, defense and affective strategies based on an exhaustive analysis of more than 100 cybersecurity games available on the market (Coentrad et al., 2020, Jerman Blažič, A., 2021).

These findings triggered the members of the Concordia Competence Center (Concordia, 2021) to dedicate part of the project work to remedy the situation of missing skills among the EU population by preparing a modular body of knowledge of cybersecurity, first for workers in the industry, and launching courses where the interested organization could shape an appropriate education process according to needs by selecting modules from the offered set. Later, the team worked on the cybersecurity curriculum development dedicated to enable cybersecurity education among the younger population in the EU. Study was launched to help the selection of KAs that could become part of EU high schools' regular education. At that time, the UK National Cybersecurity Centre launched the Knowledge Base of Key Areas (KAs) in cybersecurity dedicated to training for postgraduate degrees in higher education (Attwood and Williams, 2023). The CyBok knowledge base identifies the KAs in all the relevant topics of cybersecurity and the aligned areas, such as human, organizational and regulatory aspects (Adams and Makramala, 2017). The base is licensed under the Open Government License v3.0. However, the KAs and the educational levels appropriate for schools are not yet provided by the CyBok database. The curriculum development and the education method were developed with help from the information collected with an on-line survey and with the talks carried out with the high school students, their parents, the teachers and school managers of 14 EU high schools. The on line survey with questions about desired topics and knowledge as well the desired of the material delivery helped as well. Before starting work

on the particular topics e-sources that address education in cybersecurity for 14- to 18-year-old students were inspected. Most of them are focused on spreading awareness about cybersafety, while cybersecurity topics that contribute to the adoption of cybersecurity skills were not addressed. Similar findings were recently reported by researchers who described different initiatives for enhancing the safety behavior of young people when using online services (Lin et al, 2018; Pencheva et al., 2020). Some studies addressing the relevance of cybersecurity education in high schools have identified only a few topics that should become part of high school education for cybersecurity (Passy, 2017; Chindrus and Caruntu,2023). It was found as well that Most of the material provided on the internet is available only in written electronic form (brochures, posters or presentations, typically in pdf format). No recommendations were found on platforms about how to apply the available educational tools, such as serious games and videos, in cybersecurity educational programs at the high school level. The game-based learning tools available on the internet cover very different topics, including spam, malware, cyber-attacks, and SQL injection XSS scripting, but they are intended to be used by very large and mixed audiences. Curriculum and fiches development requires tremendous teamwork in analyzing the offers and selecting the best solutions that match the training content in the fiches, together with the selected e-sources. The team was composed of cybersecurity experts and university teachers, some of whom were contributors or editors of the developed methodology and fiches' content. To extend the applicability of the programme to the level of knowledge in a particular school, three difficulty levels were prepared for each topic, i.e., beginner, intermediate and advanced. It was decided that the developed curriculum be composed of two major fields, i.e., cyber safety and cybersecurity, as these areas have different approaches to delivering content and learning.

## **The Method and The Curriculum Design**

The methodology for lesson delivery and KAs content were developed in parallel with the selection of the e-sources, which were evaluated for their appropriateness in providing active learning in the classes. The collaboration between the high school teachers, the participating experts and the university professors engaged in teaching cybersecurity and education was continuous, and as a result, a set of 12 fiches were prepared for each of the two areas, i.e., cybersafety and cybersecurity, all of which were equipped with information about the difficulty level and the requested students' prerequisite knowledge. They are presented on Table 1. The desired topics identified by the students were included in the selection of online tools, platforms, games and videos. Flexibility in the application of the education process was assured. The idea was that the education would follow the school's selection of the module's content, as the survey results revealed that the participating schools differ greatly in their programmes and attitudes toward teaching. The flexibility of the approach enables different needs to be met by a particular school participating in the education exercise and the accommodation of the teaching content to be in line with the student's knowledge level in that school. The fiche's content and the e-sources were prepared for the teachers who were teaching informatics and who had a medium level of competence in informatics and computer science. The advanced knowledge modules in the fiche collection were prepared to enable the teachers to improve their knowledge, and in the case of interest among the students, they could elaborate that content by offering additional training hours. Class preparation and the selection of a fiche



with the appropriate difficulty level were considered teachers' tasks. The students enrolled in cybersecurity education were expected to have basic digital skills, but for the cybersafety modules, no precourse knowledge was needed. All the fiches contained a number of existing and already validated e-resources, systems and tools in both the addressed areas.

Table 1. Overview of the 12 modules and in each of the addressed knowledge area: cybersafety

A. Cybersafe topics			B. Cybersecurity topics		
A0. Why discussing cybersafe	A.TEST Testing the group level		B0. Why study cybersecurity	B.TEST Testing the group level	
A1. Personal/Sensitive Data and Privacy	A2. Cyberbullying and Sexual Harassment	A3. Inappropriate Content	B1. OSI Model	B2. Operating systems (OS), Computer Hardware, and how does a computer work	B3. Protection of Data: concerns
A4. Hate speech	A5. Fake profiles, Fraud, and Phishing	A6. The importance of Strong Passwords	B4. Network Standards and Protocols	B5. Cybersecurity essentials (CIA triad)	B6. Attacks, Threats, Vulnerabilities
A7. Addiction	A8. Keep my online account safe	A9. Stay safe in Online Social Networks	B7. Defense against Cyber threats (Cyber hygiene)	B8. Cryptography	B9. Individual Incident Management
A10. Online Games	A11. Fake News	A12. Transparency of Recommendation Algorithms	B10. Capture the Flag	B11. Penetration testing/trainings	B12. Roles in Cybersecurity and Top10 certifications

The selection of games to be included in fiches was not an easy task, as the number of appropriate serious games with proven learnability (Jerman Blažič, A., et al., 2017) for high school-level education in cybersecurity is not large (Jerman Blažič, A., 2021; Miguel et al., 2014). It seems that the cybersecurity area for a less-demanding level of knowledge is somehow neglected by game designers. The reason for this difference comes from the games' origins, as most of the cybersecurity games were developed within military institutions and are not suitable for a nonmilitary environment, for general education such as the one to be implemented in most high schools. However, the inclusion of games was based on an analysis of previous studies.

Each fiche listed in Table 3 is equipped with the following information that helps the teachers prepare for the class:

- The level of knowledge addressed by the module
- The level of knowledge required by the students before they attend the class with that module;
- The learning objectives (LOs) of each fiche
- The type of knowledge to be conveyed to the students
- Examples of questions to be discussed with the students during class
- Practical examples to be used by the teacher, such as games, hands-on exercises and quizzes



- List of links to e-resources to be used when preparing the class and later by the students during the class, such as games, quizzes and videos.

Each fiche is accompanied by a list of URLs for the proposed practical examples and suggested e-resources. A total of 434 URLs are included in the teaching material, 195 of which address cybersafety and 239 of which address cybersecurity. They are provided at the end of each module. Although all of them were tested before inclusion, regular updating is recommended. The list of serious games and quizzes in the safety module is modest and is located in fiche A11. The list of included games includes “Identify and Challenge the Information” (topic: Fake News), developed by the University of Portland, “INocular science and Harmony Square”. An example of a recommended quiz is “The All New NewsWise Headline”. Examples from the game list in the cybersecurity modules are “The Matching Games”, “Map OSI and TCP/IP Layers”, “Cisco Learning – Binary Game”, “Print Matching game”, “Education Arcade”, “Cybersecurity NOVA Labs”, “PBS and Band Runner”, “Solve the Cryptoquote”, “RSA Encryption and Decryption”, “NCSC – the Cyber Sprinter”, and “Capture the Flag.” Most of these examples are available without charge. Capture the Flag is offered as a specific module composed of three fiches, Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced. It is recommended that students and teachers interested in the advanced learning of cybersecurity topics. Appendix B presents the CTF fiche at an intermediate level.

## **Implementation of the Developed Method**

The applicability of the developed educational model for both audiences, high school teachers and students in 9 European schools, was demonstrated for the 2022–2023 school year. The call for participation was sent to the high school management who participated in the survey. The endorsement of the school’s participation after they had previously expressed a willingness to participate in the educational process according to the offered educational model required several conditions to be fulfilled by them. The school management agreed to the teaching of the selected curriculum topics becoming part of the ICT classes. Background knowledge in ICT was requested from the high school teachers who applied to take the preliminary courses dedicated to upgrading their knowledge in cybersecurity. The enrollment of the students in the cyber safety and cybersecurity classes was voluntary, and they were allocated by the school management in groups according to the presented knowledge in the tests, which was performed before the beginning of the classes. The tests were planned to be anonymous, as their purpose was to offer information about the students’ knowledge that helps the fiches with the difficulty level that best matches the students’ knowledge for selection. The test was recommended to last a maximum of 30 minutes. The teachers learned during the organized, online courses before the education in the schools started, how the proposed methodology works and how it should be applied in the classes. They were asked to test and become familiar with the e-sources and the tools presented in the fiches. One month later, they were given to prepare for their first classes before starting their education. For students who showed advanced knowledge of cybersecurity, the Capture the Flag module was prepared to be delivered to them, together with additional training hours for those interested in the subject who were planning to participate in the contest by the

end of the educational process. The participating school's management was asked to ensure that the classes had equal participation from male and female students. The teacher's education started early in October 2022 with a set of online lectures. The engaged instructors who led the courses for the teachers were university professors who contributed to the curriculum's development. The high school teachers were familiarized with the fiches' content, how to apply the educational material for the classes and which fiches were dedicated to improving their knowledge of cybersecurity. The teaching methodology presented to the teachers followed the dynamic teaching model (Concordia, 2021) by providing an active learning approach. Due to the volatility of some e-resources and their rapid changes, the teachers were asked to check them before the class and, if they changed or showed a lack of a sufficient and clear explanation of the presented material, ask the team for a replacement. Guidelines for class preparation discussed with the teachers during the teachers' courses provided opinions and advice that were recommended for use. Special attention was given to the way the fiches were selected when preparing a particular topic for the classes, as the topic material was expected to meet the identified knowledge level of the students. Open and lively discussions with students can provide enough information about how much the students are aware of threats when using online services and how much they know about the subject. This method is more suitable for cyber safety topics because they are generally more familiar with everyday activities on the internet. In teaching cybersecurity topics, the assess For most of the lessons, the fiches provide practical examples. In presenting them, they can be complemented with local news relevant to the class topic or with inspirational talks from experts. Such examples are expected to engage students in the learning process. The Bring-your-own-example (BYOE) tactic is also considered to help with a better interchange of opinions between the students and the teacher and to enable more lively discussions in class. To make the class topic more familiar, the students may be invited to check in advance the lesson to be covered in the next class and to look for cases they would like to share and discuss with the teacher and their peers that fit the class topics. Presenting their own examples was suggested to be introduced at the beginning of class or later, depending on the class topic. The fiches provide information about the learning objectives of each of the presented topics, and when the teacher feels that they have achieved their completion, a test may be included by the end of the class in the last 10 minutes. Questions for this type of test are also provided in the fiches, with the exception of fiches B12, B14 and B15 (capturing the Flag fiches). The teaching process with the developed curriculum in the schools started in the last week of November 2023. The classes were held in laboratories that were equipped with computers connected to the internet. The classes started with an introduction about "what a career in cybersecurity means". Some schools managed to invite experts from the industry that delivered a short speech about that topic by presenting cybersecurity role models and their career experiences, which was concluded with an invitation to the students to consider a career in cybersecurity. In two cases, the speakers were school parents working in the cyber domain, such as police, cybersecurity centers and CERTect. The students were allowed to bring and use their own devices (BYOD) during class. The classes usually started with information about one or two cybersecurity incidents in the area of the fiche topic, presented as a story. The results from the beginning of the class were presented to the students and discussed with the teacher. The purpose of the discussion was to stress the topic's priority within the curriculum. Most of the modules offer multiple-choice test questions with different levels of difficulty, which the teacher can select according to the needs of a particular class. Story telling prepared by the teacher at the beginning of the class is intended to launch the discussion for an easier

understanding of the game scenarios to be played during and after the class. The order of presenting different topics was selected by the individual teacher after the evaluation of the students' knowledge, but alternating the cybersafety topics with the cybersecurity topics was recommended as a method based on the findings that cybersafety topics positively impact teaching due to the greater amount of emotional/psychological content addressed in these topics. The alternation made the learning more relaxed. The topics selected by the teachers differed; however, the most frequently selected fiches for teaching were "Data protection (Foundation, Intermediate level)", "Essentials of cybersecurity (Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced level)", "Attacks, Threats and Vulnerability (Intermediate level)", "Defense against Cyber threats (Foundation level)" and "Capture the Flag (Intermediate and Advanced level)". The classes in all the participating high schools were very well attended. For example, in Slovenia, 365 students from five different high schools attended classes provided by five computer science teachers. In addition, training hours were applied for the five teams that decided to participate in the contest. The class portfolios in these schools were rich and contained both foundation fiches and fiches with advanced topics; for example, "Fake news" was one of the most frequently taught topics. Support was provided by the teachers involved, who helped the students understand the mechanics of the Capture the Flag game. The additional hours were well attended as they enabled the students to work on the Capture the Flag platforms at their own speed.

## Results and Testing the Aquired Knowledge

After the classes ended at the beginning of March 2023, a survey was carried out in the majority of the participating schools to evaluate the students' adopted knowledge and their satisfaction with the learning. The questions were designed following the ACM education recommendation, which defines three types of learning outcomes to be assessed in their Computer Science Curricula (Leune et al., 2017). They are the following: Familiarity, meaning that a student has understood the concept at the theoretical level, is achieved mainly through lectures. Usage: A student understands the concept and can apply it correctly when the situation requires it. Assessment: A student understands the concept and can recognize the given concept in practice (Švabenski et al., 2022). Several questions were prepared to address the suggested learning outcomes, and additional questions addressed satisfaction with the applied education. The answers were very positive, most of them gave very positive numbers. The interviews with the teachers provided additional insights. The total number of teachers who participated in conversations about their experience with teaching was 14. They were carried out in the schools of the three countries that applied to participate in the Capture the Flag contest. Most of the teachers were glad to be part of the educational experiment, but most of the benefits they found came from the content of the fiches and the possibility of learning and preparing classes with material provided on the shelves. The fiches were assessed to be very helpful as a good way of bringing their knowledge up to date. According to a teacher's statement, the fiche's content was found to be very well structured and clearly presented, and there was a good red line for implementing the content in a class. The prepared questions to be asked during the classes and those included in the tests were found to be useful and contributed to the discussion with the students. The provided sources for teaching helped them, with less time spent on class preparation, and

provided useful guidance in testing the students' preknowledge before the class started. The prepared recommendation for how to use the provided material was assessed to be very useful and beneficial. The e-resources, i.e., the available videos and the game playing, introduced more amusement and enjoyment in the classes and made communication between the students and the teacher easier. The applied active learning enabled better content understanding and easier learning. The teachers' extra work, in attending the education prepared for them, and the obvious success of the implemented classes were recognized and awarded. To verify the results of the applied methodology in more real circumstances, an international contest was organized with the game Capture the Flag, which is a game designed to test the cybersecurity ability of the participants. Evidence from other Capture the Flag contests with beginners shows that the students who had typically never worked with a Linux OS or common network and security utilities before with the Capture the Flag concepts were capable of solving the challenges of the Capture the Flag contest (Švabensky et al., 2018). In March 2023, the classes ended, and an evaluation of the acquired knowledge by the students who attended the Capture the Flag classes with the three difficulty levels and the training hours was performed. It was prepared to participate in the international Capture the Flag contest. The idea for the development of the Capture the Flag game comes from the battle strategy. The participating teams in the Capture the Flag "Battle" are supposed to protect their "base" and their "flag". The other objective of the participating team(s) is to capture the flag from the other competing team(s) without being caught (Akinrotimi, 2023). The adaptation of the battle strategy to cybersecurity allows different scenarios to be prepared, and as a consequence, the results of the contests with different tasks are not the same. This is enabled by the nature of the game, which allows it to be played in many different forms (Cole, 2022). The most frequently played form is the "defensive" scheme, where each team attacks an established network and connected servers. Due to the international dimension of the action for teaching teachers and students from EU high schools, the Capture the Flag contest was run remotely on the internet, which is usually the most frequently applied model for knowledge evaluation. Each team worked in its own computer at their school. The participation in the contest was limited to a maximum of five high school students on each of the participating teams, but the final number of team members was set to 4. The Capture the Flag challenge was implemented by applying the defensive scheme and was designed according to the modules that were applied during the educational program. This applied game format was played with several teams that were trying to reach the same objective or the "flag" located in the network server. In the simplest form, the "flags" are usually simple text files placed in a specific location that should be discovered. The playing time was defined by the moderator to be 3 hours; this timing is considered the best time for beginners in a Capture the Flag contest. After the game was completed, the moderator reported the results and presented the correct solutions to the challenges. The times to solve the challenges were recorded, and the team that collected all the flags or obtained the highest score after the playing time was considered the winner of the game. The challenges that were given in the contest required the competing teams from three different countries to discover the server's vulnerabilities (flags) in the established network, to exploit this vulnerability (e.g., enabling remote connecting), to identify the IP number of the attacker and to determine whether a remote shell of the server is working correctly. Appropriate tools were available for scanning the server ports, identifying which ports of the server are open, and determining the type of protocols running behind these ports. The score engine continuously received the solved challenges and confirmed the correctness of the solutions during the allocated

playing time. The competing teams did not solve all the presented challenges, so the winner was the team that collected the highest number scores. Nineteen teams of students who attended the classes with the Capture the Flag module participated in the contest. The participants were from Croatia, Romania and Slovenia. The points acquired during the contest ranged from 5 points (the team with the lowest scores) to 87 points from a possible 100, obtained by the best team, coming from Romania. The rankings of the 19 teams that participated in the contest, each with 4 members, are presented in Table 2 with their names and country codes.

Table 2. Teams, country codes and results from the CTF contest

VNU (RO)	87
ELIPROS (RO)	86
MastersOFCeremony (CR)	84
>UwU< (CR)	75
CookieCreeps (RO)	75
PAYAPAYA (SI)	66
Untitled (RO)	44
Pascaplunk (RO)	25
ExpirationDate2029 (RO)	25
EchipaMinune (RO)	24
Dandara (CR)	24
eIPršo (CR)	21
SKULD (RO)	18
CyberHack2005 (RO)	15
iCyberNShot (RO)	11
Security Squad (SI)	5
FLOWERS TOT (SI)	5
LIL DRAGON (SI)	5
CyptoCodex (RO)	5

## Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Considering the results, the applied methodology was shown to be applicable and useful. The originality of the approach, which has its origin in up-to-date educational methods and material, made the classes attractive. The efforts to promote active student participation improved teaching and student learning. The use of competitive computer games, videos from involved e-platforms, storylines and other tools are elements that made the classes enjoyable with the interactive participation of the students. The advanced testing of the students' knowledge before the lessons for accommodating the difficulty level of the delivered material, the provision of the teacher's active involvement in presenting the content, selected according to the students' interest and needs, and the

additional components applied in the education process made the proposed methodology applicable and attractive. One of the main components that contributed to this process was the offered guidance to teachers for preparing the classes with ready-to-use content, additional learning tools and available e-sources. The methodology was designed to encourage the teachers to apply specific additional measures for making the classes attractive for the participating students and ensuring their participation. The introduction of the BYOE tactic in the area of cybersecurity is another component that makes the proposed methodology innovative and acceptable for all involved people. The novelty of the developed methodology and its applicability were confirmed by the answers collected during the surveys and the expressed personal interviews of the teachers, the school managers that scouted the participants' needs in terms of teaching cybersecurity and cybersafety subjects at a level mostly adopted for the high school students. However, the main innovative component of the applied methodology is its flexibility, which provides the best match between the different knowledge levels of high school students and their interest in specific cybersecurity topics. Cybersecurity education at all levels is still an area that needs further support as well as the application of innovative methods and flexible teaching approaches. Cybersecurity is an area with rapid and dynamic development that needs to be followed.

## Recommendations

The new and modern use of tools, videos, and e-platforms prepared for teaching cybersecurity skills at the high school level enables the transfer of the necessary knowledge. It should start early in the educational process, as young people are faced with internet threats every day in their private and later in their business lives. The integration of cybersecurity and cyber safety in secondary school education will have multiple benefits; among them, it will enable more young people to pursue professional cybersecurity careers, which will reduce cyber-skill shortages among the world population and a lack of skilled labor forces. However, it should also be recognized that the introduction of cybersecurity program in the EU high schools despite of the current initiatives will require additional significant time and effort.

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# Revolutionization of Global Supply Chains: The Power of Artificial Intelligence for Enhanced Efficiency and Strategic Decision-Making

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**Abstract:** In recent times, the landscape of supply chain management has undergone a profound transformation through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI). The incorporation of AI into operations aims to bolster efficiency, optimize processes, and elevate decision-making within the realm of supply chain management. A myriad of AI tools has been deployed to drive this evolution. This paper endeavors to address specific objectives, including the identification of AI technologies utilized in supply chain management, an evaluation of the revolutionary impact of AI on supply chains, an exploration of challenges associated with adopting AI technologies in supply chains, and an examination of both current and future trends in AI technologies within supply chain management. To achieve these objectives, a systematic literature review was conducted, serving as the foundation for the study framework. Journal articles and reputable search engines such as Science Direct, Google Scholar, and Masader were utilized to source previous studies on AI technologies in supply chain management. To maintain linguistic consistency, only articles written in English were considered. The anticipated results of this study aim to contribute new insights, unveil potential gaps for future research, and foster a comprehensive understanding of the role of AI in supply chain management. Subsequently, the findings will fuel a robust discussion on the transformative impact of AI on supply chain operations.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, Supply chain management, AI and supply chain management, AI technologies.

**Citation:** Ruzive, B., & Magd, H. (2024). Revolutionization of Global Supply Chains: The Power of Artificial Intelligence for Enhanced Efficiency and Strategic Decision-Making. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1822-1827), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI), as defined by [Delke et al., 2023] refers to the capacity of computers to autonomously tackle problems for which they haven't been explicitly programmed. Reference [Poumader et al., 2021] assert that AI represents a computer field where machines exhibit the ability to perform tasks traditionally

requiring human intelligence. Within supply chain management, AI contributes significantly to smart delivery and retailing [Sharma and Dash, 2022], enhancing the efficiency of information, product, and funds flows [Pulles et al., 2016]. Marketers utilize AI to gather insights into customer behavior and preferences, employing cameras in supermarkets to analyze purchasing patterns and predict future choices [Wang and Chen, 2019]. Real-time and precise forecasting in manufacturing and retailing are notably advanced through AI applications, impacting the entire supply chain system [Sharma and Dash, 2022]. Proponents of AI in supply chain management contend that it facilitates setting product/service prices, designing effective communication channels, promoting products, and providing users with memorable experiences [Sharma and Dash, 2022].

## Literature Review

**The Concept of AI:** AI is a term broadly employed to characterize the use of diverse computer technologies capable of solving scientific and engineering problems [Helo and Hao, 2022]. Soleimani (2018) suggests that the scientific perspective on AI revolves around designing and comprehending operational environments to enable intelligent actions, akin to human intelligence. In contrast, the engineering approach to AI spans computer science and data science, requiring substantial data processing and advanced statistical methods for technical application [helo and Hao, 2022]. Davenport (2018) emphasizes the necessity for extensive data processing and cutting-edge statistical techniques for the practical implementation of AI, especially considering the dynamic technological landscape, unpredictable customer demand, globalization, and digitalization in companies.

**AI Technologies:** Various AI technologies find application in supply chains. Machine learning, a pivotal AI application, extends beyond data processing to handle unstructured knowledge by identifying patterns and providing feedback [Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2017]. Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), inspired by the nervous system, leverage interconnected computer networks for learning from examples, recognizing patterns, and processing ambiguous information [Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2017]. Robotics, an interdisciplinary field, integrates mechanical, information, and electronic engineering [8]. Evolutionary Computation (EC) employs diverse algorithms to solve problems at different levels [Helo and Hao, 2022]. Speech Processing (SP) converts speech into digital signals using digital signal processing techniques [Fu and Sun, 2018]. Expert Systems (ES) employ calculated reasoning and extensive data to solve problems, offering viable alternatives [Jarrahi, 2018]. Machine Vision (MV) recognizes objects and interprets content from images, while Natural Language Processing (NLP) extracts meaning from speech text based on semantic analysis [Davenport, 2018].

**The Impact of AI on Supply Chain Management:** AI's influence on supply chain management is profound, particularly in demand pattern projection and forecasting [Delke et al., 2023]. Accurate predictions enable enterprises to optimize sourcing agreements and order processing, reducing costs related to transportation, warehousing, and administration. Notable examples include the UK's National Grid using Google's 'DeepMind' to predict supply and demand variations, and the German online retailer Otto reducing inventory by 90%

through AI-driven reliable forecasting [Dash et al., 2019; Yao, 2018]. In production processes, AI optimizes assets, designs teams, and enhances system reliability [Delke et al., 2023]. Robotics, as an AI application, is extensively employed in production tasks, such as product transportation to delivery vans (Bughin et al., 2017). In marketing, AI generates content across social media channels, enabling the observation and prediction of customer buying patterns [Sharma and Dash, 2022].

Challenges in the Application of Artificial Intelligence in Supply Chain Management: [Nozari et al., 2022] acknowledge that despite the transformative impact of technology in various sectors, the realm of supply chain management faces significant hurdles. These challenges encompass cybersecurity concerns, a lack of trust in both artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), connectivity issues, environmental risks, energy management challenges, a dearth of traceability in efficiency across different supply chain levels, insufficient digitalization, inadequate integration at all operational levels, a lack of end-to-end visibility, and the complexities associated with handling and maintaining legal contracts [Davis and deif, 2021; Fogru and Keskin, 2020; Haddouch et al., 2019; Nozari et al., 2022; Sanders et al., 2019, Sulistyowati and Purnomo, 2020].

## Method

This study utilized a systematic literature review with a preference for a cross-sectional survey approach, drawing from literature published in high-impact academic journals and peer-reviewed articles. The stringent criteria of back-to-back peer reviews conducted in esteemed academic journals deemed these selected articles as the gold standard [Osobajo et al., 2022]. Employing a systematic literature review enhances the review process's quality and enables the synthesis of large datasets into manageable, informative pieces. It is recognized as a reliable and valid method for synthesizing research findings in a specific field [Kitchenham, 2007]. Initially, 55 journal articles were identified, with 20 eliminated based on abstracts. Subsequently, 16 were excluded due to dates exceeding a 10-year threshold, resulting in an initial database of 19 articles. After careful examination of abstracts, an additional 3 articles were omitted, ultimately leaving 16 articles that were less than a decade old.

## Results and Discussion

### Unleashing Opportunities through AI and IoT Adoption in Supply Chains

The literature analysis underscores the substantial potential for opportunities arising from the integration of AI applications and IoT in supply chains, despite the inherent challenges. Notably, in sectors such as agriculture, the advantages derived from AI applications in supply chains far outweigh the challenges encountered. There is a visionary perspective that places data and technology at the forefront of future supply chain productivity and customer satisfaction. The strategic utilization of IoT, including robotics, and AI applications proves to be exceptionally effective in capturing, storing, and distributing massive volumes of data. While it is undeniable that supply chain operations grapple with multifaceted challenges, the presence of these advanced technologies offers a promising avenue for improvement. The symbiotic integration of IoT and AI into supply chains emerges

as a transformative force that enhances overall business operations. Despite the existing hurdles, the adoption of these technologies is poised to optimize efficiency and contribute to the evolution of supply chain management into a more streamlined and resilient system. This strategic amalgamation reflects a forward-looking approach, positioning data-driven technologies as pivotal drivers for the continued success and evolution of supply chain processes.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the paper underscores the transformative influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in revolutionizing supply chain management. From enhancing demand forecasting to optimizing production processes and improving marketing strategies, AI applications demonstrate substantial benefits. The diverse array of AI technologies, ranging from machine learning to robotics, plays a pivotal role in reshaping traditional supply chain paradigms. However, the implementation of AI in supply chain management is not without its challenges, such as cybersecurity concerns, trust issues, connectivity problems, and environmental risks which pose significant hurdles. Despite these challenges, the potential for cost reduction, operational efficiency, and improved decision-making remains compelling.

The systematic literature review presented provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of AI in supply chain management, and continuous adaptation to the evolving technological landscape is imperative. It's imperative to offer some recommendations for the way forward:

- R1 - Addressing Ethical Implications: Companies should proactively address the ethical implications of AI in supply chain management. This involves developing responsible AI practices, ensuring transparency in decision-making algorithms, and considering the social and economic impact of AI-driven automation on the workforce.
- R2 - Continuous Monitoring of Industry Trends: Given the dynamic nature of technology, companies should engage in continuous monitoring of industry trends. Staying abreast of emerging AI technologies and their applications in supply chain management enables organizations to maintain a competitive edge and adapt to evolving challenges.
- R3 - Collaboration and Information Sharing: Industry stakeholders, including companies, researchers, and policymakers, should foster collaboration and information sharing. This can help address challenges such as cybersecurity concerns and connectivity issues that require collective efforts and shared insights to find effective solutions.
- R4 - Investment in Employee Training: As AI becomes more integrated into supply chain processes, investing in employee training becomes crucial. Ensuring that the workforce is equipped with the necessary and required skills to collaborate with AI technologies fosters a harmonious integration and helps mitigate concerns related to job displacement.

On a final note, while AI presents immense opportunities for innovation and efficiency in supply chain management, a balanced and thoughtful approach is essential. By addressing challenges, staying informed about technological advancements, and prioritizing ethical considerations, organizations can harness the full potential of AI to create resilient, adaptive, and ethically sound supply chains.

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## Navigating Smart Energy Systems in the Post-COVID-19 Era Amidst the Ukraine-Russia Conflict: Shaping a Novel Framework for Monitoring, Disciplining, and Sanctioning Energy Behavior in the UK and Europe

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**Abstract:** In the post-COVID-19 and amidst the Ukraine-Russia conflict era, this article delves into the trajectory of smart energy systems, specifically focusing on the United Kingdom (UK) and Europe. The global response to the pandemic has precipitated a surge in technological integration, reshaping societal dynamics and prompting inquiries into the consequences of energy behaviour. Simultaneously, geopolitical events, notably the Ukraine-Russia conflict, have introduced new complexities to the global energy landscape. This research examines the consequences of this dual environment on the development of intelligent energy systems, investigating the possibility of a fundamental change towards enhanced surveillance, regulation, and punishment of energy consumption in the United Kingdom and Europe. Drawing on insights from Michel Foucault's theoretical framework, the research explores the nuanced interplay between technological advancements, surveillance mechanisms, and the regulatory landscape. The article examines how smart energy systems, including the widespread use of smart meters, may contribute to establishing a new order in energy governance. It investigates the extent to which such technologies may be leveraged to monitor energy practices, discipline consumption patterns, and implement sanctions as control mechanisms. Furthermore, the research considers the socio-political implications of these developments, contemplating their impact on democratic principles and community engagement in energy decision-making processes. This article enhances our understanding of the changing dynamics in energy governance after global challenges and geopolitical shifts by combining empirical research on smart energy systems and analyzing current energy policy trends in the UK and Europe.

**Keywords:** Smart energy systems, Privacy concerns, Technology design, Energy transition, Inclusive decision-making.

**Citation:** Adnan, N. (2024). Navigating Smart Energy Systems in the Post-COVID-19 Era Amidst the Ukraine-Russia Conflict: Shaping a Novel Framework for Monitoring, Disciplining, and Sanctioning Energy Behavior in the UK and Europe. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1828-1851), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has significantly impacted the UK and EU energy sector, leading to a reevaluation of energy strategies. The reliance on Russian natural gas supplies and the geopolitical tensions have highlighted vulnerabilities in the energy infrastructure, necessitating a shift towards more resilient and sustainable solutions (Vivoda, 2010). Energy security has become a central concern, prompting calls for diversifying and decentralising energy sources (Selvakkumaran & Limmeechokchai, 2016). The potential disruptions in gas supplies due to the conflict have emphasized the need for smart technologies in the energy sector (Saeed et al., 2023). Smart energy systems, which integrate digital technologies and intelligent devices, offer real-time monitoring, control, and optimization of energy consumption, enhancing efficiency and mitigating vulnerabilities (Khan et al., 2020). The transition towards smart energy is a response to immediate challenges and a strategic move towards creating adaptive and sustainable energy ecosystems (Zhuang et al., 2020). The urgency for cleaner and more sustainable energy sources has accelerated efforts to integrate digital technologies and intelligent systems (Han et al., 2020). The Russia-Ukraine conflict has redirected attention to the role of smart energy as a strategic response to geopolitical uncertainties (Shen & Hong, 2023).

Integrating smart energy systems is crucial for building resilience, ensuring energy security, and mitigating the potential impacts of geopolitical disruptions (Matt et al., 2015). This transition represents a transformative moment in the energy sector, where technological innovation converges with geopolitical realities, shaping the trajectory towards a more sustainable and digitally-enabled energy future (Bican & Brem, 2020). The shift towards smart energy has the potential to reshape the energy sector's trajectory (Ma et al., 2018). It aligns with the global trend of embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which emphasizes digitalization and intelligence (Bican & Brem, 2020). However, this trajectory is not without challenges. The increased demand for electrical energy, driven by digitalization, puts additional pressure on an industry already transitioning towards sustainable sources (Ma et al., 2018). The widespread adoption of smart energy systems becomes crucial to meet this demand (Sanguinetti et al., 2018). The societal dynamics and divisions exposed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict have implications for the energy transition (Lyu et al., 2022). The willingness to embrace sustainability strategies and collective measures may be challenged (Lyu et al., 2022). Understanding the motivations of individuals who resist collective actions provides insights into the complex interplay of power and knowledge (Lyu et al., 2022). The social implications of smart energy adoption require a deeper understanding of societal conditions and the compatibility of innovations with existing norms (Sanguinetti et al., 2018). As the UK and the EU navigate the post-conflict period, smart energy adoption's social and cultural dimensions come to the forefront (Prakasa et al., 2022). Digitalization experiences during the pandemic have cultivated new attitudes, values, behaviours, and routines (Matt et al., 2015). These modifications facilitate the broader dissemination of smart energy systems (Matt et al., 2015). The public's awareness of digital tools and digitalized workflows has been heightened by the pandemic (Matt et al., 2015). Individuals and communities have acquired essential digital skills and literacies, establishing the foundation for the widespread utilization of smart energy

technologies (Matt et al., 2015). The increasing availability of smart tools has resulted in a technological ecosystem corresponding to individuals' changing digital behaviours (Matt et al., 2015).

The global transition towards smart energy systems is gaining momentum, particularly in significant emitters such as Europe and the United States. The European Union's Green New Deal and the Clean Energy Package showcase a dedication to sustainable energy sources. In contrast, the United States promotes a future focused on digitalized energy and mobility. However, it is crucial to recognize the disparities in technological infrastructure and capabilities across countries. The ongoing energy transition presents an opportunity to fortify energy security and cultivate a more sustainable and socially informed energy landscape for the future. The societal divisions exposed by the pandemic underscore the challenges in achieving collective goals, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of the social implications of smart energy technologies (Ma et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2022; Parks & Wallsten, 2019). The interplay of power and knowledge in smart energy adoption raises potential risks and challenges. Understanding the motivations and behaviours of individuals who resist collective actions is essential in shaping the ongoing energy transition. Researchers must engage with these complexities and uncertainties, drawing insights from social theories and understanding societal dynamics. It is imperative to establish a structured framework of social viewpoints regarding the diffusion of smart energy systems, considering the various factors that shape the future of smart energy. This highlights the importance of engaging with social theories and understanding societal dynamics to navigate the multifaceted nature of the transition towards smart energy systems (Ma et al., 2018; Sanguinetti et al., 2018; Noppers et al., 2019; Parks & Wallsten, 2019). The Russia-Ukraine conflict has accelerated the shift towards smart energy systems in the UK and the EU, emphasizing the need for resilience and sustainability. Integrating digital technologies and intelligent systems is crucial for addressing energy security concerns.

Moreover, the future design of energy, internet, and privacy policies should be informed by a nuanced understanding of the social implications of these technologies. This underscores the significance of considering the societal implications of smart energy technologies in shaping future policies and systems (Zhang et al., 2022; Throndsen & Ryghaug, 2015). In conclusion, the transition towards smart energy systems presents opportunities and challenges. Researchers must grapple with the multifaceted nature of this transition, engaging with social theories and understanding societal dynamics. By doing so, they can contribute to fortifying energy security and cultivating a more sustainable and socially informed energy landscape for the future (Ma et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2022; Parks & Wallsten, 2019; Throndsen & Ryghaug, 2015).

The shift toward intelligent energy systems requires thoroughly examining the social consequences, particularly concerning power and knowledge dynamics. Foucault's power/knowledge concept offers valuable insights into an energy regime that self-regulates and disciplines without explicit state control, relying on constant mutual observation to influence individuals. While this regime holds the potential to support sustainability, concerns arise regarding its influences, highlighting the necessity for critical discourse and thorough research (Heizmann & Olsson, 2015). The significance of comprehending power and knowledge dynamics and their effects on the energy transition is emphasized by the influences shaping smart energy's future after the pandemic, particularly

in light of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This underscores the need for a structured social framework to examine various power constellations operating on multiple levels, providing a comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics involved and emphasizing the call for nuanced research and analysis (Lopes et al., 2016; Silvast et al., 2018; Kojonsaari & Palm, 2023).

Moreover, examining energy behaviours in a smart grid and the evolving representations of users in layered infrastructures shed light on policy implications and social impacts. This underscores the significance of empirical social research for the successful co-evolution of technology and behaviours, enabling smart grids to encourage active engagement by end-users (Lopes et al., 2016; Silvast et al., 2018). In conclusion, delving into the interplay of power, knowledge, and the adoption of smart energy mandates a multidisciplinary approach encompassing social implications, policy considerations, and user representations. By integrating social science research and applying Foucault's power/knowledge perspective, researchers can contribute to a nuanced comprehension of the intricate dynamics involved in the transition toward a sustainable energy future (Heizmann & Olsson, 2015; Kojonsaari & Palm, 2023). This compilation of chosen sources thoroughly comprehends the societal consequences of smart energy and the energy transition, highlighting the necessity for critical discussion, extensive investigation, and a well-organized framework of social viewpoints.

### **The foundation of Foucauldian perception**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the implementation of stringent quarantine measures by various governments, particularly in the EU and the UK. These measures, reminiscent of historical instances of state-imposed quarantine, reflect the exercise of disciplinary power in society (Cohen, 2019). Foucault's analysis of the evolution of modern societies aligns with the expansion of disciplinary power, which has transitioned from overt governmental control to individuals' internalization of rules, leading to self-discipline (Peters, 2017). The exercise of authority is demonstrated in the handling of the pandemic. It is anticipated to substantially impact the future of intelligent energy, particularly within the European Union and the United Kingdom. As exemplified by Bentham's panopticon, Foucault's concept of disciplinary power has been influential in understanding modern society's power dynamics (Manley et al., 2012). The spatial intricacies of modern disciplinary power, as described by Foucault, are now commonplace within carceral studies and geographies, reflecting the enduring relevance of his work (Schliehe et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Foucault's conceptualization of surveillance within elite sports academies has been questioned using alternative surveillance networks, indicating the ongoing scholarly engagement with his ideas (Manley et al., 2012). The influence of disciplinary power extends beyond the pandemic, as evidenced by its application in analyzing the discipline suffered by women in the context of patriarchy (Liao et al., 2022). Additionally, Foucault's work has been seminal in understanding the rationality of disciplinary power, emphasizing its enduring significance in sociological discourse (Welsh, 2016). The power dynamics at play are set to significantly impact the future of smart energy in both the EU and the UK. As smart urbanism takes hold and data collected by sensors and devices shape our understanding of spaces, it becomes evident that disciplinary

power is increasingly shaping urban environments (Dalton et al., 2019). Moreover, the focus on citizen engagement in co-creating low-carbon smart cities underscores the intersection of power dynamics and sustainability efforts, highlighting the relevance of Foucault's analysis in contemporary urban development (Preston et al., 2020). In conclusion, Foucault's examination of disciplinary power provides a framework for understanding the power dynamics evident in the pandemic response and their potential impact on the future of smart energy, particularly in the EU and the UK.

The application of Foucault's concepts to the context of the EU, the UK, and the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia reveals the relevance of pastoral power to the smart energy transition. As societies transition towards decentralized models, disciplinary power, embodied in governmental bodies, dictates acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. In contrast, pastoral power, governing thoughts and feelings crucial to the energy transition, gains significance (Martin & Waring, 2018). The metaphor of the panopticon, adapted from Bentham, resonates within the smart energy landscape, representing individualized-subjectivized biopolitics, where state agencies in the EU and the UK serve as overt shepherds (Waring & Latif, 2017). Nevertheless, within the realm of smart energy, the shepherd's role becomes veiled as it navigates through the collective efforts of the regime's constituents. As this process unfolds, a power vacuum emerges, filled by the "technologies of the self," leading to internal governance by individuals in the EU and the UK as central control and self-regulation converge (Waring & Latif, 2017). This evolution introduces challenges, including heightened individual pressure due to digital omnipresence and difficulties in creating regulated data protection and privacy structures. Foucault's emphasis on self-governance implies that individuals in the EU and the UK remain interconnected within broader societal governance structures despite wielding greater autonomy through smart energy technologies (Martin & Waring, 2018). The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia adds complexity to the geopolitical context within which these technological and societal shifts unfold. Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power can be extended to the international realm, where states exercise influence over each other through various means, influencing the geopolitical dynamics of the conflict (Cohen, 2019). The EU and UK lessons underscore the importance of a nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to smart energy transitions within the broader international landscape. Applying a Foucauldian perspective to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, particularly from the standpoint of the UK and the EU, allows for drawing parallels between Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power and contemporary geopolitical dynamics, extending his ideas to the international arena (Cohen, 2019).

#### *Foucault and the Challenges of Transitioning in Energy*

The Ukraine-Russia conflict has prompted the UK and the EU to employ disciplinary power at the international level through economic sanctions, diplomatic pressures, and military deployments to influence Russia's behaviour (Jabri, 2007). Jabri (2007) argues that Foucault's notion of political power reflects how governmental institutions and laws influence behaviours deemed acceptable or unacceptable globally. Additionally, the information warfare and propaganda efforts accompanying geopolitical conflicts can be viewed through the lens of pastoral power, as governments, including those of the UK and the EU, seek to shape narratives and influence

public opinion to gain international support (Tilli, 2019). The metaphor of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon for internalized surveillance extends to the surveillance and intelligence-gathering activities of states in response to geopolitical tensions (Jabri, 2007). Governments monitor foreign entities' actions and communications to ensure compliance with established norms and detect potential threats, using the panoptic gaze to enforce compliance and deter undesirable behaviours in the international arena (Jabri, 2007).

Moreover, the concept of technologies of the self, as described by Foucault, can be applied to the strategies states employ to regulate their behaviour in response to conflict (Cadman, 2010). Governments self-regulate by formulating foreign policies, alliances, and strategies aligned with their national interests, contributing to the complex web of international power relations (Cadman, 2010). In conclusion, a Foucauldian perspective sheds light on the intricate power dynamics in the Ukraine-Russia conflict from the perspective of the UK and the EU. By analyzing the deployment of disciplinary, pastoral, and automated mechanisms, one can understand how states exert influence, shape narratives, and navigate the complexities of international relations in geopolitical turmoil. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia and the crucial need for intelligent energy usage presents a complex perspective when analyzed in light of Michel Foucault's concepts of knowledge, power, and governmentality. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence and the tangible impact of climate change on global communities, a wave of scepticism still challenges established knowledge (Legg, 2018). This scepticism disregards the effects on coastal areas and ridicules policies aimed at climate protection (Bucher, 2012). The scepticism draws support from conspiracy theorists, particularly in virtual spaces, shaping discourse around topics such as gated communities (Bucher, 2012). The suggestion of compromising data privacy to optimize energy efficiency in local and wide-area energy networks will likely face opposition from those inclined toward conspiracy theories (Bucher, 2012).

Applying a Foucauldian perspective to the interplay between individual agency and smart energy technologies reveals the centrality of knowledge, power, and governmentality (Cadman, 2010). Foucault's concepts regarding knowledge, space, control, and power find relevance in understanding smart energy systems (Cadman, 2010). According to Foucault, knowledge is intrinsically linked to power, and power is manifested through technological "spaces" like smart energy systems, which have entry requirements in the form of knowledge (Cadman, 2010). This sets the stage for the development of power relations (Cadman, 2010). Foucault views knowledge as a transformative process that shapes both the subject and the object (Legg, 2018). The exercise of definitional power, determining how something is defined and by whom, becomes crucial (Legg, 2018). The pandemic has underscored the significance of controlling narratives as a primary means of exercising power and resisting such control through counter-narratives (Portschy, 2020). The reciprocity between knowledge and power is emphasized by Foucault, stating that power relations and fields of knowledge are interdependent (Legg, 2018). Discourse, serving specific interests, uses established knowledge to create norms, exemplified by the peer review process (Legg, 2018). However, in domains like climate change or public health, societal actions can evoke counter-discourses challenging mainstream knowledge (Legg, 2018). Foucault's understanding of knowledge societies as control societies, producing norms and standards through disciplinary technologies, finds resonance in the smart energy movement (Cadman, 2010). Governmentality, encompassing



various strategies of normalization flexibly applied, involves the microphysics of power (Cooper, 2019). It incorporates the relationship between power and subjectivity, linking governance techniques with self-practices, such as self-adjusting energy behavior, and political governance, with techniques of self-governance, such as activating self-motivation (Cooper, 2019). While governmentality entails constant monitoring and supervision, it paradoxically upholds individual freedom within the framework of liberalism, which organizes conditions for individual freedom with a focus on security (Cooper, 2019). In the realm of smart energy regimes, the promise of user control encounters limits when non-rational behaviour or deviations from norms occur, emphasizing the delicate balance between individual freedom and the broader societal interest (Cooper, 2019).

### *Foucault and the Concept of the Smart City in the Context of the Ukrainian-Russian War*

The integration of networked technologies in smart cities has led to an increased focus on surveillance, control, and the politics of urban data. This has given rise to a nuanced interplay of power dynamics and the emergence of what has been termed "spatialized intelligence" (Kitchin, 2013). Existing critical urban studies research has highlighted the unequal power relationships created or reinforced through objectivist understandings of data, the troubling new form of capital that urban data extraction represents, and the obstruction of citizens' ability to participate in the city and exercise their democratic rights (Hoop et al., 2022). Furthermore, the smart city has been identified as a disciplinary strategy, re-subjectifying citizens as active participants required to achieve specific goals (Vanolo, 2013). The recognition of the importance of individual citizens' rights in the smart city, which is centred around the needs of its citizens, as well as the significance of equity, participation, and democratic principles, has been acknowledged as essential elements (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2018). Additionally, the value of adopting a Foucauldian 'archaeology of knowledge' approach has been suggested to explicate understandings and misunderstandings surrounding the idea of the 'smart city' (Wang, 2017).

Understanding the dynamics of smart cities also involves exploring knowledge management perspectives, as knowledge management is crucial for building competitive advantage and creating value propositions in this context (Israilidis et al., 2021). Moreover, enhancing citizens' sense of gain in smart cities has been studied using a SWOT-AHP-TOWS approach, which identified the essential criteria for enhancing citizens' sense of gain and the top-ranked strategy for achieving this (Li et 2022). Moreover, there has been a strong emphasis on the importance of provincializing smart urbanism by shifting the focus away from technology as the central point of analysis and instead prioritizing power relationships. This approach draws inspiration from post-colonial theories (Chang et al., 2020). Additionally, the shift from a human-centric to a multi-service digital (non-human) city council in smart cities has been recognized, necessitating a new business process for managing smart city (non-human) customers (Saragih et al., 2021). Finally, evaluating and applying public management service quality in smart cities based on intelligent computing has been explored, emphasizing the significance of public satisfaction with public information services in smart cities (Lu, 2023).

- In smart city studies, Foucauldian perspectives posit a "production of techno-centric rhetoric and narrative" where technological solutions subdue urban and societal problems. Three vital theoretical



concepts have been applied for concrete analyses (Trunova, O., Khodachek, I., & Khodachek, A. M. 2022).

- A reinterpretation of the panopticon: Smart technologies can implement surveillance reminiscent of the panopticon model, as they operate without the need for a guardian or overseeing authority to guarantee compliance; potential consequences are proactively expected (Sun, J., Makosa, L., Yang, J., Darlington, M., Yin, F., & Jachi, M. 2022).
- The intentional manipulation of public space, mainly through security architecture, has led to the rise of pastoral power. This power aims to influence individuals' behaviours by aligning them with digitally contextualized conditions (Lu, 2023).
- Analyzing the governance of daily life, this study explores the power dynamics revealed by automated and anticipatory governmentality. It delves into the role of smart information technologies in shaping these dynamics, particularly in the context of smart energy systems. Drawing on Foucault's differentiation between discipline and security apparatuses, the study examines the concepts of referentiality, normativity, and spatiality (Saragih et al., 2021).

The social science research extensively delves into the impact of smart energy on socio-technical environments. Scholars have scrutinized the smart city as a disciplinary strategy, focusing on the power/knowledge implications within contemporary urban spaces (Vanolo, 2013). Moreover, studies have explored smart grids in social science research, emphasizing visions, professionals, users, and smart technologies, with a geographic emphasis on Europe and the USA (Kojonsaari & Palm, 2023). Additionally, the social science literature widely discusses the potential role of households as 'co-managers' of energy in smart grids, emphasizing the collaborative aspect of energy management (Smale et al., 2018). The institutional logic approach has been applied to examine citizen participation in smart city development, providing a deeper understanding of the social construction of the smart city in specific contexts (Pansera et al., 2022). Investigation into the intersection of social practices and smart grids, particularly in the Netherlands, has focused on flexibility, grid management, and domestic consumption, shedding light on the practical implications of smart grid technologies (Smale et al., 2017). Critiques of smart city research have been presented, addressing current shortcomings and advocating for a more comprehensive interdisciplinary research agenda (Kitchin, 2014).

Furthermore, ethical dimensions of smart cities and urban science have been scrutinized, centring on instrumental rationality, privacy, datafication, dataveillance, geosurveillance, and anticipatory governance. This underscores the importance of ethical considerations in implementing innovative city technologies (Kitchin, 2016). Additionally, societal implications of cybernetic urbanism and the smart city as a specific modality of entrepreneurial urban governance have been critically analyzed, highlighting the complexities of power dynamics within smart city initiatives (Krivý, 2016). These comprehensive investigations give rise to apprehensions regarding data- and future-oriented urban methodologies, resulting in unfavourable perceptions of the smart city notion and suggestions for a more extensive interdisciplinary research plan. Nevertheless, they

also acknowledge the advantages of smart energy technologies, specifically regarding their socially advantageous implications and digital advancements for urban sustainability.

*Intelligent energy systems and the impending revolution in energy*

The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has led to a sense of helplessness among local communities as geopolitical forces dictate decisions (Arias et al., 2022). This sentiment is reminiscent of resistance observed in anti-war movements and is compounded by apprehensions about a surveillance society (Arias et al., 2022). The proliferation of sensors in smart devices has led to pervasive 24/7 monitoring technologies, which are ingrained in contemporary society and align with state interests (Aman et al., 2021). This has given rise to a Smart Machine Age, partly catalyzed by the ongoing conflict dynamics in Ukraine and Russia (Aman et al., 2021). The trajectory towards a Smart Machine Age is also influenced by the second energy revolution, which focuses on digitally transforming energy systems and ushering in a modern digitalization regime (Aman et al., 2021). This digitalization renders energy practices more transparent and amenable to optimization, fostering awareness that guides choices favouring climate support and energy conservation (Aman et al., 2021). Smart energy applications facilitate the connection and synchronization of diverse, decentralized energy generation, consumption, and storage systems, optimizing them for efficiency through big data management applications (Aman et al., 2021).

The logic of smart energy, viewed through the lens of Foucault, rests on a system of individualized-subjectivized disciplinary power akin to Bentham's panopticon (Arias et al., 2022). Constant energy transparency engenders mutual surveillance, rendering a central supervisory authority redundant, as individuals observe and adapt to each other's behaviour, forming a mainstream without a discernible leader or framing (Arias et al., 2022). Although smart energy systems have the potential to reduce energy costs by improving efficiency and implementing cost-reduction initiatives, they also present a privacy challenge due to the requirement to access personal data (Aman et al., 2021). Efforts to introduce smart meter infrastructures in the European Union have slowly diffused across member states. Scandinavian countries and Germany are at the forefront of pushing for a digitalized energy system (Aman et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has contributed to the emergence of the Smart Machine Age, characterized by the integration of sensors in smart devices and the digital transformation of energy systems. This has implications for surveillance, privacy, individualized-subjectivized disciplinary power, and the need for transparency and optimization in energy practices. Smart meters, seemingly innocuous, wield the potential to influence energy consumption in novel ways. The "energy community" concept envisions connected energy infrastructures with embedded digital applications, linking electric vehicles and appliances. This network shares real-time usage statistics across a national or international network, creating a social energy network reminiscent of a smart city, where control is maintained through continuous monitoring, comparison, and evaluation, reflecting the complex geopolitical dynamics at play in the Ukraine-Russian conflict.

### *Cultural Perspectives on Smart Energy Amidst the Russia-Ukraine War*

The cultural differences in smart energy behaviours across European nations have significant implications, particularly in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The digitalization of daily life and work routines, as well as attitudes towards smart energy adoption, are shaped by cultural nuances. Scandinavian countries, known for their high levels of digitalization and transparency in energy usage, offer valuable insights into these dynamics (Nadolu & Nadolu, 2020). However, concerns about surveillance capitalism and ethical questions regarding significant data practices have been raised in these societies (Alladi et al., 2019). Often considered a pioneer in implementing smart energy technologies, Norway faces challenges where imagined experiences diverge significantly from real ones (Lunde et al., 2015). Unlike Germany, where cooperation and commitment are expected from all actor groups, Norway takes a more exclusive approach, prioritizing "greening," grid optimization, and user flexibility (Lunde et al., 2015). Even in environmentally conscious cultures, organizational conflicts can lead to scepticism and resistance among smart energy prosumers (Lunde et al., 2015).

In Finland, the proliferation of smart energy encounters active resistance stemming from disinterest and disillusionment. At the same time, Denmark witnessed criticism of implementing the National Smart Grid Strategy, with smart systems fostering a passive consumer attitude that discourages proactive prosumer behaviour (Lunde et al., 2015). Comparable challenges are evident in the Netherlands, where autonomy and privacy concerns hinder participation in emerging cooperative models (Lunde et al., 2015). Adopting smart energy solutions is further complicated by infrastructure complexities, scepticism from critical actors, and a lack of clarity regarding long-term strategies (Lunde et al., 2015). Geopolitical events, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have the potential to influence the acceptance and adoption of smart energy technologies, underscoring the necessity for resilient and adaptable smart energy systems that account for the distinct cultural contexts in which they operate (Lunde et al., 2015). The emphasis on cultural differences underscores the importance of tailoring technology implementation to the diverse needs of specific communities (Lunde et al., 2015).

### *Balancing Act of Smart Energy Systems in Homes: Examining the Techno-Economic Advantages versus Pessimistic Perceptions*

Integrating smart energy systems into households is a complex procedure shaped by factors beyond economic considerations. Unlike Germany, where cooperation and commitment are expected from all actor groups, Norway takes a more exclusive approach, prioritizing "greening," grid optimization, and user flexibility (Lunde et al., 2015). Individual characteristics such as age, openness to experience, and perceived benefits of demand flexibility further contribute to shaping attitudes towards these technologies (Dwivedi et al., 2017). The development of attitudes, from knowledge acquisition to persuasion and decision-making, is highly personalized, with acceptance contingent on various factors (Dwivedi et al., 2017). In residential contexts, individuals tend to exhibit more conservative tendencies, less impulsivity and shared responsibility. Deeply ingrained objections, personal values, identity perceptions, and situational factors all shape attitudes towards

smart energy systems (Dwivedi et al., 2017). The study of smart home energy management systems encompasses the operation of home electricity consumption devices, distributed generation systems, energy storage devices, and the charging and discharging of electric vehicles (Ma et al., 2021).

Additionally, energy-saving behaviour involving home retrofitting and financial investment in new energy efficiency technologies, such as installing home energy management systems and purchasing energy-labelled appliances, is critical in influencing the adoption of smart home energy technology (Ji & Chan, 2019). Moreover, the most influential contextual factors affecting the implementation of climate-smart technologies in agriculture include human capital, physical capital, financial capital, and social capital (Nchanji et al., 2022). Adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, such as irrigation, has been demonstrated to increase household income for farmers (Agbenyo et al., 2022). This has prompted the seed sector to introduce various varieties of climate-smart maize into the market, impacting household income among smallholder farmers (Wanjira et al., 2022). Adopting intelligent energy systems in households is a nuanced process shaped by many factors, including economic considerations, individual characteristics, contextual factors, and the perceived benefits of the technologies. A comprehensive understanding of these diverse influences is essential for successfully adopting and integrating smart energy technologies in residential settings.

Smart energy technology, notably smart meters, can revolutionize energy management by providing enhanced comfort, reduced operating costs, diminished environmental impact, and significant demand response (Chawla & Kowalska-Pyzalska, 2019). However, the societal embrace of smart meters is impacted by various psychological and structural elements, including concerns about privacy, technological characteristics, and societal expectations (Chawla & Kowalska-Pyzalska, 2019). Initiatives at augmenting acceptance through data visualization and user-friendly technologies face challenges, as adopting sustainable innovations is intricately affected by a blend of economic, environmental, and symbolic characteristics (Chawla & Kowalska-Pyzalska, 2019). Furthermore, intelligent systems can instigate household conflicts due to discrepancies in energy preferences among household members, potentially involving individuals in novel surveillance, automation, and data markets (Chawla & Kowalska-Pyzalska, 2019). Public perceptions of demand-side management and a more intelligent energy future emphasize the cost and operational benefits of innovative energy systems, particularly in automated meter readings, diminished customer inquiries, and societal gains through the reduction of carbon emissions (Spence et al., 2015). Additionally, an analysis of smart metering information systems supports the frequent issuance of improved electricity bills reporting actual consumption, which can influence consumer acceptance and interaction with smart meters (Nachreiner et al., 2015).

### *Exploring Gender Dynamics, Age Factors, and Smart Energy Neighborhoods in the UK, EU, Ukraine, and Russia amidst the War*

The attitudes, knowledge, and preferences related to sustainability, trust, risk tolerance, and comfort in the context of the ongoing Ukraine and Russia conflict are influenced by various factors, among which gender and age are prominent. Gender, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and behaviours towards smart energy systems (Nesti, 2019). Studies have revealed marked differences in gendered perceptions of smart

home technology preferences in the United Kingdom, indicating the need to recognize women's and men's distinct economic, social, and cultural capital (Nesti, 2019). This highlights the importance of fostering inclusive practices to create a more sustainable and equitable low-carbon energy system (Nesti, 2019). Moreover, the prospect of incorporating gender into the economy, especially in developing regions, holds significance for industries such as intelligent agriculture.

Furthermore, matters concerning bias, safeguarding personal information, and the lack of energy security in households of minority communities in the United States also have a substantial impact (Uteng & Turner, 2019). Furthermore, age is a crucial aspect influencing perceptions of smart energy systems. Younger generations, despite being digital natives, tend to critically assess smart technologies, influenced by their upbringing in a digital society with social media (Iqbal et al., 2018). Conversely, older individuals may express reservations regarding relying more on external professionals but may exhibit a heightened interest, particularly in health monitoring (Iqbal et al., 2018). The disparities associated with age become even more evident when comparing homeowners and those residing in social housing, as homeowners tend to be more sceptical about increased dependence on external experts and potential exposure of their data, reflecting a stronger sense of control over the technologies (Iqbal et al., 2018). To bridge the gaps between generations and cultivate a sense of community, smart energy neighbourhoods and communities have been developed to leverage social connections within a community to enhance collaboration towards shared goals (Iqbal et al., 2018). In conclusion, gender and age are pivotal factors that significantly impact perceptions and behaviours towards smart energy systems. Recognizing the influence of gender and age is essential for developing inclusive policies and technologies that cater to diverse preferences and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable energy system.

### *Envisioning Smart Communities in the UK and EU Amidst the Ukraine and Russia War: The Role of Community Energy*

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has brought to the forefront the relevance of community energy systems, particularly from the perspectives of the UK and the EU. The EU actively supports community energy systems, recognizing their potential to address high electricity costs in certain European regions (Wang et al., 2020). Smart energy systems, a key component of community energy, aim to leverage digital dynamics but face challenges in making individual energy profiles public and shareable, raising concerns about privacy and personal rights (Fang et al., 2012). The shift towards sustainable energy sources necessitates comprehensive approaches encompassing all industries and demographics. However, this transition also gives rise to apprehensions regarding privacy, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the welfare of users (Apanavičienė et al., 2020). Smart energy communities are envisioned as integral components of more extensive smart city networks, aiming to achieve a more participatory, fair, and democratic energy transformation. However, challenges such as the "centrality dilemma" and uncertainties about the impact of smart technologies on community cohesion exist (Saeed et al., 2023). The shift towards sustainable energy sources necessitates comprehensive approaches encompassing all industries and demographics. However, this transition also gives rise to apprehensions regarding privacy, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the welfare of users (Apanavičienė et al., 2020). They are

integrating smart grids and IoT results in highly dynamic and efficient energy distribution and consumption, offering potential solutions to the challenges faced by smart energy systems (Z et al., 2021).

Additionally, community energy management systems (CEMS) are crucial in providing ancillary services to energy consumers in a community, facilitating inter-community energy trade (Murakami et al., 2018). Furthermore, the development of predictive and prescriptive digital twin models, simulating future scenarios, is identified as a future tendency in the operational stage of smart building integration into smart cities (Khan et al., 2020). Advancing and implementing community energy systems and intelligent energy technologies offer the potential for a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic energy revolution. Nevertheless, tackling obstacles concerning privacy, cybersecurity, and user approval is crucial to fully unlocking these systems' benefits.

*Discussing Smart Advantages and Self-Monitoring Drawbacks in the UK and EU Amidst the Ukraine and Russia War*

Incorporating intelligent energy systems initiates a transformative process in behaviour through shared observation and monitoring, heightening individual pressures to adjust (Lund et al., 2017). This shift results in greater individualization and subjectivation within the evolving energy landscape as personal behaviours, practices, and lifestyles become public (Lund et al., 2017). As smart energy systems advance, traditional pastoral power structures may evolve into mutually controlling self-technologies, resembling a new manifestation of "AI power" where individuals remain gatekeepers, shaping and managing systems toward desired outcomes (Lund et al., 2017). Smart devices are widely used in all aspects of life, so it is difficult to disconnect from the grid or separate from a centralized power system. Despite the advantages of smart energy systems in promoting energy-efficient climate protection, there are lingering concerns about covert control, both by suppliers and through collective surveillance (Lund et al., 2017). It is crucial to proactively design smart systems and implement higher-level state regulations to address these challenges, highlighting the continued importance of a regulatory role akin to that of a pastor (Lund et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted technology anxiety, cybersecurity, and trust in utilities, with the concept of a "smart" quarantine contributing to increased openness to smart technologies (Lund et al., 2017). However, heightened reliance on intelligent technologies raises privacy concerns within the home as a private space (Lund et al., 2017). The transition from energy feedback and dynamic pricing to a broader and more integrated approach to smart strategies, which incorporates artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and automation, poses specific difficulties (Yan et al., 2013). The cost of privacy control is expected to rise with increased surveillance and novel panopticon systems, particularly in vehicle automation (Yan et al., 2013).

As smart systems advance, they face various challenges due to their complex nested logic. These logics become intertwined with energy policy, resulting in materialism focused on objects. This contradiction between complexity and simplicity creates difficulties, mainly when services are marketed as being simple but end up causing complications and overload. These issues have a direct impact on resource efficiency and waste reduction. (Yan et al., 2013) Moreover, addressing significant issues associated with smart energy technologies,



such as establishing a moral programming roadmap, remains challenging (Yan et al., 2013). The future advancement of smart energy deployment raises concerns regarding energy justice as the focus on energy poverty intensifies alongside technological advancements (Sovacool et al., 2017).

A comprehensive framework is introduced to tackle social questions of power at micro, meso, and macro levels, encompassing dimensions of smart energy diffusion, modes of action, power constellations, and community solutions (Sovacool et al., 2017).

*I am presenting a framework that introduces social inquiries into power dynamics within smart energy systems.*

The emergence of intelligent energy systems has triggered a significant change in how personal decisions are publicly perceived, underscoring the significance of individualization and subjectivization in the future energy landscape (Tusova et al., 2019). With the increasing prominence of smart technologies, behavioural change is set in motion within the transition, leading to mutual observation and monitoring. Consequently, individuals face pressures to adapt, giving rise to the establishment of control mechanisms, discipline, and power (Renekappa et al., 2022). This transformative process prompts inquiries into the evolution of traditional control systems, potentially transforming pastoral power into a complex network of mutually controlling self-technologies (Tusova et al., 2019). The proliferation of intelligent energy systems also entails surrendering personal control, as individuals become crucial gatekeepers who can shape and oversee these systems (Tusova et al., 2019). Nevertheless, finding a harmonious equilibrium between the economic significance of data and the democratic importance of privacy continues to pose a challenge in liberal democracies.

Moreover, the interconnectivity of smart energy systems could lead to a unique manifestation of power dynamics. In this scenario, traditional power relations become indistinguishable as they blend into the dynamic nature of digital interactions among individuals (Tusova et al., 2019). This connectedness poses challenges regarding resource efficiency, waste reduction, and establishing pandemic-resilient livelihoods (Alahakoon & Yu, 2016). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further influenced aspects such as technology anxiety, cybersecurity, and trust in utilities, leading to a redefinition of the home as a private space with privacy implications (Vitak et al., 2021). Users are developing practices and strategies to counteract surveillance, reflecting the spirit of counter-movements as described by Foucault (Vitak et al., 2021). The advent of intelligent energy communities brings forth the potential for novel, eco-friendly energy networks. Within these communities, individuals may find themselves subject to a higher level of collective or systemic control compared to those who are not part of such communities (Tusova et al., 2019). Smart community energy systems can foster a stronger sense of community and encourage active participation, thereby creating fresh prospects, particularly for underprivileged rural regions, to foster collaborative lifestyles and work environments (Tusova et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, addressing the significant challenges associated with smart energy technologies, including concerns about data privacy and energy justice, necessitates innovation and the development of a moral



programming roadmap (Alahakoon & Yu, 2016). The implications of smart energy systems on individual attitudes and behaviours are diverse, covering issues of control, privacy, community engagement, and resource efficiency. As the progression of smart technologies persists, it becomes increasingly crucial to proactively design smart systems and implement higher-level state regulation. This is necessary to guarantee that the advantages of technology are accessible and equitable for all individuals.

Table 1. illustrated the Modes of Action, Behavior, Interaction, Power Dynamics.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Intelligent Technologies Operational Functions</b>	<b>Modes of Action, Behavior, Interaction, Power Dynamics</b>	<b>Types of Power Structures</b>	<b>System-Power Logic, Drivers, Motivations</b>	<b>Community Solutions</b>
Level	Intelligent Systems	Ways of Operating, Conduct, Interaction, Power Relationships	Categories of Power Configurations	Logic of System-Power, Motivators, Drivers	Solutions for the Community
Micro	Intelligent Energy/Home/Mobility Technologies, such as Applications, Intelligent Meters, Intelligent Storage	Mutual Observation and Monitoring, Self-control, Anticipation of Behavior, Compliance	Technologies that Regulate Individuals: Personalized Disciplinary Power	Comparison of Data, Self-sufficiency, Self-improvement, Incentives through Benefits, IT Capabilities, Core Values	Intelligent Micro Networks, Social Applications/Media, Collaborative Solutions
Meso	Intelligent District Management, Intelligent Micro Grids, Urban or Rural Intelligent Mobility Systems	Specific System Monitoring and Control, Interaction: Feedback at the Micro Level, System Adjustments, Optimization, Feedback Control, Customer Support	Self-governance, Logic of Coordination and Configuration, Internal Iterative and Dynamic IT Processes	Connectivity, Availability, Development, Integration of Sectors, Efficiency, Optimization, User Acceptance, Simplification of Complexity, Technological Dependencies	Community Energy Systems: Intelligent Energy Neighborhoods, Community Grids, and Community Mobility Systems
Macro	Essential System Control of Energy, Mobility and Living Devices by Government or E-Commerce/IT	Development of System Design (based on Analysis of Large-scale Data), Interaction: Feedback at the	Power through Authority, Central Control, Incentive Systems, Utilization of	Standardization, Rationalization, System Efficiency, System Effectiveness, Efforts, Rebound	Collaborative Solutions through Hybrid Joint Ventures (involving Private Companies, Public Enterprises,

Level	Intelligent Technologies Operational Functions	Modes of Action, Behavior, Interaction, Power Dynamics	Types of Power Structures	System-Power Logic, Drivers, Motivations	Community Solutions
	Companies or Energy Providers	Micro/Meso Level, Reception of Information, Adaptation of System Design, Top-down Rule-making, Overall System Monitoring and Control	User Control Logic and Capabilities	Effects, Costs, Benefits, Technological Dependencies	Civil Society (Associations)

*Central Theme: Microscopic Dynamics*

*Sub-Theme: Personalized Technologies and Conduct*

- **Description:** This central theme explores technologies and behaviours on a microscopic scale, concentrating on individual-centred smart energy systems. Technologies related to smart energy, home, and mobility, including applications (Apps), smart meters, and smart storage systems, are reshaping how we manage energy, optimize home functions, and revolutionize transportation. It delves into how these technologies impact individual actions and responses.

*Sub-Theme: Micro-Level Power Dynamics*

- **Description:** Investigating power dynamics, this sub-theme underscores mutual surveillance, self-discipline, the anticipation of behaviour, and conformity as prevalent features at the microscopic level. It discusses how individuals navigate power relationships within smart energy systems.

*Sub-Theme: Self-Technologies*

- **Description:** This sub-theme introduces the idea of "Technologies of the self," emphasizing the personalized and subjectivized aspects of disciplinary power. It investigates how individuals use these technologies to govern and influence their behaviours within the smart energy framework.

*Sub-Theme: Data-Driven Incentives*

- **Description:** This sub-theme delves into motivations and examines data-driven aspects such as comparing

data, enhancing self-efficiency, optimizing oneself, providing incentives through benefits, leveraging IT capabilities, and considering meta-values. It illuminates the underlying factors that influence individual actions in smart energy systems.

*Sub-Theme: Community-Centric Resolutions*

• **Description:** This sub-theme promotes the importance of community involvement and proposes solutions beyond individual efforts. It delves into the concept of Smart Micro Networks, Social Apps/Media, and Crowd Solutions as community-focused approaches at a microscopic level.

*Main Theme: Mesoscopic Dynamics*

*Sub-Theme: Local Technologies and Interactions*

• **Description:** Shifting focus to more localized technologies, this sub-theme highlights Smart District Management, Smart Micro Grids, and Urban/Rural Smart Mobility Systems. It explores how these technologies interact within specific community settings.

*Sub-Theme: System Monitoring and Control*

• **Description:** Examining modes of interaction, this sub-theme emphasizes specific system monitoring and control at the mesoscopic level. It explores feedback mechanisms at the microscopic level, system adaptations, optimization, and customer care within localized smart energy systems.

*Sub-Theme: Governance and Coordination*

• **Description:** Dieses Unterthema befasst sich mit Dynamiken der Macht, Selbstverwaltung, Organisationsstrategien und den sich ständig ändernden IT-Prozessen innerhalb von Organisationen. At mesoscopic level, it studies how these elements shape smart energy systems.

*Sub-Theme: Broader Considerations and Motivations*

• **Description:** This sub-theme broadens considerations to connectivity, availability, development, sector coupling, efficiency, user acceptance, complexity reduction, and technological path dependencies. It examines overarching motivations shaping the mesoscopic dynamics of smart energy systems.

*Sub-Theme: Community-Centric Solutions*

• **Description:** Proposing solutions at the mesoscopic level, this sub-theme advocates for Community Energy Systems, Smart Energy Neighborhoods, Community Grids, and Community Mobility Systems. It explores how localized communities can actively participate in shaping smart energy outcomes.

*Main Theme: Macroscopic Dynamics*

*Sub-Theme: Key System Control and Management*

- **Description:** Dieser Teil des Themas konzentriert sich auf wichtige Systemsteuerungen, die von Organisationen wie der Bundesregierung, E-Commerce- und IT-Unternehmen oder Energieversorgern verwaltet werden. Es untersucht, wie hochrangige Organisationen Smart Energy Systems beeinflussen und verwalten.

*Sub-Theme: Top-Down Rule-Making and Design*

- **Description:** Examining modes of action, this sub-theme involves creating system design through big data analysis, top-down rule-making, and overall system monitoring and control. It explores the macro-level actions that shape the entire smart energy landscape.

*Sub-Theme: Overarching Power Dynamics*

- **Description:** This subtopic explores fundamental dynamics of power, including pastoral power, central control, incentivization regimes, and the utilization of user control logic and opportunities. It examines the ways in which power is employed and distributed on a macro level.

*Sub-Theme: System Efficiency and Optimization*

- **Description:** Dieser Abschnitt konzentriert sich auf Systemlogik, Treiber und Antriebe. In addition, it addresses standardization, rationalization, system efficiency, system effectiveness, efforts, rebound effects, costs, benefits, and macro-level technological path dependencies.

*Sub-Theme: Collaborative Hybrid Ventures*

- **Description:** Dieses Unterthema stellt Hybrid-Joint-Venture-Projektlösungen vor, die die Zusammenarbeit zwischen privaten Unternehmen, staatlichen Unternehmen und sozialen Organisationen fördern. It explores collaborative approaches to address macro-level challenges in smart energy systems. This thematic analysis furnishes a detailed understanding of the primary themes, sub-themes, and their explanations across microscopic, mesoscopic, and macroscopic levels within smart energy systems.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, navigating the intricate landscape of intelligent energy systems demands a comprehensive evaluation of their potential benefits and drawbacks. While these systems promise increased efficiency through transparency and control, they simultaneously introduce vulnerabilities akin to those observed in social networks. While providers tout enhanced freedom and self-determination, it is crucial not to overlook the

looming threats of potential data misuse and the rise of monopolistic entities. The concept of collaborative solutions involving citizens, stakeholders, and users is a positive stride toward developing user-friendly, grassroots approaches. However, inclusivity challenges emerge, with evidence indicating that more affluent individuals often dominate engagements in the energy transition. To uphold principles of just transitions and energy democracy, a paradigm shift toward inclusive decision-making processes is imperative. Failure to engage diverse segments of the population risks exacerbating inequalities, fostering resistance, breeding mistrust, and fueling movements rooted in science denial and conspiracy theories.

To foster widespread engagement, moving away from top-down policy dictation is essential. Intelligent energy policies should embrace negotiation and discourse with individuals and communities traditionally excluded from formal policymaking. Neglecting these stakeholders' interests, preferences, and concerns may provoke defiant reactions. Using platforms like citizens' councils can mitigate such risks by incorporating citizen perspectives into legislative and executive processes.

Es ist wichtig, innovative Forschungsmodelle zu verwenden, um die Vorteile, Ungleichheiten und Auswirkungen des Rückkaufs in intelligenten Energiesystemen zu bewerten. A user-centric approach to designing technology and increased citizen participation emerges as a critical strategy for navigating the complexities within integrated systems. The post-pandemic landscape introduces new challenges for energy social research, necessitating reevaluating surveillance power and including gender considerations.

The detailed framework presented in this contribution establishes a robust foundation for future research, providing insights into the unfolding power dynamics within social networks across various levels. Given the multifaceted nature of smart energy, a comprehensive exploration with detailed descriptions and analyses becomes essential. The framework highlights power dynamics as level-dependent but predominantly top-down. To understand how knowledge flows and privacy concerns are safeguarded, it is essential to understand nexus structures the interfaces between levels, systems, and actors. Despite the seamless nature of digital processes, a paradox of complexity, chaos, and data overload persists. The role of artificial intelligence in navigating this landscape and its implications for emerging pastoral power instances warrant further investigation.

A broader and deeper debate involving technology developers, policymakers, civil society, scientists, and future users is imperative. Enabling an integrative process that customizes smart energy systems according to user preferences and privacy concerns is the key to realizing the advantages of energy-efficient climate protection without compromising individual freedom to government-imposed control. This pursuit is comparable to discovering a rare chameleon in the continually changing terrain of smart energy.

## **Acknowledgement**

The researcher would like to thank prince Muhammad bin Fahad University and the College of Business

Administration for allowing me to work on this research.

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# Doctors' Careers Intention and Retention: Studying the Underlying Factors in Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare Hospital in The Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract:** Doctors' retention and career intention are consistent problems that healthcare institutions globally face. It increased during and after the COVID-19 pandemic as it caused many doctors to leave their organizations or reduce their working hours. Several studies have investigated this issue. However, there is still a lack of exploring all the related factors impacting doctors' career intention and retention within a healthcare organization, utilizing the Social Exchange Theory to study further the correlation between job satisfaction and doctors' intention & retention. This paper explored six influencing factors to determine this relationship. Results from survey data collected from doctors working in a private healthcare institution in Saudi Arabia were conducted to support the hypothesized relations. The results contributed to a deeper understanding of how and when a doctor decides on a career change or remaining in a specific organization.

**Keywords:** Doctors Career Intention, Doctors' Retention, Job Satisfaction, Private Healthcare Sector, Social Exchange theory

**Citation:** Abuflassa, F.M, & Adnan, N. (2024). Doctors' Career Intention and Retention : Studying the Underlying Factors in Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare Hospital In The Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1852-1877), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

As per the WHO Health report in 2016, a close correlation has been found between the accumulation of a qualified healthcare practitioners such as (doctors, nurses, and midwives) and significant healthcare outcomes such as immunization coverage, and maternal survival. This is because healthcare practitioners act as gatekeepers for the community and its individuals. Furthermore, in order for a healthcare organization to overcome the global shortage of healthcare practitioners' issue and develop an efficient and effective system to meet the goal demand management of healthcare organization should pay great deal of attention to the human

resources for health (HRH) practices in term of the number of the healthcare practitioners in each area and the skill mix with optimum competency and motivation.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the global faced an evident shortage of doctors; where doctors in Italy were working 100 hours per week and covering multiple areas and duties with the hospital, and that became worse when many of them got infected while taking care of their patients (J. Am. Coll Surg 2020). That severe shortage had an unfortunate effect on the population of rural areas. In addition, the Associate of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) projected that the U.S. will face a shortage of physicians between 37,800 in 2019 vs. 124,000 in 2023. On the other hand, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated a shortage of physicians and nurses to reach up to 4.3 million, and that caused an outmatch of supply vs. the growing demand. According to Chopra, Atkins, Ranson, Bennett and Dal-Poz (2010) study, approximately 70% of healthcare resources are human. Enormous implications can result from inadequate training, recruiting or distribution of management within the healthcare organization. These concerns primarily affect the healthcare workers in rural and urban areas and between the public and private healthcare sectors. One suggestion was presented by Canavan, M., Alpern, R., E., Thompson and others in a (2013) study, were they discussed a method to reduce the shortages in the healthcare system in a medium and long-term periods through the promotion of R&D. On the other hand, both Schweitzer and Synowiec (2012) presented another solution where the role of new health informatics is essential to overcome the traditional obstacles to delivering care to all populations. An example is telemedicine technology, which helps provide more care to remote and rural areas. This also helps to resolve the shortage of coverage staff. Technology can also increase the demand for new medical specialties, enhancing the deficiency level. Further studies by Zurn, Mariio, Dal Poz, Stilwell, and Orvill in a (2004) study where they discussed the economic theory, stating that an imbalance in a skill occurs when an adequate supply of a skill is given. The workforce and the amount demanded to diverge at the existing market conditions. Another common issue between the public and private healthcare sectors is a need for more planning and management, which leads to unbalanced staffing of doctors.

This study aims to investigate and comprehended the factors impacting doctors' careers intention and retention in the private healthcare sector by examining the current state in Saudi Arabia concerning doctors' job satisfaction in private hospitals. The objectives of this thesis are:

To analyze the current literature review and examine the elements influencing doctors' careers intention and retention in the private healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia

To explore the intention of leaving an organization or changing career path

To investigate the influencing factors linked to doctors' retention and job satisfaction in an organization

Further in this thesis, the shortage of doctors in Saudi Arabia's private healthcare sector will be further investigated, while most hospitals are concerned about recruiting new physicians. Therefore, they should focus on the different strategies to retain doctors for as long as possible. The thesis will further investigate the underlying factors for doctors' intention to either leave or remain at an organization. As for the second and third objectives, a research model and survey were utilized to explore and address specific factors influencing doctors

in the Saudi private healthcare sector. Studying the factors influencing doctors' career intentions and retention in a specific healthcare institution, such as the Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare Hospital in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, can provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by healthcare professionals in that setting. By understanding these factors, hospitals and healthcare organizations can develop strategies to improve doctors' career satisfaction, intention to stay, and overall retention rates. Aman-Ullah, A., Aziz, A., Ibrahim, H., Mehmood, W., & Aman-Ullah, A. (2023) investigated the workload and job demands placed on doctors can help identify if excessive work hours, high patient volumes, or other factors contribute to career dissatisfaction and intention to leave. This could involve analyzing the number of hours worked, on-call duties, patient-to-doctor ratios, and the impact of these factors on work-life balance. de Guzman, A., Carver-Roberts, T., Leake, R., & Rienks, S. (2020) assessing the competitiveness of compensation packages, including salary, bonuses, benefits, and opportunities for professional development and advancement, can help determine if doctors feel adequately rewarded for their work. Comparing compensation packages with other healthcare institutions in the region could provide useful benchmarks. Younas, M., & Waseem Bari, M. (2020) explored the hospital's culture, leadership styles, and management practices can shed light on how these factors influence doctors' job satisfaction and intention to stay. Factors such as communication, autonomy, support from superiors, and opportunities for professional growth and recognition can significantly impact doctors' career decisions. Van den Borre, L., Spruyt, B., & Van Droogenbroeck, F. (2021) investigated the balance between work and personal life is crucial to understanding the factors that influence doctors' intention to continue working in a specific healthcare institution. Factors such as flexible working hours, availability of family support programs, and access to recreational facilities can affect doctors' overall satisfaction with their quality of life. Pierse, T., Morris, R., OToole, L., Kinirons, B., & Staddon, E. (2023) assessed the availability of continuing medical education programs, research opportunities, and career advancement prospects can reveal how these factors contribute to doctors' career intentions and their decision to stay or leave. The presence of mentorship programs, academic collaborations, and research infrastructure can influence doctors' professional growth and commitment to an institution. Meshah, M. D. (2023). conducting surveys or interviews to gauge doctors' overall satisfaction, engagement levels, and job motivation can provide valuable data on the factors that drive or hinder their commitment to their careers in a particular healthcare institution. Factors such as job autonomy, recognition, teamwork, and a supportive work environment can impact doctors' career intentions. Schweitzer and Synowiec (2012) stated doctors' perceptions of the hospital's work environment, including the availability of resources, quality of patient care, clinical governance, and patient safety protocols, can shed light on how these factors influence their career intentions and retention. Factors such as professional fulfillment, patient outcomes, and perceived impact on society can influence doctors' commitment to their careers. Pierse, T., Morris, R., OToole, L., Kinirons, B., & Staddon, E. (2023) explained the availability of opportunities for personal and professional growth, including specialized training, leadership development programs, and participation in conferences and workshops, can help determine if doctors feel supported and encouraged to enhance their skills and knowledge....By studying these underlying factors and their impact on doctors' career intentions and retention in the Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare Hospital in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, healthcare administrators and policymakers can identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to enhance doctors' job satisfaction, well-being, and commitment to their careers in the institution.



## **Theoretical Background and Hypotheses - Doctors' Intention and Retention**

### **Doctors' Retention**

The process in which an employee is encouraged to stay in an institution for extended period of time is called *Retention* (Hom & Griffeth 1995). As stated by Dixit and Singh (2011), the different practices and strategies which cause the employee to remain in an institution for a an extended period of time can refer to as the retention process. Various theses discuss the psychological factors that might be linked to the employees' level of interest in their jobs (Rowland & Ferris, 1982). Authors Namusonge, Ng'ethe and Iravo in a (2012) study, stated that employees' retation in their job is vital, as they are the engine which can make the organization work in an immensely improved manner, achieving competitive advantage in the identified industry. On the other hand, studies showed that losing vital employees is costly to organizations in term of capital and time. In a (2009) study by Chipunza and Samuel, it was discussed the that when a high performer departure from an organization, the capacity to gain competitive advantage and gaining productive talent are lost.

Previous studies such as (Bojke, Sibbald, and Gravelle) in 2003 and (Heponiemi et al., and Kuusio et al) in 2013 reported that the intention to depart from the private healthcare sector increase with age; there are several causes for the increase in the turnover rate for doctors in the private healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia; for instance, the role of workload (Chambers, Colthart and Mckinstry (2004)), balancing work and life responsibilities, attractive compensation (Martochio, 2013), career development, and an appropriate performance appraisal system (Kuvaas, 2006). A 2011 research by Kumar and Sandhya, has categorized the strategy of retention into three stages, bottom, middle, and top stages. Starting with the bottom stage strategy which consist of the offering workplace conveniences, performance appraisal, recognizing professionalism, and provide perks and recreation. On the other hand, the middle stage consists of options for personal growth, recognition, and training and development. Finally, the top stage which is more about encouraging work & life balancing, considering employees' needs, offering a trusting environment, and lastly assigning the right person at the right role.

### *Doctors' Careers Intention*

According to Griffeth, Hom, R. W., P. W. & Gartner, S (2000) study, they described turnover intention as the individual's willingness to voluntarily departing from an organization, which Khatri et al. (2001) linked in his research to job satisfaction and organizational commitment as the main elements that affect employees' intention to resign from an organization. According to Meyer and Tett (1993), a psychological factor is one of the leading factors to depart from the organization, which was proven during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in the turnover rate among healthcare practitioners directly affected the quality of healthcare and facility management. Several organizations are still working on surviving the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare industry, including patients' dissatisfaction due to managing new doctors and the departure of their long-term treating doctors.



Another side of this issue also understands what influences career choices for doctors, as the healthcare industry is consistently changing and is one of the most complicated industries across the market. Previous studies found that doctors tend to change their career choices after five years after their graduation, as the increasing demand, working hours, and changes in the work nature of the case influence them to make a career change intention. For example, a study by de Vries H, Hertogh CM et al., and Meilboom AA (2015) focused on joiner doctors in the UK and found that joiner doctors choose medical specialties with good working conditions and opportunities for better geographical location and career advancements. In Saudi Arabia in particular, a study conducted by King Abdulaziz Medical City in Riyadh focused on Saudi female doctors and the difficulty of balancing work and life, which resulted in an increased desire for Saudi female doctors to select specific specialties life (Primary Care, Internal Medicine, and Pediatric) verses decreased desire in a specialty like (Surgery and Emergency Medicine) given the long working hours and nature of work which cause difficulty to balance between life and work.

Therefore, focusing on influencing factors that impact the resignation rather than addressing the underlying reasons of the turnover rate would be more efficient. However, discovering and addressing these underlying factors and reasons take much work. In 1982 Michaels et al. created a scale for the turnover intention, later in 2014 Li et al. altered that scale in order to employ it in China to study the turnover intention of nurses. Li et al. new scale consisted of six items, stating that an employee's intention to depart an organization depend on his or her intention to explore the market for a new job or the possibility of locating a new job with better opportunities. Other studies stated that job satisfaction with its dimensions, such as work environment, compensation, training and development, and organizational support, determined turnover intention.

### *The Social Exchange Theory*

Kelley and Thibaut developed the Social Exchange Theory (SET) 1959. The theory has been used as a conceptual base of the retention and turnover study to determine the relationship between the employee and the employer (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro 2005). This theory states that an individual receives benefits they feel required to compensate or repay by demonstrating a positive efforts or behaviors (Mossholder & Settoon & Henagan 2005). In this thesis's context, it means that depending on how the organization treat its employees, that will be directly reflected on their performance. This is also defied as the reciprocation of benefits between employee and the employer. This can refer to tangible exchange like salary and awards or intangible exchange like support and appreciation. As a result, commitment and loyalty toward the organization will increase, which will decrease the turnover rate and increase the retention rate. As per the Social Exchange Theory by Blau in 1964, adequate practices of Human Resources Management such as performance appraisal, compensation, training and development, work environment, and instrumental support should improve job satisfaction which in return enhances employee retention, in this case, an individual and organization enter into a trade of relationship in which shared benefits result in obligations to replicate to one another (Raihan, 2012). As per Jaworski's (1988), the effectiveness of several control choices may depend upon external and internal factors. This suggests the need for a moderate variable, such as job satisfaction, as suggested in this thesis. The research

model has also included the work environment variable because, as stated earlier, having a positive work environment affects career success and job satisfaction (Ng & Feldman, 2014). According to (Cai et al., Buchtel, E. E., Zhu, F., Z., & Guan, Y 2019), the more support the individual recourses from the surrounding environment, the better focus they will have on their career goals. From the previous literature review and related doctors' retention factors of training and development, performance appraisal and compensation the below research framework and model have been identified: Figure 1 identified as research model.

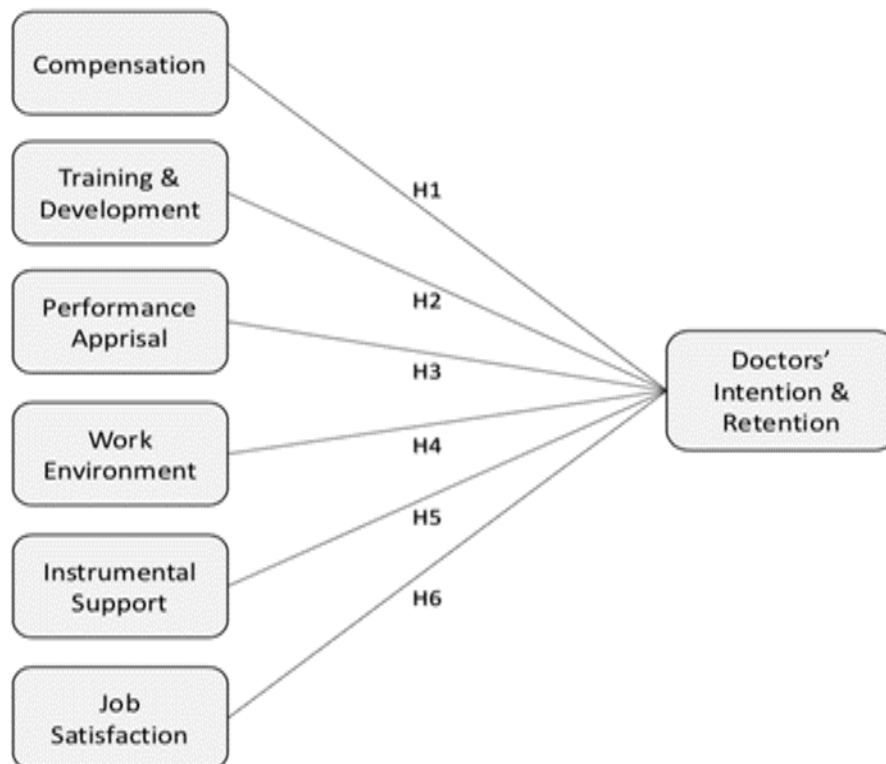


Figure 1. Research Model

*Compensation*

Dessler, 2005 defined compensation a system of financial payment going to employees as a result of their work toward the organization; this component is one of the main factors effecting workers' retention. According to (Bibi, Ahmad, and Majid 2016; Kumar, Mathimaran 2017; Dreher &Williams 1992), the financial payment is the crucial aspect of compensation that influence employee's attraction and retention, and it helps to decrease absenteeism. Every employee desires a compensation system that is fair and equivalent with their qualifications, experiences, and skills (Perumal, Ajgbe & Long 2012). According to Willis, Kelton, Saywell & Kiovsky (2004), direct compensation is the most critical issue in recruiting and retaining talents. It is also used as a strategy to motivate workers to enhance organizational commitment , performance, and, eventually job satisfaction. Because doctors work in the service sector, unlike the manufacturing sector, focusing on their behavior and attitude is a vital part of the organization's outcome; this means providing attractive compensation benefits to

ensure doctors' job satisfaction which leads to better service quality and eventually, patients' satisfaction. Previous studies like Kosoe (2011) investigated the influence of compensation on workers' retentions and found an important relationship between those two components. In a related study Afridi & Irshad (2007) explored the affect of compensation on workers' retentions. The results revealed a positive correlation between workers' retentions and compensation. Following the above literature review, the below hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant correlation between compensation and doctors' retention

### *Training and Development*

Training can be described as an activity that is organized and directed to improve workers' performance by guiding them reach level of skill or understanding by sharing information (Forgacs, 2009). Through Chipunza & Samuel 2009 study, they discovered that employees' level of organizational commitment and therefore their stay at the organization was through training and development, and that decreases the turnover rate and enhances the retention rate. Many studies showed that the more opportunities of training and development are presented to employees that will increase their satisfaction. The Social Exchange Theory (SET) also supports these results. According to Rosser (2004), Khalsa and Grace (2003) studies, training and development influence workers' job satisfaction levels, which, in return, might influence their decision to stay with the organization. Given the ever-changing medical sector, organizations must pay attention to their doctors' continued medical education, encourage it and provide as many opportunities for their learning and enhancing their skills. This can be done by offering doctors training programs within and outside the organization exposing the doctors to new cases and populations to learn from; according to Chew (2004), study in order for employees to conquer career challenges, organizations should provide training opportunities as it provide employees with the needed abilities and tools to improve their performance. Besides the fact that training and development improve employees' competency and skills (Martin, 2011), this can also affect the retention rate within the organization. According to Long and Bashir (2015) and Chung and Cave (2013, a positive relationship was found between employee retention and training as a factor.

Furthermore, Winterton (2004) study suggested that workers' retention might be negatively affected if an organization fail to provide training and development opportunities. In the contrary, Janette, Larose and Haines (2010) study discussed that providing training and development opportunities may lower workers' retentions by improving their skills, making it more appealing to continue with the organization. However, several studies still had opposing conclusions regarding the correlation between employee retention and training and development . Therefore, future investigation is needed to better identify the nature of the relationship between the two factors. Therefore, the following hypothesis was identified:

Hypothesis 2: Training and development will positively affect doctors' retention

### *Performance Appraisal:*

Performance appraisal is the process of evaluating workers' performance on a regular basis with the purpose of improving the productivity within the organization (Raihan, 2012); implementing this system can improve and measure the performance of employees, according to Waldman, Bass, and Einstein (1987). Furthermore, organizations use this system to develop, retain, and motivate employees (Kuvaas, 2006). Moreover, from the Social Exchange Theory SET perspective, when employees understand and know that decisions are made based on a fair and structured system, this increases the desire to stay at the organization. However, developing a performance appraisal system for the doctor should be tailored to their job nature; as hospitals contain both clinical and non-clinical employees, organizations should take into consideration the doctors' working hours, shifts, patients' satisfaction rates, and the doctors' willingness to update his/her knowledge to improve their skills and keep up with the changes in the medical sector.

Jehad and Farzana (2011) stated that the development of performance appraisal process improve workers' sense of being appreciated and valued by the organization, which results in increasing the employee's retention rate and loyalty to the organization. However, Ayaz, Riaz, Sajid and Wain (2012) study stated that performance appraisal as a component did not impact workers' retentions. Similarly, Yean, Johari, Ahmed, and Adnan Yahya (2012) study discovered no remarkable correlation between performance appraisal and worker intention to remain in an organization. Given all of the above conflicts, it is still necessary to explore further and analyze the relationship between those two factors; hence, the below hypothesis was identified:

Hypothesis 3: Performance appraisal is positively associated with doctors' retention

### *Work Environment*

The work environment is the elements which provide the surroundings for individual's jobs (Chao, 2013). It is considered one factor that impact an employee's intention to continue with an organization (Zeytinglue & Denton, 2005). According to Gunaseelan and Ollukkaran (2012), the work environment tends to positively or negatively affect specific job outcomes. Several studies by Lata and Kundu (2017), Soomro, Mangi, Abidi, Ghumro, and Jalbani (2011) studies discussed that a positive working environment, such as clean and appealing environment, motivate individuals to accomplish their tasks efficiently and effectively, that is assumed to have a significant influence on workers' retentions and organizational commitment. Similarly, Farooq et al., Akhtar, A., Naheed, K. & Akhtar (2018) found that the lack of suitable housing in rural areas contributed to the emigration of doctors from that area to more industrialized cities. Also, Shemodoe et al. (2006) study documented that settling in the community was associated with the retention of employees in that area and affected the employees' intention to leave a particular organization. The above literature review found that the working environment can be both the organization environment itself and the community surrounding the organization also has the same effect; this includes housing, schools, and other recreation facilities. Given the job nature of a doctor, and since they are very professional and experienced individuals, they will have different

expectations about the job and the working environment. Therefore, working conditions and living situations are vital factors influencing their retention and intention to leave the organization. For example, doctors working in rural areas have different relationships between them and their patients due to the limited social networking in rural areas. Following the above literature, the below hypothesis has been identified:

Hypothesis 4: A significant correlation exists between the working environment and doctors' retention

#### *The Instrumental Support*

The previous study has discussed that instrumental support experienced at the workplace positively and significantly affects employees' career success and job satisfaction (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2017). Therefore, instrumental support is considered part of social support, an essential resource for individual' personal development and growth (Kerksieck et al., 2019). Furthermore, it can be defined as the individuals believes of how much their well-being is valued by their supervisors, coworkers, and the overall the organization in which they work (Eisenberger et al. (2002)). On the other hand, according to (Kahn, 2007), instrumental support relate to the tangible support from the employees' surrounding working environment. Although several studies have focused on instrumental support and its coloration on Objective Career Support (OCS), this section will focus on the coloration between Subjective Career Support (SCS) (e.g., career satisfaction job satisfaction) and instrumental support.

According to (Florian et al., 1995) study, forming relationship in the working space supply individuals with vital social support resources in times of stress or need, which result in increasing job satisfaction and the intention to stay within an organization. Furthermore, the more the employee feels connected, attached, and close to their working environment, the higher their contribution will be to the organization, leading to their retention (Kahn, 2007). Similarly, healthcare institutes should pay great attention to doctors' engagement within the organization. This thesis examines how instrumental support fosters doctors' retention and the influencing role of job satisfaction between the two factors. In addition, responding to arguments by (Kundi et al., 2021) states that when employees establish connections with others at the organization, the long-term results are likely to be increasing job satisfaction. Following the above literature, the below hypothesis has been identified:

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive correlation between instrumental support and doctors' retention

#### *Job Satisfaction*

Smith et al. (1969) described job satisfaction as individual feeling toward their job. On the other hand, Locke (1969) suggested that any pleasurable or positive attituded toward a job is a result of increasing job satisfaction and sense of achievement. Job satisfaction is a complicated element of various factors, as doctors can be happy about one acceptance of their job and unhappy about another aspect of the same job. For example, a doctor can be happy about his work location but not his income. A doctor's satisfaction with the job considerably enhances

the service operations and vice versa; it also affects the level of patients' satisfaction with delivering the care with quality. This is also reflected in the doctor's behavior toward their peers and the rest of the clinical and non-clinical team members, eventually increasing patient satisfaction. Therefore, any organization's success and improvement relate directly to the workers' relationship between them, as it plays a vital role that benefits the organizations and their individuals on the long run.

A significant gap is addressed in this study regarding the intention of retention literature review by exploring the role of job satisfaction, instrumental support, training & development, compensation, and performance appraisal and their effect on doctors' intention and retention in an organization. Lastly, this thesis may play a role in developing the social exchange theory by testing and framing the correlation between the abovementioned elements and SET.

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and doctors' retention

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

The thesis data were collected over one month, starting July 1 – July 31, 2022, by utilizing a survey that was emailed to 200 doctors using Google Forms; these doctors are working in a private healthcare organization in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, approval from the private healthcare organization management was taken before distributing the survey. The participants understood the purpose of the survey along with the components involved in selecting the questions; they were advised to answer the question as honestly as possible. Therefore, the two open-ended questions were kept optional to answer.

The questionnaire comprised 27 questions addressing six components: training & development, compensation, work environment, performance appraisal, instrumental support, and job satisfaction. The survey response rate was 69%, a result of 133 responses out of 200, representing a response rate of 69%. Data were entered and processed with SPSS and Mplus software. Most of the responders were male (81% male vs. 18% female), 39% aged 50 – 60 years old vs. 34% aged between 40 – 50 years old. Most of the participants worked in the organization for 20 – 30 years; most of them are Saudis nationals working in the Eastern Province in Dhahran city. Most of the doctors in this thesis work in Surgery, Primary Care, and Internal Medicine services.

### *Measure:*

Due to the small sample size (less than 300), Velicer and Guadagnoli (1988) theory was adopted, stating that a sample size of 100 is stable if the component pattern contains at least four variable loadings  $> 0.6$ . All answers were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5, "strongly agree." To 1, "strongly disagree," to (Appendix A for thesis questioner, questions from 1-22).

Sample Demographics

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	24	18.3	18.3	18.3
Male	107	81.7	81.7	100
Total	131	100	100	

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
American	13	9.9	9.9	9.9
British	20	15.3	15.3	25.2
Egyptian	13	9.9	9.9	35.1
Indian	3	2.3	2.3	37.4
Irish	1	0.8	0.8	38.2
Jordanian	10	7.6	7.6	45.8
Lebanese	4	3.1	3.1	48.9
Pakistani	3	2.3	2.3	51.1
Philippine	3	2.3	2.3	53.4
Saudi	54	41.2	41.2	94.7
South African	3	2.3	2.3	96.6
Sudanese	4	3.1	3.1	100

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
5 – 10 years	42	32.1	32.1	32.1
10 – 20 years	58	44.3	44.3	76.3
20 – 30 years	7	5.3	5.3	81.7
Above 30 years	24	18.3	18.3	100
Total	131	100	100	

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Abqaiq	2	1.5	1.5	1.5
Al Hasa	13	9.9	9.9	11.5
Dhahran	112	85.5	85.5	96.9
Ras Tanura	4	3.1	3.1	100
Total	131	100	100	

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Allergy	1	0.8	0.8	1.5
Anesthesiology	10	7.6	7.6	9.2



Cardiology	5	3.8	3.8	13
Emergency Medicine	9	6.9	6.9	19.8
Endocrinology	1	0.8	0.8	20.6
ENT	6	4.6	4.6	25.2
Gastroenterology	2	1.5	1.5	26.7
General Surgery	4	3.1	3.1	29.8
Internal Medicine	20	15.3	15.3	45
Neurology	2	1.5	1.5	46.6
Neurosurgery	5	3.8	3.8	50.4
OB/GYN	3	2.3	2.3	52.7
Oncology	2	1.5	1.5	54.2
Ophthalmology	3	2.3	2.3	56.5
Orthopedic Surgery	5	3.8	3.8	60.3
Pathology	2	1.5	1.5	61.8
Pediatric Surgery	1	0.8	0.8	62.6
Pediatrics	9	6.9	6.9	69.5
Plastic Surgery	2	1.5	1.5	71
Primary Care	28	21.4	21.4	92.4
Psychiatry	4	3.1	3.1	95.4
Radiology	4	3.1	3.1	98.5
Urology	1	0.8	0.8	99.2
Vascular Surgery	1	0.8	0.8	100
Total	131	100		

### Compensation and Doctors' Goals

To measure compensation factor and its effect on the doctors' careers, a three-item scale was adopted. A sample item is "My work is duly awarded". Items were rated on a scale of 5-point ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.780.

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.780	.780	3

### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	COM1	COM2	COM3
COM1	1.000	.494	.642
COM2	.494	1.000	.491
COM3	.642	.491	1.000

### Training & Development

Training & development factor and its effect on the doctors' careers was measured using, a five-item scale. A sample item is "The training program at my organization help me to achieve my career goals". Items were rated on a scale of 5-point ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.639.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.634	.642	5

#### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	TRN1	TRN2	TRN3	TRN4	TRN5
TRN1	1.000	.404	-.035	.167	.132
TRN2	.404	1.000	.086	.550	.555
TRN3	-.035	.086	1.000	.104	.174
TRN4	.167	.550	.104	1.000	.498
TRN5	.132	.5551	.174	.498	1.000

### Working Environment

Working environment factor and its effect on the doctors' careers was measured using, a four-item scale. A sample item is "I feel proud and engaged in the work that I do". Items were rated on a scale of 5-point ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.825.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.825	.826	4

#### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	WE1	WE2	WE3	WE4
WE1	1.000	.541	.391	.508
WE2	.541	1.000	.592	.653
WE3	.391	.592	1.000	.570
WE4	.508	.653	.570	1.000

### Performance Appraisal

Performance Appraisal factor and its effect on the doctors' careers was measured using, a five-item scale. A sample item is "The performance appraisal process at my organization help me to address my weaknesses". Items were rated on a scale of 5-point ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.874.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items

#### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5

Alpha	Based on Standardized Items	Items
.874	.878	5

PA1	1.000	.404	.496	.842	.793
PA2	.404	1.000	.598	.393	.530
PA3	.496	.598	1.000	.529	.603
PA4	.842	.393	.529	1.000	.715
PA5	.793	.530	.603	.715	1.000

### *Instrumental Support*

To measure Instrumental Support factor and its effect on the doctors' careers, a three-item scale was adopted. A sample item is "When you think about your co-workers, do you feel a sense of belonging". Items were rated on a scale of 5-point ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.879.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.879	.886	3

#### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	IS1	IS2	IS3
IS1	1.000	.778	.711
IS2	.778	1.000	.673
IS3	.711	.673	1.000

### *Job Satisfaction*

To measure Job Satisfaction factor and its impact on the doctors' careers, a three-item scale was adopted. A sample item is "I have clear achievable goals and standards for my positions". Items were rated on a scale of 5-point ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.768.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.768	.779	3

#### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	JS1	JS2	JS3
JS1	1.000	.682	.432
JS2	.682	1.000	.505
JS3	.432	.505	1.000

### *Analytical Strategy:*

The Structural equation model (SEM) was conducted in Mplus software (version 8.8; Muthen & Muthen, 2017) in order to measure the identified hypotheses. In accordance with the previously discussed studies (e.g., Raihan, 2012), the test models were first tested prior to measuring the identified structural model. Next, the models were evaluated using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Following Bentler and Hu theory developed in (1999), CFA, SEM, and EFA models were evaluated using three fit indices: minimum covariance coverage, comparative fit index, and STDYX values. In addition, values like (compensation and work environment) as predictor and values like (job satisfaction) as moderator

## Results

### Confirmatory Factor and Exploratory Factor Analysis

In this thesis, various testing were performed to test the discriminant reliability of the study variables. First, CFA was performed to measure the fit of the identified model. Results of the identified model indicated that the seven-factor model was as follows: minimum covariance coverage value of 0.100, STDYX values are 0.514, 0.499, 0.514, 0.519, 0.536, and 0.521 representing COM, TRN, WE, PA, IS and JS respectively. Second, exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were conducted for an array of substitute models to compare the fit of the identified model to that of competing models. Chi-squared test of model fit for the baseline mode value was 208.694, and the CFI/TLE scores were 1.000 and 1.000, respectively, indicating a good fit model. Likewise, the Standardize Root Mean Square Residual value was 0.000, which indicates a good fit model.

### Estimated Sample Means

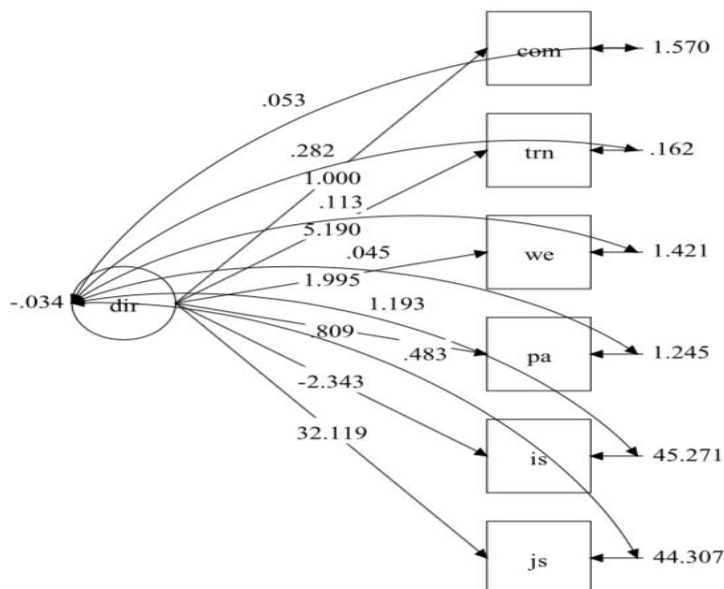
COM1	TRN1	WE1	PA1	IS1	JS1
3.252	3.481	3.519	4.053	3.707	4.001

### Hypotheses Testing

Results of the identified hypotheses were demonstrated using the structural equation model. As seen in the structural equation model below, the model results are 1.00, 5.190, 1.995, 0.809, -2.343, and 32.119, representing COM, TRN, WE, PA, IS, and JS, respectively. In Hypothesis 1, it was proposed that there is a positive correlation between doctors' retention and compensation. The values were 0.0000 and 0.000, representing the Chi-Square P-value and the RMSEA value, respectively, indicating a good fit model. In Hypothesis 2, it was proposed that training and development will positively affect doctors' retention. The values were 0.0163 and 0.059, representing the Chi-Square P-value and the RMSEA value, respectively, indicating a close fit model. Providing initial support for Hypothesis 2. In Hypothesis 3, It was assumed that Performance appraisal is positively associated with doctors' retention and intention. The values were 0.4385 and 0.546, representing the Chi-Square P-value and the RMSEA value, respectively, indicating a close fit model.

In Hypothesis 4, it was stated that a positive correlation exists between the working environment and doctors' retention. From the analysis, the values were 0.0000 and 0.000, representing the Chi-Square P-value and the RMSEA value, respectively, indicating a good fit model. As for Hypothesis 5, it was proposed that There is a significant correlation between instrumental support and doctors' retention. The results show that values were 0.0000 and 0.000, representing the Chi-Square P-value and the RMSEA value, respectively, indicating a good

fit model. Finally, for Hypothesis 6, it was stated that job satisfaction positively affected doctors' retention and intention. The results demonstrated values were 0.0000 and 0.000, representing the Chi-Square P-value and the RMSEA value, respectively, indicating a good fit model.



DIR: doctors' career intention & retention    COM: compensation    TRN: training  
WE: work environment    PA: performance appraisal    IS: instrumental support    JS: job satisfaction

*Open Ended Questions:*

In this questionnaire, doctors were given two open-ended questions regarding their career intentions (Appendix A for thesis questionnaire, questions 25 & 26). A total of 74 doctors answered the open-ended questions out of 133 who responded to the questionnaire. These qualitative items were created under the final dimension of this thesis (Doctors' Careers Intentions) and analyzed using a 5-point Likert coding scheme provided in Appendix B. Each comment was then rated on scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree).

Change workplace:

Some responders expressed their plans to change their healthcare institution to either work in their private clinic or move out of the country to pursue working in a different environment with new opportunities.

Financial reward:

Some responders expressed their feeling toward the change in their contracts, including their allowances and financial rewards, to which they feel their work are not being duly rewarded. Therefore, they choose to move to another job with a better financial offer, especially with the increased workload and administrative demand.

Working environment:

Other participants expressed their feeling toward the stressful working environment, unfair treatment from their supervisor, receiving other discrimination practices, or not feeling valued overall.

Positive working environment:

Most responders have established themselves in the current healthcare institution and prefer to remain for the next three years.

Negative working environment:

On the other hand, some responders plan to leave the healthcare institution and pursue their careers either at a different organization or in a different career path.

## **Discussion**

The thesis utilized the Social Exchange Theory while developing and testing the hypothesis by selecting six factors (performance appraisal, working environment, compensation, instrumental support, training, development, and job satisfaction) in a private healthcare sector in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Through the hypotheses, we assumed that each factor had either a significant or a positive relationship with doctors' careers intention and retention. A cross-study selected sample, the strong impact, and the correlation between the abovementioned elements and doctors' career intention and retention in the healthcare institution. In particular, compensation and work environment had the most positive feedback and responses percentage toward encouraging doctors to remain at a specific organization. On the other hand, both performance appraisal and instrumental support factors had the highest reliability score toward doctors' careers intention and retention. This supports the Social Exchange Theory (SET), referring to the benefits a person receives from someone and how they will make the person feel committed to repay and compensate through positive efforts and behaviors (Henagan, Mossholder & Settoon 2005). In this thesis's context, doctors' obligation and loyalty toward an organization depend on how their employer treats them. On the other hand, we found that performance appraisal and training & development had a moderate relationship with job satisfaction and, therefore, doctors' career intention and retention in an organization. As per the above findings, it is clear that healthcare institutions should also offer training, career development, or vocal support for healthcare institutions to retain doctors. However, they should be associated with tangible returns such as rewards, satisfactory evaluation ratings, and work-related support from materials and other resources (Montoya-Weiss et al., 2001). As well as creating a positive working climate and environment by asking for continuous feedback from doctors by utilizing employees' engagement surveys and face-to-face corresponding with the management. This will lower the

turnover rates and reduce the associated cost of hiring new employees according to J E., Colbert et al., A. E., Bono & Purvanova, R. K. in 2016 research.

As for the role of job satisfaction, this was explicitly selected because, as social beings, everyone craves the quality of relationships and environment, and the wanting to belong, (Lim, 2008). A study by (Hom and others in 2007; suggests that reducing the turnover rate could be possible by regularly observing employees' work balance and their communication with their supervisors.

## Conclusion

In view of the above results, the following are several implications and recommendations for the managers leading private healthcare organizations in Saudi Arabia. In theory, several evidence has been provided in this MBA thesis of the correlation between doctors' retention and the six selected thesis components (compensation, performance appraisal, training and development, instrumental support, job satisfaction and work environment). One of the main theoretical contributions of this thesis is the introduction of job satisfaction as a moderating role with the Social Exchange Theory to explain the relationship between the selected moderating role and doctors' retention.

A 2019 paper by the Saudi Health Council focusing on the physician workforce in Saudi Arabia discussed some recommendations to increase Saudi doctors' engagement and encourage them to face the new challenges and opportunities facing the Saudi healthcare system by creating a Society of entrepreneurship centers in medicine schools and professionals' societies offering continuing medical education (CME) and establishing investments space. Similar to the American Medical Association (AMA)'s Physician Innovation Network and AngelMD (a platform for physicians to invest in health sector start-ups). Moreover, HR Department and the private healthcare organization should understand the need to provide tangible and intangible solutions and recourses to the doctors to increase their organizational commitment. Some of these practical recommendations could be; Create rewards programs to engage doctors and showcase appreciation for their achievements; managers should ensure a fair and balanced distribution of the working hours and workload between the team; HR Department should conduct regular sessions with the doctors to address their concerns and questions to make them feel involved and heard. As well as investing in the medical residents trained in the hospital and recruiting them for permanent hiring. This will provide a comprehensive supply for the hospital for a workforce resource pool and assets to build its reputation as a teaching and training hospital. On the other hand, hospital management should offer training programs abroad to improve the doctors' skills and increase their experience and innovation opportunities in several fields related to the new aspects of medicine, such as telemedicine and artificial intelligence-assisted medicine.

Furthermore, adding recreational facilities and arranged out-of-work activities and events for the doctors and their families. Also, an essential aspect of the working environment is improving the current mental healthcare



spaces and resources for doctors, especially post-COVID-19 pandemic, given the increasing demand and consistent changes in the healthcare system. In addition, hospital management should ensure that policies are established to protect doctors' rights and avoid patient abuse.

## Recommendations

The thesis contains a few limitations will provide opportunities for future research. First, the result relied on only doctors' feedback to assess the factors and their relation and effect on intention and retention. It would be more beneficial in for future researchers to gather the results from multiple recourses, as this study collected the data from doctors' responses only. Second, this thesis measured the SET with job satisfaction and careers' intention. Therefore, researchers in the future should take into consideration testing the theory with other factors such as personal growth and work-life balance (Spurk et al., 2020; Kundi et al., 2014). Third, this study chose job satisfaction as a moderating role between the influencing factors and intention & retention. Hence, it would be interesting to explore other moderating factors like leadership role and organizational climate. Finally, the time frame given to distribute and review responses to the questionnaire was only one month, which affected the sample size and, accordingly, the results.

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## **Twenty-First-Century Librarianship and The Need for Infopreneurial Content in The Library and Information Science Curriculum of a Developing Nation**

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**Abstract:** We are in a rapidly evolving landscape where knowledge and information are catalysts for innovation and economic growth. However, the current Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum has failed to equip graduates with the requisite 21st-century skills needed for innovation and self-reliance, thereby exacerbating unemployment challenges, especially in a developing nation like Nigeria. Hence, this paper highlights the critical need to instil infopreneurial content into the LIS curriculum of Nigeria, to foster creativity among the LIS students by making them identify and capitalize on information-based opportunities. In the process, an overview of 21st-century librarianship was made, Nigeria as a developing nation was discussed, the meaning and areas of infopreneurship practice were highlighted, obstacles to infopreneurial practice in developing nations were explained, and the need for increased involvement of LIS professionals in infopreneurial endeavours to enhance national development are explored. However, the paper proposed curriculum development in the LIS field, to drive innovation and concludes by emphasizing the imperative of embedding infopreneurship content into the LIS curricula as a means of advancing the employment avenues of LIS graduates in emerging nations.

**Keywords:** Twenty-first-century, Infopreneurship, Library and Information Science Curriculum, Developing Nations.

**Citation:** Barau, H., M. & El-Kalash, K., I. (2024). Twenty-First-Century Librarianship and The Need for Infopreneurial Content in The Library and Information Science Curriculum of A Developing Nation. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1878-1886), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### **Introduction**

In the dynamic landscape of the twenty-first century, where information ecosystems evolve rapidly, libraries stand as vital hubs for community engagement, lifelong learning, and the acquisition, organization, and transfer of knowledge for individual and economic gains. This, may not be unconnected to the fact that libraries form the

bedrock of our social and economic progress. However, the advent of the internet, which led to the proliferation of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed how information is accessed, consumed, and shared, resulting in information abundance. The development has propelled librarians and allied information professionals, especially in developed nations, to embrace the new paradigms that are evolving into the library and information science (LIS) terrain, beyond mere custodians of knowledge, to navigators of complex information landscapes.

With the nature of the changing times, one of those skill sets that are required by LIS professionals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that of infopreneurship. However, while a handful of developed nations have increasingly integrated infopreneurial concepts into their LIS education frameworks, developing nations like Nigeria often lag in this regard. The disparity is concerning, given the pivotal role that libraries play in facilitating access to information, promoting literacy, supporting education, and fostering socio-economic development. By implication, the failure to equip LIS professionals with the requisite infopreneurial skills risks relegating their roles to contemporary society as mere custodians of print materials and overlooking their potential as catalysts for innovation and social change. More so, graduates of the LIS profession are likely to add up to the already existing chunk of unemployed youths without entrepreneurship skills especially since the established gap within the public and private sectors cannot in any way absorb the constant stream of the products of our institutions of higher learning.

While it is common knowledge that the digital revolution has ushered in unprecedented opportunities for information access and exchange, it has also exacerbated existing disparities between developed nations and developing ones. In Nigeria for example, librarianship is facing a series of challenges that include outdated educational models, and infrastructural challenges that hinder the ability of her LIS programs to adequately prepare her graduates for the realities of the twenty-first-century markets. Against this backdrop, this paper advocates for the integration of infopreneurial content into the LIS curriculum as a means of fostering innovation, infopreneurship, and sustainable development of the country. In other words, the paper underscores the need for educational reform, to equip aspiring librarians with the skills and the necessary mindset to thrive in an increasingly digital and infopreneurial environment.

### **Nature of the Twenty-First Century Librarianship**

The present century, also known as the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an era that is characterized by unprecedented technological advancements and the rapid proliferation of digital information, leading to the profound transformation of many fields of the human enterprise. It is the century of innovation, development and ideation (British Council, 2024). Librarianship and allied disciplines are not left out in these transformations because the once-traditional repositories of knowledge have metamorphosed into dynamic hubs of innovation, information access, and dissemination. According to El-Kalash, Mohammed and Ahmed (2017), many view the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the beginning of the knowledge age, sequel to the new patterns of work and business practices that sprang up

in the century, leading to a variety of jobs with different sets of skills being required. The authors affirmed that the century has redefined the library's role and changed the meaning of knowledge.

However, librarianship of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is beyond the provision of textual information resources to library users. It entails the provision of an array of satisfactory services that are offered to users across diverse locations, including the use of technology. Some features of 21<sup>st</sup>-century librarianship include managing digital collections alongside traditional materials and organizing and providing access to e-books, journals, and multimedia resources. It also entails the teaching of information literacy skills through workshops and one-on-one assistance, and helping the library users to navigate the digital landscape effectively. Additionally, 21<sup>st</sup>-century librarianship encompasses the integration of technology to enhance services, while engaging with communities through diverse programming, advocating for open access, and preserving cultural diversity in their collections amongst others.

### *Nigeria as a Developing Nation*

As a country, Nigeria is a birth of an involuntary amalgamation of various ethno-religious, geo-regional and political nationalities that occurred on January 1, 1914 (El-Kalash, Magaji and Saba, 2014). The name was suggested by British journalist Flora Shaw in the 1890s, who referred to the area as Nigeria, after the Niger River, which dominates much of the country's landscape (Dumka, n.d). Her rich natural and cultural endowment makes her a regional powerhouse in Africa (El-Kalash, Mohammed and Aniki, 2016). While Nigeria is seen as a regional powerhouse in Africa, the country is characterized by a range of weak socioeconomic factors, including lower GDP per capita, inadequate power supply, high levels of poverty, limited access to healthcare and education, environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, and endemic corruption. In addition, the country is experiencing food insecurity, and rapid population growth, leading to issues like overcrowding, inadequate housing, and strained public services amongst others. As such, the country is said to be a developing country.

In a statistical annexe by the Economic Analysis and Policy Division (EAPD) of the United Nations (2020), the world is divided into three categories namely; developed economies, economies in transition, and developing economies. DigitalLearning (2020) stated that the World Bank defines developing countries as the ones associated with low and middle threshold levels of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. However, developing nations like Nigeria also possess potential for growth and development, with opportunities for investment, technological advancement, and sustainable development initiatives. The country is rich in natural resources and has a young and dynamic workforce that can be leveraged for economic progress through effective governance, investment in education and healthcare, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Mamuli (2020) have argued that in developing countries education, significantly higher education is recognized as the critical force for human capital development and economic wellbeing. Higher education is held accountable for the formation of human capital through teaching and learning, disseminating knowledge, facilitating global collaborations, and fostering quality education (Sharma, Jain and Mogaji, 2020).

### *The Meaning and Areas of Infopreneurship Practice*

The term 'infopreneurship' is unarguably an extension of two distinct fields as the term has its etymology from the words: 'information' and 'entrepreneurship' (El-Kalash, Mohammed and Aniki, 2016). The concept is an emerging business model in mainstream information practice that is profit-oriented in nature, based on a vision and passion for using the internet medium to create and or develop, package and sell quality information products and services to generate income (El-Kalash, Mohammed and Aniki, 2016). Similarly, Lahm and Stowe (2011) averred that infopreneurship entails the widespread practice of developing, selling, and (reselling) information products.

Infopreneurship practice involves the identification of information/ knowledge deficiency gaps, creating/generating factual data/ results and selling them to a target audience. Infopreneurs create value by way of channelling information resources into areas of demand for higher productivity and greater economic gains (El-Kalash and Fakandu, 2018). In the view of Chew (2010), the exciting term 'infopreneur' is becoming a hit among today's entrepreneurs who want to capitalize on the sea of opportunities available on the internet because infopreneurs explore the uncharted "blue oceans" of internet business to define their niche markets.

However, the Corporate Affairs Commission in Nigeria (2014) highlighted that some graduates from many disciplines such as library and archival / record management, computer and information and communication technology, computer science, information science, mass communication, marketing, telecommunications and publishing engage in infopreneurship practices. El-Kalash, Mohammed and Aniki (2016) outlined automation of records management systems, content analysis and development, data services like database development and support and data analysis, freelance writing, graphic designing, knowledge management consultancy, marketing of company information products, paid blogging services, project publishing consultancy, records classification and indexing, records surveying, registry systems analysis and design, web design services, amongst others as some of the activities carried out by infopreneurs.

### *Obstacles to Infopreneurial Practice in Developing Nations*

Like many other entrepreneurial activities, infopreneurship practice is facing numerous setbacks in many developing countries, hindering the growth of information-based businesses and initiatives. Amakiri and Tafeng Marie (2019) highlighted some of these obstacles including the high level of illiteracy, poor internet connectivity, inadequate ICT skills, high cost of running a business, inadequate awareness of business opportunities in the information sector, and over-dependence on white-collar jobs among others.

Another issue is the associated high cost of subscription, cost of technology acquisition and maintenance amongst others, which usually restrict access for individuals and small businesses, making it very challenging for aspiring infopreneurs to access online resources, market their products or services, and engage with a global audience.

Also, regulatory and legal barriers create challenges for infopreneurial practice in developing nations. For example, complex bureaucratic processes, ambiguous intellectual property laws, and restrictive regulations on online commerce can stifle innovation and deter infopreneurial initiatives. In addition, corruption and lack of transparency in regulatory frameworks may discourage investment and business development, particularly for small-scale infopreneurs who lack the resources to navigate legal complexities.

Nonetheless, economic instability and financial constraints present significant obstacles to infopreneurship in developing nations because limited access to capital, financing, and investment opportunities constrain the growth and sustainability of information-based ventures. Moreover, fluctuating currencies, inflation, and economic volatility in many developing nations create an uncertain business environment, deterring potential infopreneurs from pursuing infopreneurial ventures and investments. To overcome these challenges, however, a comprehensive strategy that includes educational and regulatory reforms, infrastructure development, and initiatives to support economic stability entrepreneurship is needed.

#### *The Need for Infopreneurial Content in the LIS Curriculum of Nigeria*

It is an open secret that the LIS field is undergoing rapid transformation globally, driven by advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the emergence of new information ecosystems. In Nigeria, like many other developing nations, the need for a dynamic and relevant LIS curriculum that reflects these changes is increasingly apparent and a very critical area that demands inclusion is infopreneurship – the practice of creating, managing, and monetizing information-based products and services. In other words, integrating infopreneurial content into the LIS curriculum of Nigeria is undisputably very essential, to prepare the would-be graduates of the profession to thrive in the evolving information landscape and contribute to national development.

Before now, the rate of the government's over-dependence on oil revenues to fund her activities in Nigeria is next to nothing. Aigbedion and Iyayi (2007) stated that Nigeria's extreme reliance on the crude oil market has triggered structural difficulties for the economy, as earnings from crude oil fluctuate along with market trends. With the ever-increasing information and knowledge-based industries however, coupled with the growing opportunities in sectors such as digital publishing, content creation, and information brokerage amongst other infopreneurial activities, infusing an infopreneurial content into the LIS curriculum of Nigeria would equip the growing population of LIS students with the required competencies to align with current market demands and empower them on how to capitalize on emerging job opportunities or create their ventures. By implication, the over-dependence on oil and diversification into the ICT sector would certainly add to revenue generation and reduce the unemployment rate in the country. This is because infopreneurship education would foster entrepreneurial mindsets, creativity, and innovation, enabling the LIS graduates to adapt to changing market dynamics and contribute to self-reliance for economic growth.



While infopreneurship practice is a business area that leverages information resources and services to address societal needs, integrating infopreneurial content into the LIS curriculum would make graduates of the field to gain the knowledge and skills to identify information gaps, develop innovative solutions, and create value-added information products and services to the society especially because infopreneurship is an ICT-driven field and according to Leadership Newspapers (2023), the ICT sector in Nigeria has contributed 15.97 per cent to the country's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Q3 of year 2023. The ICT sector comprises the four activities of Telecommunications and Information Services; Publishing; Motion Picture, Sound Recording, and Music Production; and Broadcasting (Leadership Newspapers, 2023).

However, infopreneurial practice requires proficiency in information management, digital technologies, marketing, and business development. By incorporating infopreneurial content into the curriculum, LIS programs can broaden students' skill sets beyond traditional library functions to encompass digital content creation, intellectual property management, online publishing, and digital marketing strategies. This holistic approach would equip the LIS graduates with the multidisciplinary competencies that are needed to navigate the complexities of the digital age and to succeed in diverse information-based professions. In addition, infopreneurship education would instil entrepreneurial leadership qualities, such as resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking, which are essential requirements for driving organizational innovation and sustainability.

Nonetheless, it can be summed up that the urgency of addressing this educational gap is underscored by several factors including the exponential growth of digital information that necessitates librarians to navigate, evaluate, and leverage diverse information sources effectively; the democratization of knowledge, which requires librarians to curate and disseminate information in ways that are accessible, inclusive, and culturally relevant; and, the emergence of new technologies and information platforms, which requires librarians to harness those tools that can enhance library services and outreach efforts. With the above imperatives, it is pertinent to note that a holistic reimagining of the LIS curriculum to incorporate infopreneurial content becomes imminent, especially in developing nations and the content of such a curriculum should encompass topics that include digital literacy, information entrepreneurship, intellectual property rights, data management, user experience design, and emerging technologies among others.

We believe that by collectively advocating for curriculum reform and investing in the professional development of LIS professionals, we can chart a course towards a future where libraries serve not only as repositories of knowledge but also as dynamic hubs of innovation, empowerment, and social rebirth for the collective advancement of developing economies.

## **Conclusion**

On a conclusive note, the integration of infopreneurial content into the LIS curriculum of a developing nation like Nigeria is highly imperative especially because equipping future information professionals with certain



business skills and mindsets are sure way to drive innovation, reduce the unemployment rate in the country and contribute meaningfully to national development agendas. By implication, practising infopreneurship ensures that LIS education remains relevant and responsive to the dynamic needs of the ever-evolving world of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century economy.

## Recommendations

Based on the arguments raised for the need for infopreneurial content in the LIS curriculum of developing countries like Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

- LIS schools should update their curriculum content to encompass infopreneurship skills and competencies.
- Governments, international organizations, and civil society stakeholders should work hands-in-gloves to ensure that a reliable, fast and cheap internet infrastructure is available to all in developing nations.
- Governments at all levels of the educational sphere should ensure that our institutions of higher learning are adequately structured and equipped with modern facilities. By so doing, enrolment rates into those schools are likely to increase, thereby facilitating the enrolment figures of those who would want to venture into infopreneurship activities.
- Public and private institutions of higher learning should work out plans to enhance vocational training and also, encourage private business initiatives, to reduce the unemployment levels of the developing nations.
- To encourage self-reliance, regulatory procedures should be expedited, to encourage people to have much interest in the private sector.
- Start-up capital should be provided to the unemployed LIS graduates to serve as a motivator that would boost their interest in venturing into infopreneurial practices.

By addressing these challenges, developing nations can unlock the potential of infopreneurship as a driver of economic growth, innovation, and sustainable development.

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## Beyond the Books: A Study on AI Augmentation in Civil Engineering Pedagogy for Pavement Design

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the integration of AI tools, ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard (now Gemini), in the education of civil engineering students specializing in pavement design. Two groups, totaling sixty-eight undergraduate students (Group A= 28, Group B=40), enrolled in the Pavement Design course at UTPL from October 2023 to February 2024, participated. They were tasked with generating prompts covering various pavement design topics. These included Traffic, Subgrade Characteristics, Asphalt Materials, AASHTO-Flexible Design, AASHTO-Rigid Design, Interlocking Concrete Pavements Design, International Roughness Index (IRI), and Construction Systems on Pavements. Students then assessed AI-generated responses using a predefined grading scale. The results revealed Bard achieved a higher approval rate of 71.1% compared to ChatGPT's 48.5%. ChatGPT 3.5 would not meet the passing threshold for certain topics, such as AASHTO-Flexible Design, AASHTO-Rigid Design, and IRI. In contrast, Bard consistently achieved higher approval rates across all assessed topics. Students acknowledged the AI tools' significant contribution to a deeper understanding of the course material. This integration positively influenced civil engineering students' learning outcomes, highlighting the evolving role of AI in education and encouraging further exploration in academia.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence in Education, Pavement Design Curriculum, ChatGPT, Bard, Civil Engineering Learning Experience.

**Citation:** Vásquez-Monteros, J., & García-Ramírez, Y. (2024). Beyond the Books: A Study on AI Augmentation in Civil Engineering Pedagogy for Pavement Design. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1887-1900), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In recent years, the field of artificial intelligence (AI) has experienced unprecedented growth, marked by significant technological advancements and diverse applications. Intelligent sensing, a prominent facet combining AI with smart sensors, has garnered considerable attention for its autonomous decision-making capabilities across various domains (Sharma et al., 2022). Notably, AI techniques, especially in deep learning

and reinforcement learning, have undergone substantial advancements. This progress has resulted in the creation of more efficient and accurate systems, notably in areas such as computer vision, natural language processing, and autonomous systems (Samara, 2022). The advent of AI-generated content, exemplified by models like ChatGPT, has emerged as a focal point. These models aim to streamline and democratize content creation processes, contributing to increased efficiency and accessibility (Cao et al., 2023). Furthermore, the rise of Green AI has become a noteworthy trend, focusing on the environmental sustainability of AI models. This subfield has witnessed a surge in research interest and publications since 2020, highlighting a growing emphasis on eco-friendly AI practices (Verdecchia et al., 2023). These dynamic developments underscore the rapid progress and diverse applications of AI, with implications reaching various sectors.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has showcased its versatile capabilities in various domains, illustrating its potential to redefine conventional practices. In the medical field, AI has demonstrated notable achievements, as seen in a study where an AI candidate achieved an average accuracy of 79.5% and successfully passed two out of ten mock radiology examinations (Shelmerdine et al., 2022). Furthermore, AI-assisted tools have exhibited superiority over traditional clinical care in 77% of randomized controlled trials, with 70% of these studies reporting enhanced clinical outcomes (Lam et al., 2022). In systematic reviews, an AI tool has proven to be on par with human assessors in accurately identifying eligible references, showcasing the reliability of AI in information synthesis (Burns et al., 2021). Beyond healthcare, ChatGPT has showcased its prowess by outperforming undergraduate students in an anatomy course, highlighting its potential as an effective educational tool in higher education contexts (Talan & Kalinkara, 2023). AI's reach extends to complex problem-solving scenarios, as evidenced by tools like Larch Prover, capable of tackling challenging problems, including entrance exams at top universities, a feat beyond human capability (Jaishy et al., 2016). However, despite these interventions, there remains a noticeable gap in AI studies within the engineering field, particularly in civil engineering. This underscores the need for exploration and research in applying AI to engineering disciplines for comprehensive advancements.

The utilization of AI in engineering education is a burgeoning area, aiming to enhance students' grasp of practical applications and intricate problem-solving. Studies emphasize AI's potential for improving learning outcomes in engineering and computer science education, employing various methods like curriculum integration, online courses, tutoring systems, blended learning, and industry collaboration (Pillay et al., 2018). In software engineering practices, the integration of AI into IT student education consistently produces graduates showcasing the symbiotic relationship between AI and software engineering, yielding functional research tools (Kalles, 2016). The training of specialists in transport construction not only forms essential competencies but also addresses new relevant skills required for professionals amid the widespread adoption of AI (Levin et al., 2022). The inclusion of AI content in professional courses contributes to a profound understanding of civil engineering projects and the application of mechanical equipment in educational settings, providing a comprehensive approach to learning (Xie et al., 2020). Collectively, these studies highlight AI's potential to enrich engineering education by offering practical applications and enhancing overall learning outcomes.

The integration of AI into engineering education brings forth opportunities and challenges. Privacy, security, and potential bias concerns must be effectively addressed (Harry, 2023). A balanced approach is essential, ensuring that AI enhances learning without replacing human instructors, with a focus on maximizing benefits for all students, including those with special educational needs (Reiss, 2021). There is a potential downside as AI might inadvertently diminish analytical skills and encourage misconduct (Grassini, 2023). Despite their popularity, AI language tools like ChatGPT have encountered technical issues, emphasizing the necessity for ongoing development and improvement (Boschee, 2023).

Despite existing extensive literature, it is evident that more applications in education are needed to comprehend the utilization and potential challenges of AI, particularly in the field of civil engineering. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the transformative potential of AI, such as Bard (now called Gemini) (Google, 2023) and ChatGPT 3.5 (OpenAI, 2023), integration in the education of civil engineering students, focusing on pavement design. The utilization of Bard and ChatGPT 3.5 is imperative, as they have transformed learning through personalized and interactive experiences (Riyaz & Salim, 2023). Studying pavements is crucial for infrastructure development, ensuring safety, minimizing economic costs, addressing environmental considerations, fostering innovation in civil engineering, promoting sustainability, ensuring long-term durability, influencing urban planning, prioritizing user experience, and integrating evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence. The primary contribution of this article lies in its exploration of the transformative potential of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in the education of civil engineering students specializing in pavement design. This research aims to address the existing gap in literature by investigating the practical applications and potential challenges of AI in civil engineering education, offering valuable insights into the evolving role of AI in enhancing the learning outcomes of students in this specialized field.

## **Method**

### **Participant selection**

Two cohorts of undergraduate students from Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) were chosen as participants in this study. Both cohorts actively engaged in the academic period spanning from October 2023 to February 2024. The total number of participants reached sixty eight, all of whom were pursuing studies in civil engineering and specifically enrolled in the Pavement Design course. Among these participants, 19% identified as female, while 81% identified as male. The Pavement Design course comprehensively covered vital aspects of pavement design, aligning with the core focus of this study. All participants opted into the research voluntarily, underlining a self-selecting and motivated sample.

### *AI tool selection*

ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard were selected for their advanced natural language processing capabilities and accessibility, being free to use. Developed by OpenAI, ChatGPT 3.5 excels in generating coherent responses to

complex prompts. Bard is renowned for its proficiency in authorship recognition and detection. This deliberate selection ensures a comprehensive analysis, leveraging the distinct strengths of each tool, for a thorough evaluation of their performance in addressing a diverse range of challenges within the context of pavement design.

### *Task assignment*

Each student group was assigned the task of crafting prompts that delved into various aspects of pavement design. These prompts were instrumental as inputs for the AI tools, forming the foundation for evaluating their responses across a broad spectrum of challenges within the field. The overarching objective was to cover a comprehensive range of challenges and intricacies inherent in pavement design.

The prompts encompassed a diverse array of pavement design topics, including Traffic, Subgrade Characteristics, Asphalt Materials, AASHTO-Flexible Design, AASHTO-Rigid Design, Interlocking concrete pavements Design, International Roughness Index (IRI), and Construction Systems on Pavements. To establish a reference and contrast knowledge for each topic, relevant literature was provided, meticulously detailed in Table 1. In Table 1, it is highlighted that for each topic, students were required to pose four questions, except for the Interlocking concrete pavements design topic, where they asked only two questions. This intentional variation in question quantity aimed to tailor the assessment approach to the specificity of each topic. The thoughtful selection of these topics aimed to ensure a well-rounded evaluation of the AI tools' capabilities, offering insights into their performance across different facets of pavement design. The deliberate inclusion of a diverse range of topics served the purpose of challenging the AI tools and evaluating their adaptability to various dimensions of pavement design. This deliberate diversity was crucial for ensuring a robust assessment of the AI tools' effectiveness in handling a broad spectrum of subjects within the field.

Table 1. Literature References and Question Requirements for Pavement Design Topics

Topic	Literature reference	N° questions asked to AI
Traffic study	Pavimentos: fundamentos, estudios básicos y diseño (Montejo, 2010)	4
Subgrade characteristics	Pavimentos: fundamentos, estudios básicos y diseño (Montejo, 2010)	4
Asphalt Materials	Pavimentos: Materiales, construcción y diseño (Reyes & Rondón, 2015)	4
AASHTO-Flexible design	Pavimentos: fundamentos, estudios básicos y diseño (Montejo, 2010)	4
AASHTO-Rigid design	Pavimentos: fundamentos, estudios básicos y diseño (Montejo, 2010)	4



Interlocking concrete pavement Design	Structural Design of Interlocking Concrete Pavement for Roads and Parking Lots (Tech. Spec. No. 4) (Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute (ICPI), 1995)	2
International Roughness Index (IRI)	Aspectos y consideraciones en el cálculo del índice de regularidad internacional (IRI) (Vargas, 2010)	4
Construction Systems	Pocket book for road construction equipment (Indian Roads Congress, 2018)	4

Students were instructed to formulate a single prompt following the structure "Act as an expert on" + "Provide a short and concise answer about" + Topic. For example, a prompt could be "Act as an expert civil engineer on roads and pavements, and give a brief and precise answer about what existing traffic is." This prompt was to be initiated in a separate chat to ensure the AI had no access to previous knowledge or response history. Furthermore, each chat was limited to a single question, with no provision for follow-up inquiries.

#### *Evaluation process*

The evaluation process utilized a predefined grading scale, referencing literature provided in Table 1. Correct responses were awarded a score of 1, vague responses received a score of 0.5, and incorrect answers were assigned a score of 0. This standardized scale facilitated a quantifiable assessment of the AI-generated responses. The scoring system aimed to differentiate between accurate, partially correct, and incorrect responses, offering a nuanced evaluation of the AI tools' performance. Across all eight topics, encompassing 30 questions in total, the maximum achievable score was 30 points. This scoring mechanism ensured a comprehensive and standardized evaluation of the AI tools' effectiveness in addressing the varied challenges presented in the prompts.

#### *Data collection timeline*

Students interacted with both AI tools throughout the entire academic periods of October 2023 and February 2024. The data collection process was strategically synchronized with the syllabus of the Structural Pavement Design course. Prompts were distributed at intervals aligned with the course modules, ensuring that students engaged with the AI tools in a timely and relevant manner corresponding to their ongoing coursework.

#### *Data Analysis and Interpretation*

##### *Descriptive Statistics Analysis*

A comprehensive analysis of AI-generated grades was undertaken to evaluate student performance and perceptions. Students, willingly participating, shared their AI grades with the instructor, facilitating the generation of detailed descriptive statistics. This encompassed mean scores, standard deviation, minimum,

maximum, and quartiles for both ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard. The breakdown aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of student interactions with AI tools.

*Approval Rate Visualization*

To complement the quantitative analysis, a scatterplot was created to visually represent the distribution of assigned grades. This plot incorporated a reference line set at 70% of the grade, aiding in the identification of pass or fail status. The visual representation enhances the understanding of how ChatGPT and Bard perform in terms of test approvals.

*Post-Semester Surveys*

Surveys conducted at the end of the semester yielded valuable insights into students' perceptions of AI tools in the Pavements course. They were prompted to rate their familiarity with AI tools before and after usage on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicated very little familiarity, and 10 denoted expertise. Additionally, opinions on the usefulness of AI in their learning were collected, utilizing response options ranging from Very useful to Not at all useful. A query aimed to measure the impact of AI integration on their understanding and reinforcement of concepts, using a scale from 1 to 10. Moreover, students were asked about their willingness to recommend the continued use of AI tools in future Pavements courses. Finally, they were encouraged to provide additional suggestions or comments to enhance the implementation of ChatGPT and Bard in Pavements teaching.

**Results**

**Descriptive Statistics for AI Tools**

Students shared their AI's grades with the instructor, facilitating a detailed analysis through descriptive statistics for each AI tool, as outlined in Table 2. It is important to note that this table encompasses the entire sample, including both student groups. The tabulated data reveals that, on average, Bard received a higher score compared to ChatGPT 3.5. It's worth noting that both tools exhibit identical maximum and minimum values, underscoring that the distinction lies in intermediate metrics like Q1, median, and Q3, where Bard demonstrates a slightly higher value. This insight offers a nuanced understanding of the comparative performance of ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard, derived from the assessments provided by the students.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Student Grades for ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard

Variables	N	Mean	StDev	Minimum	Q1	Median	Q3	Maximum
ChatGPT 3.5	68	20.90	3.65	12.50	18.00	20.50	24.38	28.50
Bard	68	22.01	3.78	12.50	19.50	22.50	25.00	28.50

Figure 1 presents a scatterplot illustrating the distribution of all assigned grades. For reference, a line is drawn at

70% of the grade (equivalent to 21 points), aiding in discerning pass or fail status for exams. By using this reference line, it becomes evident that ChatGPT would pass 48.5% of the tests related to the topics asked, while Bard would attain a higher approval rate of 71.1%. This visual representation provides a clear understanding of the comparative performance of ChatGPT and Bard concerning test approvals.

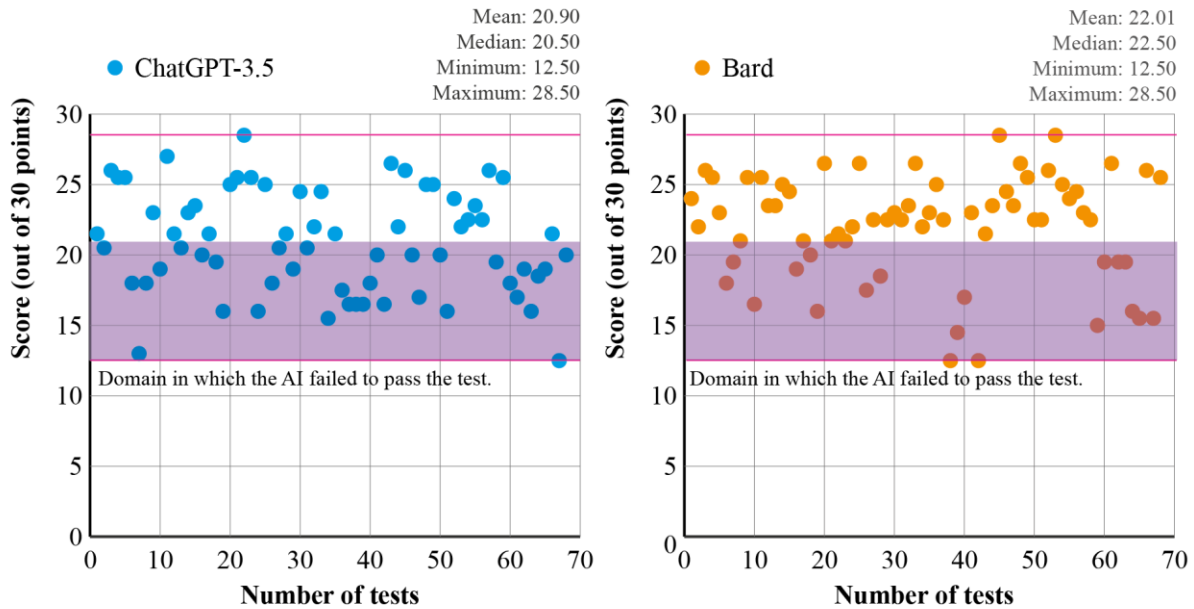


Figure 1. Scatterplot of Assigned Grades and Approval Rates for ChatGPT and Bard

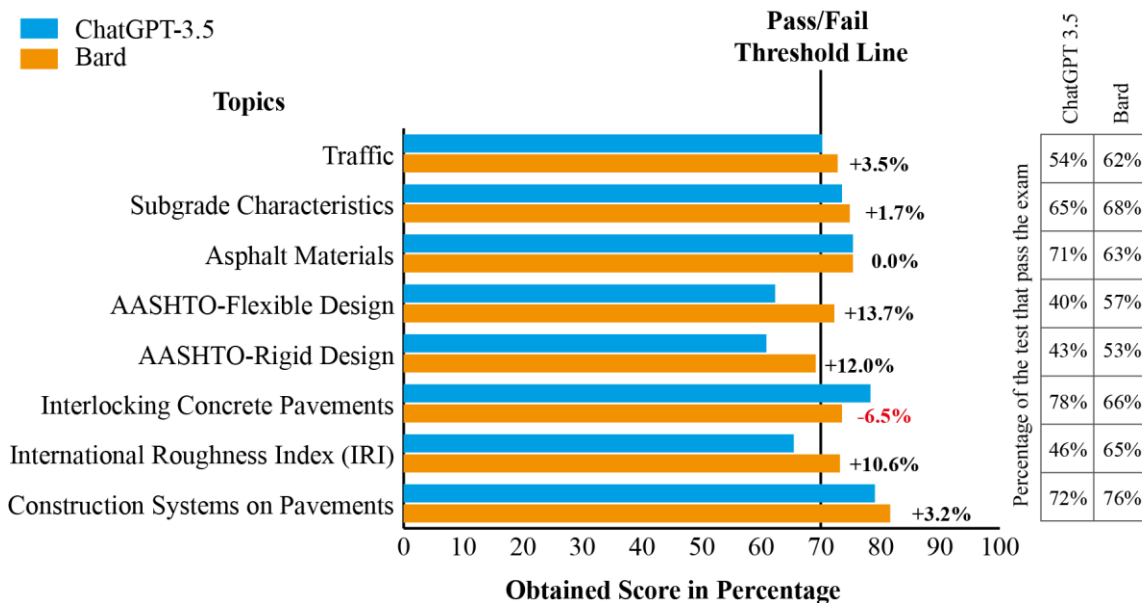


Figure 2. Comparison of Average Scores and Approval Percentages for AI Tools in Various Pavement Design Topics

To conduct a more in-depth analysis of the outcomes presented in Figure 1, a bar chart (Figure 2) was generated,

illustrating the average scores for each topic and AI tool. These scores were subsequently converted into percentages. Figure 2 highlights that, on average, the scores attained by ChatGPT 3.5 would not meet the passing threshold for certain topics: AASHTO-Flexible Design, AASHTO-Rigid Design, and International Roughness Index (IRI). Conversely, Bard demonstrated passing scores in nearly all topics, with the exception of AASHTO-Rigid Design. Proportionally, Bard outperformed ChatGPT 3.5 by more than 10% in AASHTO-Flexible Design, AASHTO-Rigid Design, and IRI—these being the topics where ChatGPT 3.5 scored the lowest. Notably, ChatGPT 3.5 surpassed Bard only in the Interlocking Concrete Pavement topic. Additionally, to provide context for the previous findings, Figure 2 incorporates a table presenting the approval percentages for each individual result. ChatGPT achieved an average approval percentage of 58% (ranging from 40% to 78%), while Bard garnered an approval rating of 64% (with a range of 53% to 76%), indicating that Bard consistently achieved higher approval rates across the assessed topics.

### *Survey Response Summary*

At the conclusion of the semester, students were surveyed to gauge their perception of using AI in the Pavements course. Initially, 72.4% rated their familiarity with ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard as 7 or above, a percentage that increased to 97% after consistent use throughout the semester. Regarding utility, 36.2% considered the tools very useful, while 58% found them useful. In terms of the impact on their understanding and reinforcement of concepts in the Pavements course (on a scale from 1 to 10), 40.6% gave a rating of 8, 24.6% gave a rating of 9, and 11.6% gave a rating of 10, indicating a positive impact on student learning. Concerning recommendations, 97.1% would suggest the use of AI tools in future Pavements courses. Finally, students shared comments and suggestions based on their experiences.

- **Integration of More AIs:** Some students suggested integrating more AI models to compare their accuracy. Some students suggested implementing another AI model, such as Llama2, for potentially better accuracy. This indicates a desire for a broader evaluation of AI tools and potentially exploring multiple AI solutions for a more comprehensive understanding.
- **Application of Emerging AI:** Students recommended applying newly emerging AI to assess its effectiveness. This reflects an interest in staying updated with the latest advancements in AI technology and exploring their potential contributions to education.
- **Challenges with AI Responses:** Students expressed challenges with both ChatGPT and Bard. They noted that ChatGPT had a lower pass rate while Bard had a higher pass rate. Additionally, concerns were raised about Bard's responses being lengthy, potentially causing confusion for beginners.
- **Use for Doubt Reinforcement:** Some students highlighted the utility of AI tools for reinforcing doubts within the class. This suggests that they see AI as a valuable resource for addressing specific questions and clarifying concepts.
- **Importance of Well-Formulated Prompts:** Several students emphasized the significance of formulating good prompts for AI to provide accurate responses. This highlights the importance of

guiding students in creating effective queries to optimize AI engagement.

- **Diverse Topics for AI Evaluation:** The inclusion of diverse pavement design topics for AI evaluation was acknowledged. Students appreciated the range of subjects, which allowed for a comprehensive assessment of AI tools' capabilities across various facets of pavement design.
- **Efficiency and Learning Impact:** Students generally viewed ChatGPT and Bard as efficient tools for learning. They recognized the positive impact of these AI tools on their understanding of the subject matter.
- **Interactive and Practical Elements:** A suggestion was made to include interactive practical exercises and relevant case studies to further enhance the learning experience. This indicates a desire for a more dynamic and hands-on approach to learning with AI tools.
- **Consideration of AI Limitations:** Some students advised considering the limitations of AI and being cautious with certain types of questions, such as true or false, where AI tools might have more challenges.

In summary, the students' suggestions highlight a keen interest in exploring and maximizing the potential of AI in the educational context. They recognize the benefits of AI tools while also providing constructive feedback for improvement, emphasizing the importance of diverse topics, well-formulated prompts, and consideration of AI limitations.

## Discussion

The study investigates the transformative potential of integrating artificial intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard, into the education of civil engineering students specializing in pavement design. The research aims to enhance the learning experience by assessing the efficacy of AI responses as supplementary tools within the pavement design curriculum. Two groups of sixty-eight undergraduate students (A= 28, B=40), participating in the Structural Pavement Design course, were tasked with generating prompts covering diverse pavement design topics. The AI-generated responses were evaluated using a predefined grading scale.

The study reports similar responses from ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard, with Bard receiving slightly higher ratings. : ChatGPT 3.5 achieved a 48.5% pass rate on the pavements exam, while Bard achieved a higher 72.1% pass rate. According to the previous results, ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard demonstrated similar performance in certain tasks, such as recipe adaptation and recipe detailing, while ChatGPT 3.5 outperformed Bard in recipe correction (Degerli & Tatlisu, 2023). In other domains, such as news fact-checking, both models showed moderate proficiency, with ChatGPT 4.0 slightly outperforming Bard (Caramancion, 2023). In health literacy, ChatGPT 3.5 and ChatGPT 4 produced responses at lower reading grade levels compared to Bard and Bing, which tended to produce responses at higher reading grade levels (Amin et al., 2023). In a multiple-choice question examination in endocrinology, diabetes, and diabetes technology, ChatGPT obtained slightly more marks than Bard, but both did not achieve satisfactory scores (Meo et al., 2023).

The integration of ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard as educational supplements positively influenced the learning outcomes of civil engineering students. Students perceived a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of the course material through the use of AI tools. A study comparing GenAIbots (including ChatGPT-3.5 and Bard) found that these tools functioned as agents-to-think-with, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and subject-matter knowledge (Thanh et al., 2023).

Another study assessed the capabilities of generative AI tools, including ChatGPT-4, and found that they perform well at lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy while maintaining a decent level of performance at higher levels, with "create" being the weakest level of performance (Santos, 2023). It is essential to consider the student's current understanding and the need for human intervention in AI-assisted learning (Thanh et al., 2023).

A positive impact on the understanding and reinforcement of concepts in the Pavements course was reported by students, with ratings ranging from 8 to 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. Also, 94.2% of students found ChatGPT and Bard either very useful or useful in their learning process. AI has been shown to positively impact the understanding and reinforcement of concepts in various educational fields, including mathematics, computer science, and language learning. For example, the use of AI-based learning materials in Calculus II improved students' conceptual understanding in Informatics Engineering (Anggraini et al., 2020).

ChatGPT has been found to enhance students' attitudes towards learning and develop their skills in computer science and IT (Sakib et al., 2023). Additionally, AI-driven adaptive learning systems have been shown to raise student engagement and academic performance in high school computer science curricula (Ezzaim et al., 2024). Overall, AI technologies have the potential to transform education by providing personalized learning experiences and improving students' understanding and motivation in various subjects.

In conclusion, a noteworthy 97.1% of students express a positive inclination towards recommending the ongoing utilization of AI tools in forthcoming Pavements courses. This consensus aligns with the perceived benefits reported in the current study. However, it's essential to acknowledge that the broader landscape of opinions on the integration of AI tools in education varies. A 2023 study focusing on introductory programming instructors revealed a divergence of opinions. One faction advocates for the exclusion of AI coding tools, emphasizing the continued teaching of programming fundamentals.

On the other side, there is a perspective favoring the integration of AI tools into courses, aiming to equip students with skills relevant to future job requirements (Lau & Guo, 2023). Another study conducted in the same year delves into the impact of AI tools on the student experience in programming courses. While recognizing significant potential benefits for students, the study underscores the need for further research to comprehensively understand the effects of these AI tools on students' learning capabilities (Maher et al., 2023). These varied perspectives highlight the ongoing discourse within the educational community regarding the optimal integration of AI tools, emphasizing the importance of a nuanced and context-specific approach.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the positive influence of integrating ChatGPT 3.5 and Bard in the education of civil engineering students with a focus on pavement design. The outcomes reveal a substantial contribution to a more profound comprehension of course material and a favorable impact on overall learning outcomes. However, the identified challenges and variations in pass rates among the AI tools underscore the imperative for ongoing exploration and enhancement. The survey responses from students convey a predominantly optimistic perception of AI tools, accompanied by recommendations for deeper integration while remaining mindful of the limitations associated with AI. In essence, this research provides not only valuable insights into the transformative potential of AI in engineering education but also emphasizes the importance of a continuous refinement process to optimize the learning experience for students.

## Acknowledgements

We want to express my thanks to ChatGPT for its invaluable assistance in crafting this article, enhancing the clarity of the content. Furthermore, we are grateful for the support and resources extended by the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL), which greatly enriched the research process.

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## Individual Differences in the Most Frequent Content Word Usage as a New Type of Features in the Authorship Profiling Task

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**Abstract:** Authorship profiling is a task of revealing an author's characteristics (i.e., gender, age, personality traits, etc.) of a text based on the analysis of linguistic features. This task is not only a purely theoretical but also a practical one. Identifying the characteristics of text authors is a task of great importance in marketing, sociology, forensics, etc. The task of authorship profiling is often approached as that of text classification or clustering. Different types of features have been introduced – lexical, morphological, syntactical ones, etc. In recent years, deep learning (DL) architectures have frequently been applied, along with traditional machine learning methods. However, for AP DL approaches regularly underperform, left behind by classical machine learning approaches, which indicates the complexity of the task. Also, interpretability is the key demand for authorship profiling methods limiting the use of DL methods for AP in real life. There is a need in more sophisticated but interpretable features for AP. In this paper, we propose a completely new type of features for this task – semantic characteristics of the contexts of the most frequent content words extracted using word embedding model, semantic relation extraction method and hand-crafted set of variables reflecting different aspects of word meaning. We present the results of the experiments where we applied this type of features to the texts of two genres extracted from the RusIdiolect dataset for the detection of gender and Big-5 personality traits. We discuss the advantages of this type of features as well as their limitations and further directions of improving the proposed methodology.

**Keywords:** Authorship profiling, Semantics, Word embeddings, Personality detection.

**Citation:** Litvinova, T., Zavarzina, V., & Panicheva, P. (2024). Individual Differences in the Most Frequent Content Word Usage as a New Type of Features in the Authorship Profiling Task. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1901-1924), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Authorship profiling is a task of revealing the characteristics (i.e., gender, age, emotions, traits, etc.) of an author of a text based on the analysis of linguistic features. This task is not only a purely theoretical but also a practical one. Identifying the characteristics of text authors is a task of great importance in marketing, sociology, forensics, etc. Although this problem is not a new one, with the emergence of a great number of texts (mostly on social media) it has become one of the most important and widely studied issues in the area of text analysis. A series of hackathons has been devoted to this task in its different aspects (PAN events, <https://pan.webis.de>) (Potthast et al., 2019). Nowadays, this specific task has gained incredible importance due to the appearance of new risks introduced by generative AI and necessity of research into its ability to mimic an author's style and characteristics as well as an urgent need in the development of the models aimed at detecting texts generated by AI.

The task of authorship profiling is often approached as that of text classification or clustering. Different types of features have been introduced – lexical, morphological, syntactical ones, etc. Very naïve features such as word unigrams and bigrams and character 3-4-5-grams are the most popular in traditional machine learning approaches (HaCohen-Kerner, 2022). In recent years, deep learning (DL) methods have frequently been applied, along with traditional machine learning methods (HaCohen-Kerner, 2022). Controversial results have been reported regarding the superiority of this or that methodology for different tasks of text classification including authorship profiling, and lots of researchers highlight the superiority of the traditional machine learning approaches (López-Santillán et al., 2023).

Also, one of the drawbacks of deep learning methods are the difficulties with the interpretability of the results they provide. For some type of tasks this is not crucial, but it is not the case when we reconstruct the authors behind the texts where we are seeking to identify not only an author's characteristics but also which features of a text are associated with them (i.e., why did the model choose to classify this text as one written by a female?). This aspect of the authorship profiling task has often been overlooked in recent papers which have used deep learning methods making the results of the constructed models less applicable in the domains where the explanation is key.

In this paper, we discuss the results of the experiments aimed at profiling the authors of texts using a new type of features, namely the semantic characteristics of the contexts of the most frequent content words. It is well known that there are some differences in word meanings in an individual's mental lexicon. Based on this fact, we extracted the contexts of the most frequent content words from a corpus of texts in Russian RusIdiolect supplied with the author metadata (Litvinova, 2020), calculated the semantic characteristics of the contexts of the selected words over a set of features using Concept Mover's Distance (Stoltz & Taylor, 2019) and pretrained a language model word2vec. Namely, we were able to measure the most frequent content words's engagement with a set of the concepts using distributional representations of the meaning of words. While

constructing a set of the concepts, we relied on the features that had been shown to represent the core modalities of information processing in the neuroimaging literature (Binder et al., 2016). For example, we calculated the engagement of the contexts of the most frequent content words with sensory and motor experiences (e.g., shape and motion) and affective experiences (e.g., happy and sad) using the pretrained language model. Then, using these features, we built the classification models to predict the gender and psychological traits of the authors of texts.

In our paper, we will discuss which content words and semantic features of their contexts of usage contributed most to the results of the predictive models for gender and personality detection. We will also look at the advantages and some limitations of this new type of interpretable features for the authorship profiling task.

## Methods

### Material description

#### *Text data*

Collection of the datasets for personality detection is difficult since it requires recruiting participants, processing of the results of psychological questionnaires, etc. Moreover, not only personality test data but also user-generated texts should be analyzed, which is often not the case (especially when social media data is analyzed). However, recent studies (Zhou et al., 2020) have confirmed that small high-quality datasets perform better than large low-quality ones in the model training of personality testing tasks. With this in mind, we used the carefully constructed dataset RusIdiolect (Litvinova, 2020) which contains both personality test scores and texts written by the respondents in the course of the data collection process.

We analyzed texts of two different genres – picture description and letter to a friend. Examples of both text type are given below.

Picture Description: На картине изображены две женщины. На переднем плане изображена молодая женщина с короткой стрижкой. Грустными глазами она смотрит в сторону. Как будто провожая взглядом уходящего человека. За ней стоит старушка с белыми седыми волосами, покрытыми темным платком. Правую руку она держит подперев подбородок. Глаза как будто смотрят в другую сторону. С первого взгляда лицо женщины очень страшное, все покрыто складками и морщинами. То ли она осуждает эту женщину, то ли сочувствует ей. Понять это не возможно. А если присмотреться к старушке повнимательней, то начинаешь испытывать симпатию. Милая старушка слегка улыбается. Напряженный взгляд молодой женщины провожает человека, смотря ему вслед. Но лицо остается спокойным и без эмоций. Ей все равно уйдет этот человек или нет.

The painting shows two women. In the foreground there is a young woman with short hair. She looks

away, her eyes are sad. As if watching someone leaving. Behind her stands an old woman with white gray hair covered with a dark scarf. She holds her right hand under her chin. The eyes seem to be looking in the other direction. At first glance, the woman's face is very scary, everything is covered with folds and wrinkles. Either she condemns this woman, or she sympathizes with her. It is impossible to understand. And if you take a closer look at the old woman, you begin to feel sympathetic. The sweet old lady is faintly smiling. The young woman's intense gaze follows the man she is watching leaving. But her face remains calm and without emotion. She doesn't care whether this person leaves or not.

Letter to a friend: Привет, Данил! Как дела? Я надеюсь, что все хорошо. Последний месяц был очень напряженным и интересным. Я получил права на вождение автомобиля. Я целых полгода ходил на занятия. Это было утомительно, но это того стоило. Теперь я могу управлять авто. Это помогает делать много дел в один день. Побывать в сотнях новых мест, узнать много новых людей. Я понял смысл поговорки: «автомобиль не роскошь, а средство передвижения». И это правда! Учеба дается мне легко. Наша группа очень веселая и сильная. Мы сдаем завтра зачет по информатике. Через месяц у меня сессия. Немного волнуюсь, но да ладно! Расскажи о себе, мне все интересно. Жду ответа! Я знаю, что ты не любишь писать, но надеюсь на ответ. Может, позвонишь, мне будет приятно услышать твой голос. Мы давно не разговаривали по телефону. Твой номер не изменился? Или ты пользуешься только мобильным? Не пропадай. Пока!

Hi Danil! How are you? I hope everything is OK. The last month has been very busy and interesting. I have received my driving license. I have been training for six months. It has been tiring, but it has been worth it. Now I can drive a car. This helps to do a lot of things in a day. Visit hundreds of new places, meet a lot of new people. I have understood the meaning of the saying, "A car is not a luxury, but a means of transportation." And it is true! Studying comes easy to me. Our group is very cheerful and strong. We are taking a computer science test tomorrow. I am having an exam session in a month from now. I'm a little worried, but oh well! Tell me about yourself, I'm interested in everything. Can't wait to hear back from you! I know you don't like to write, but I hope to get your answer. Maybe you'll call me, I'll be glad to hear your voice. We haven't talked on the phone for a long time. Has your number changed? Or do you only use mobile? Stay in touch! Bye!

The mean text length is 152 (sd=55.6).

#### *Participant metadata*

RusIdiolect dataset contains the personality scores obtained with a set of questionnaires. For this particular study, we used scores on the *Big-5* test as widely used in personality computing research (Gregory et al., 2015). The theoretical foundation of the questionnaire is the five-factor personality model. Five fundamental factors that help to characterize the structure of a person's personality have been identified as a result of scientific research



by psychologists over a few decades. They include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience. This framework does not imply that personality can be described by merely five factors. Rather, these five dimensions represent personality at a high level of abstraction. Each of the five factors includes a large number of smaller specific characteristics.

Initially, the Big Five was created in English (Goldberg, 1981), but the authors emphasize the universality of this model for a lot of languages and cultures, which is confirmed by empirical research.

While creating RusIdiolect materials, the 5PFQ version of the “Big Five” was used which was translated and adapted in 1995-1999 to domestic conditions of the social environment by psychologists of Kurgan State University (Hromov, 2000) as the only one available at the first stage of the experiment (2006). This version was subsequently used to compare the results.

A high level of extraversion in the interpretation of this test is associated with activity, dominance, sociability, and the search for new experiences; a low level is associated with passivity, subordination, isolation, and avoidance of impressions and attention. Extraversion in this version of the test carries a more significant connotation of dominance than in the other adaptations.

According to the second factor, agreeableness contrasts warmth, cooperation, trustfulness, understanding, respect for others, on the one hand, and indifference, suspicion, misunderstanding, self-respect. There is a more pronounced collectivist attitude in the 5PFQ construct where a greater emphasis is placed not on the test taker, as such but rather on their actions in relation to group members.

The third factor includes components such as accuracy, perseverance, responsibility, self-control, forethought, which are contrasted with sloppiness, irresponsibility, impulsiveness, carelessness, and lack of persistence. High scores on the fourth factor are associated with such characteristics as anxiety, depression, self-criticism, and emotional lability; low scores are associated with carefree, relaxed, emotional comfort, self-sufficiency, and emotional stability.

High scores on the fifth factor are associated with curiosity, daydreaming, artistry, sensitivity, and plasticity; low scores are associated with conservatism, realism, lack of artistry, insensitivity, and rigidity.

The minimum number of points scored for any main factor is 15, the maximum number is 75. Conventionally, the points can be divided into high (51-75 points), average (41-50 points) and low (15-40 points). In accordance with this, we initially divided the respondents into 3 classes. However, in total for each factor, the number of respondents with low and average ratings was lower than or approximately equal to that of the respondents with high ratings. Therefore in order to make our dataset more balanced, which allows for higher accuracy, we combined individuals with low and average scores into one LowMedium group. The composition of the dataset is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant metadata

Variables/Register		Picture description	Letter to a friend
Gender	Male	95	75
	Female	166	128
Extraversion	LowMedium	108	86
	High	153	117
Agreeableness	LowMedium	101	69
	High	160	134
Conscientiousness	LowMedium	89	66
	High	172	137
Neuroticism	LowMedium	132	106
	High	129	97
Openness	LowMedium	48	35
	High	213	168
Total		<b>261</b>	<b>203</b>

### Feature construction

At the first stage of analysis, texts were lowcased and lemmatized using udpipe package R. We also used special token for emoji and left it for further analysis. After that, we selected the most frequent content words whose contexts to be analyzed further. We set the minimal document frequency (for each register) where such word occurs to 50 (i.e. in no less than in 20 % of the text).

The resulting list of selected words for picture description: всё\_PRON “all”, мочь\_VERB “can”, дочь\_NOUN “daughter”, лицо\_NOUN “face”, девушка\_NOUN “girl”, бабушка\_NOUN “granny”, парень\_NOUN “guy”, человек\_NOUN “human”, жизнь\_NOUN “life”, мужчина\_NOUN “man”, я\_PRON “me”, мать\_NOUN “mother”, свой\_DET “own”, возможно\_ADV “possible”, смотреть\_VERB “see”, сторона\_NOUN “side”, взгляд\_NOUN “sight”, думать\_VERB “think”, время\_NOUN “time”, очень\_ADV “very”, хотеть\_VERB “want”, мы\_PRON “we”, весь\_DET “whole”, женщина\_NOUN “woman”, молодой\_ADJ “young”.

Resulting list of selected words for letter to a friend: человек\_NOUN “man”, я\_PRON “me”, свой\_DET “own”, очень\_ADV “very”, думать\_VERB “think”, жизнь\_NOUN “life”, весь\_DET “whole”, время\_NOUN “time”, хотеть\_VERB “want”, всё\_PRON “all”, новый\_ADJ “new”, уже\_ADV “already”, мой\_DET “my”, любить\_VERB “love”, надеяться\_VERB “hope”, давно\_ADV “longago”, много\_ADV “many”, писать\_VERB “write”, 😊 “emoji”, ждать\_VERB “wait”, your “твой\_DET”, друг\_NOUN “friend”, последний\_ADJ “last”, видется\_VERB “see”, учеба\_NOUN “study”, хорошо\_ADV “nice”, скоро\_ADV

“soon”, день\_NOUN “day”, хотеться\_VERB “want2”, учиться\_VERB “learn”, соскучиться\_VERB “miss1”, скучать\_VERB “miss2”, работа\_NOUN “job”)

As a unit of our analysis, we used the contexts of the selected word. We experimented with different window sizes but for the final experiments  $n=3$  (i.e., 3 words before and after key word) were chosen taking into account the length of the documents.

To construct our feature set, we used methods for semantic relation extraction from the texts using word embeddings. Semantic relations are modeled as vector translations in a word embedding space (Stoltz et al., 2024).

Namely, we used text2map function CMDist() (Stoltz & Taylor, 2019) which document-term matrix (DTM) as input, a matrix of word embedding vectors, and concept words or concept vectors. The function uses word counts from the DTM and word similarities from the cosine similarity of their respective word vectors in a word embedding model. The "cost" of transporting all the words in a document to a single vector or a few vectors (denoting a concept of interest) is the measure of engagement, with higher costs indicating less engagement. For intuitiveness the output of CMDist() is inverted so that the higher numbers will indicate more engagement with a concept of interest.

It is possible not only to specify single words from the word embeddings, but also a list of them. In this case the function (get\_centroid) takes a vector extracted from the embedding space in the form of a centroid (which averages the vectors of several words). It is possible to use the offset of several juxtaposing words using a function get\_direction() to extract the engagement of a text with this or that pole of the scale. A widely used example is the gender spectrum, from more feminine to more masculine. Therefore, this method has been used extensively to measure the extent target terms are biased toward man or woman. The words need not be in the DTM, but they must be in the word.

As was shown in a number of papers, different types of psycholinguistic relations could be extracted from word embeddings, e.g., abstractness, sentiment, etc. (see Stoltz et al., 2024). Therefore, we might construct, using existing psycholinguistic databases, a concept consisting of words with a high/low level of abstractness, sentiment, etc. and extract the level of abstractness of the texts.

A different set of concept words was tested, and their particular content was dependent on the task the researcher was solving (more on that: Litvinova & Panicheva, 2024). We propose a novel approach for the construction of these feature set. As our task is to perform complex analysis of the contexts, we set the task to describe them over the comprehensive set of features however theoretically motivated. To do this, we relied on the data from neurobiology about the processing of different type of words depending of their semantics. Specifically, we used the data from Binder et al. (2016) where a brain-based semantics consisting of conceptual primitives defined in terms of the modalities of neural information processing proposed.

This study aimed at developing a representation that captured the aspects of the experience that are central in the acquisition of concepts. The authors organized human experience in 13 different domains - each one corresponding to a variable number of features for which some specialized neural processor has been identified and described in the neuroscientific literature (Binder et al. 2016). In this work, an example of the words rated high on these features was proposed. We used both translations of these words to construct our dimensions and also the data from psycholinguistic databases. E.g., for constructing the dimensions which are related to the visual modality we used the database with a human rating of different words for this modality from database created by Miklashevsky (Miklashevsky, 2018), Russian version of LIWC thesaurus (Pennebaker et al., 2015) was used (Panicheva & Litvinova, 2020), etc.

We also preliminary constructed the list of basic semantic oppositions. They were constructed based on the word meaning components presented in Binder et al. 2016, lists of semantic differentials presented in literature (see Litvinova & Panicheva 2024 for more on this) as well as using a dictionary of Russian antonyms aligned with the set of the most frequent Russian words.

The resulting feature set is presented on github (<https://github.com/Litvinova1984/ICRES2024> ).

We used a pretrained model ruwikiruscorpora\_upos\_cbow\_300\_10\_2021 which was trained on Wikipedia and NCR in late 2021.

DTM on the contexts of the selected words was constructed using quanteda package. Thus, for each contexts of the selected words, 46 features were extracted. Resulting matrix for PIC dataset was 261x1159, for LETTER dataset – 203x1527.

#### *Exploratory analysis and classification approach techniques*

As our major goal is not only to obtain high quality classification/regression models, but also to search for the most significant features, taking into account the situation when the number of features is greater than that of the samples, as well as possible multicollinearity of the features (which is typical for linguistic features), we used a set of multivariate methods analysis implemented in the mixomics library and specifically designed for such a data set.

We performed PCA for exploratory analysis using both mixomics and Factominer packages and functions of this package allowing us to establish connections between the selected combined features (components) and the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of respondents (which, according to the terminology adopted by those who designed the package, are called additional qualitative (quantitative) variables, i.e., they serve to interpret the results, but are not directly used in the analysis itself). Supplementary variables have no influence on the principal components of the analysis. They are going to help to interpret the dimensions of variability. We can add two different kinds of variables: continuous ones and categorical ones. To facilitate interpretation, we used functions dimdesc and catdes of **Factominer**.

The *dimdesc()* function calculates the correlation coefficient between a variable and a dimension and performs a significance test. These tables give the correlation coefficient and the p-value of the variables which are significantly correlated to the principal dimensions. Both active and supplementary variables whose p-value is smaller than 0.05 appear.

For both text types, as supplementary continuous variables, we would like to add the variables linked to the scores on 5 personality traits from Big 5 and age. As supplementary categorical variable, we used gender.

For the classification (in the case of a binary variable - the gender of the author of the text), we used the algorithm Partial Least Squares – Discriminant Analysis (PLS-DA) which operates efficiently over large dataframes and is not negatively influenced by collinearity.

While evaluating the classification performance of (s)PLS-DA models, repeated cross-validation is used. We used 5-fold cross-validation with 50 repeats for each model as recommended by the package developers.

We used a balanced error rate (BER) as a measure for the model efficiency. All the tasks (both gender and personality traits detection) were approached as a binary classification problem for the purpose of the comparison with SOTA approaches in other languages and with the aim of constructing more balanced datasets.

## Results and Discussion

### PIC dataset

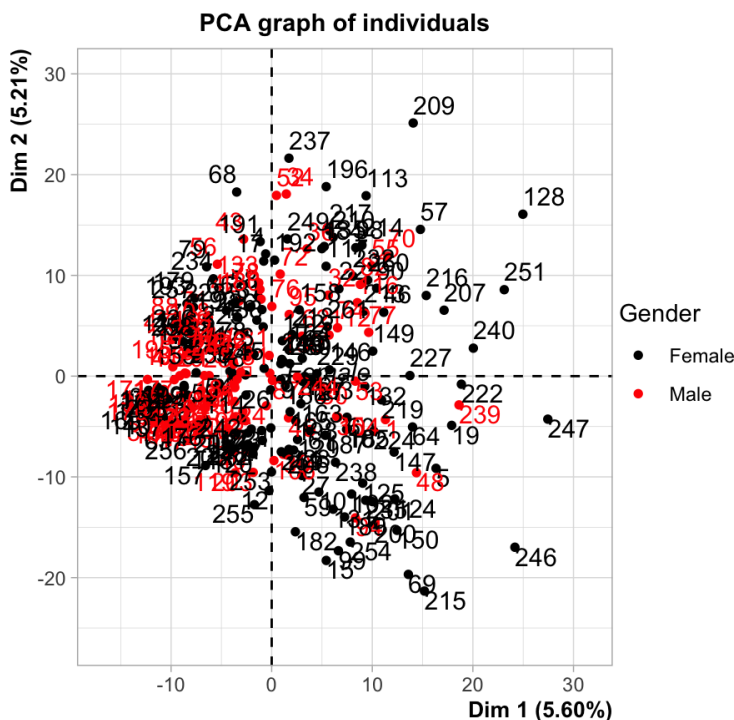


Fig. 1. PCA on PIC dataset

PCA was performed to summarize the data with a multivariate approach and to provide a visual representation of the distances between the texts. Preliminary analysis with elbow method and showed that 5 components were optimal and was used for further experiments. One-way ANOVA models were constructed including the Principal Components as the response variables and gender and personality traits as the explanatory variable; coefficients of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) and related p-values were calculated as well as the categories coefficient estimates, tested for significant differences from zero ( $\alpha = .005$ ). Fig. 1 shows the tendency of division of the texts by male and female authors over Dim. 1, which is proved by statistical test (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.0543, p=0.0001; estimates for gender: Female =1.976211, p= 0.0001, Male = -1.976211, p= 0.0001).

The following features were positively correlated (0.5 and higher, p<0.000000001) with Dim 1: motherSocialSelf, motherSocialLIWC, motherGustNorms, motherSpatialProx, motherVisLIWC, motherAudLIWC, motherSomatNociception, motherCausal, motherVisBody, daughterSocialSelf, daughterSocialLIWC, daughterSpatialProx, daughterSomatNociception (according to estimate, this values are higher in female texts). Negative correlations are registered for motherEmoAngry, motherGustTaste, motherSocialGender, motherEmoSentiment, motherDrive, motherMotorPractice, motherEmoDisgust, daughterSocialGender, daughterEmoAngry, daughterMotorPractice, motherAttentionArousal, motherAudIntens, daughterGustTaste, motherCognitionImage, motherEmoHappy, canSomatTexture (these features have higher levels in texts which are located to the left on Dim 1, i.e. most texts by male and some female texts).

*Gender classification*

For the classification, initially we performed PLS-DA with 10 PCs. For each component, repeated cross-validation (10 ×5-fold CV) is used to evaluate the PLS-DA classification performance (overall and balanced error rate BER), for each type of a prediction distance; max.dist, centroids.dist and mahalanobis.dist). The smallest error rate (both overall and balanced) was obtained for centroids.dist (0.39) and comp=3. They were used for the final model.

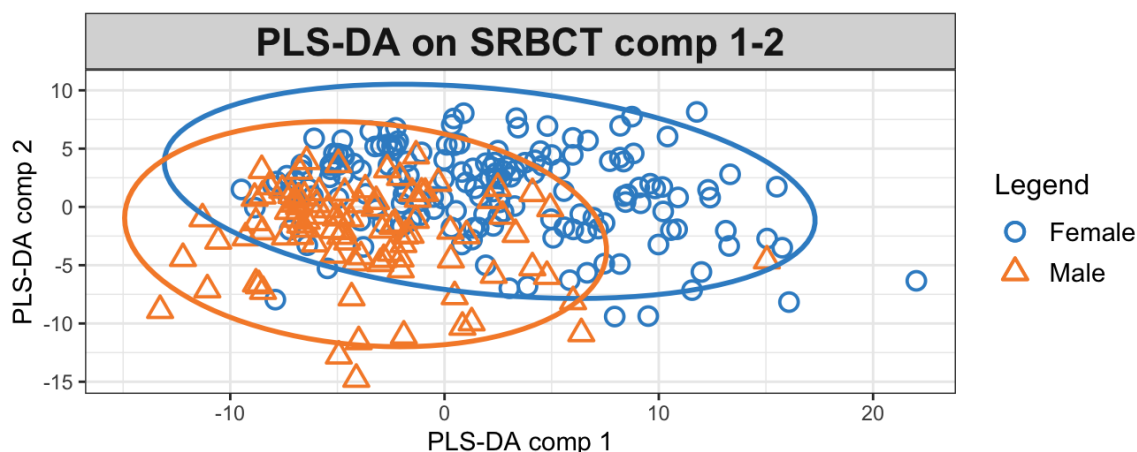


Fig. 2. Visualization of PLS-DA on PIC dataset

Then we constructed a sparse model with the aim to reduce the feature size in mind . We set `list.keepX <- seq(50, 200, 10)`. We estimate the classification error rate with respect to the number of the selected variables in the model with the function `tune.splsda()`. The tuning is being performed on one component at a time inside the function and the optimal number of variables to select is automatically retrieved after each component run.

Previously, we determined the number of components to be `ncomp = 3` with PLS-DA. Here we set `ncomp = 4` to further assess if this was the case for a sparse model, and use 5-fold cross validation repeated 10 times. We also choose the centroid prediction distance. A model with `comp = 1` and 200 variables were automatically selected with `$BER = 0.401`. It is interesting that the female authors were detected at a lower level than those by males (0.512 and 0.273, respectively) which is supported by the visualization (the male texts are more homogeneous) (see Fig. 2).

In the plot in Fig. 3, the loading weights of each selected variable on each component are represented. The colours indicate the group in which the expression of the selected features is maximal based on the mean value.

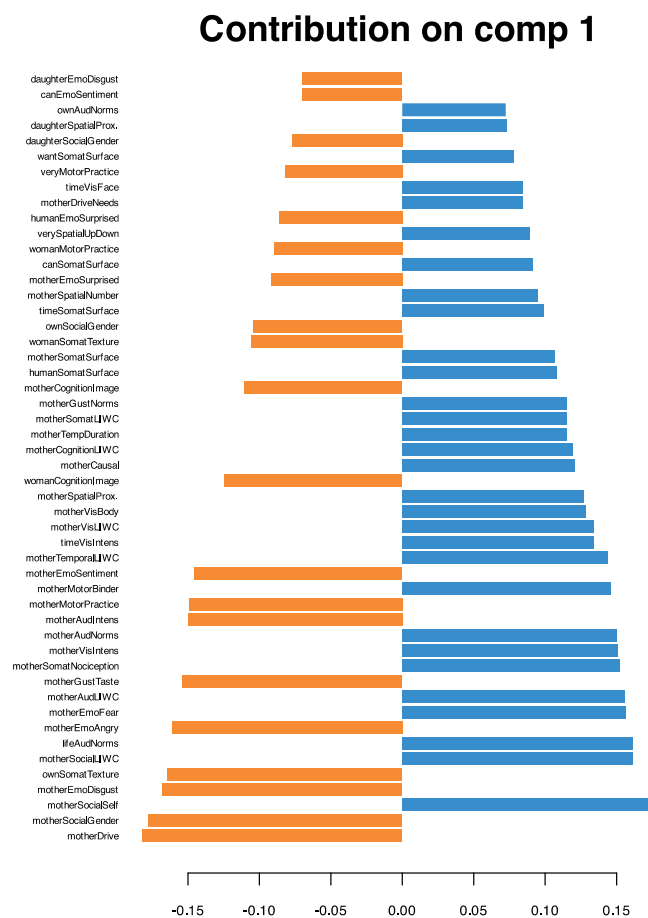


Fig. 3. Feature importance for Gender, PIC dataset  
(blue lines indicate the female texts, orange lines indicate the male texts)



We can see that the most important features related to the differences in the meaning of words mother, own, life, time, can, daughter.

*Big 5 classification*

At the first stage of the analysis, we calculated the correlations ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the Big 5 scores and features. The extraversion scores are correlated with Openness at a rather high level (0.58), Agreeableness (0.36) and Conscientiousness (0.25). Among linguistic features different components of the meaning of word me are positively correlated with the scores on extraversion (meDriveNeeds, meCausal, meSocialLIWC, meTemporalLIWC, meCognitionLIWC, meSomatNociception, meVisBody, meSocialSelf, meAudLIWC, meEmoFear), side (sideGustNorms, sideSpatialNumber, sideSocialSelf, sideSomatProprioception, sideTemporalLIWC, sideEmoPleasant, sideCausal, sideSpatialProx, sideSomatLIWC, sideVisColor, sideCognitionLIWC), very (veryOlfacNorms, veryVisColor), as well as life (lifeEmoSentiment), while negative correlations were observed for life features lifeVisFace, lifeEmoPleasant, lifeEmoBenefit, lifeEmoHappy, side features sideDrive, sideAttentionArousal, sideEmoAngry, sideGustTaste, me meCognitionImage, meEmoAngry, very veryAudNorms.

For all the models related to psychological traits, we set  $ncomp=10$ , then tuned the models using the procedure recommended in mixOmics tutorial.

The lowest BER for extraversion = 0,35 was obtained with max.dist and  $comp=1$  (Fig. 4).

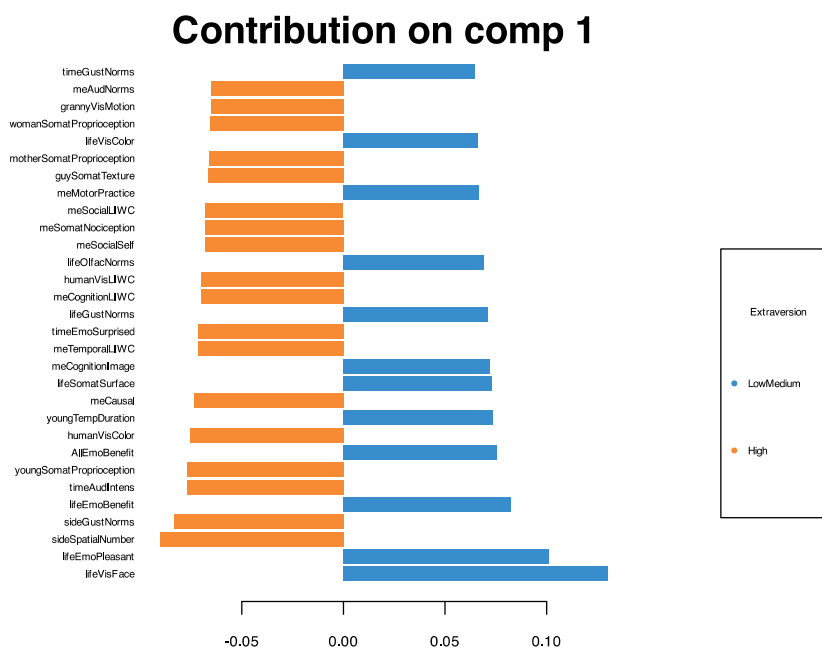


Fig. 4. Feature importance for Extraversion, PIC dataset

Agreeableness correlated positively with Openness (0.45), Conscientiousness (0.41), Extraversion (0.36). Linguistic features positively correlated with Agreeableness are the characteristics of mother (motherSomatNociception, motherTemporalLIWC, motherEmoFear, motherAudLIWC, motherCausal, motherSocialLIWC (negatively with motherMotorPractice, motherDrive, motherEmoAngry, motherEmoSurprised, motherEmoBenefit), can (canEmoFear, canSocialLIWC, canSocialSelf, canGustNorms) (negatively – canEmoAngry, canDrive, canEmoSentiment, canAttentionArousal), as well as different characteristics of want (VisSize, wantVisIntens, wantDriveNeeds, negatively – wantMotorPractice), *human* (EmoHappy), *own* (ownSpatialUpDown, ownVisIntens, negatively - ownMotorPractice), *whole* (wholeAttentionArousal; negatively – wholeEmoBenefit, wholeCausal), granny (grannyDriveNeeds), face (faceAudNorms), guy (guyVisMotion), life (lifeTempDuration) (negatively – lifeSomatNorms).

As for Agreeableness, the minimum BER using centroid.dist and mahalanobis.dist was 0,36. The best results are obtained with ncomp=2 (Fig. 5).

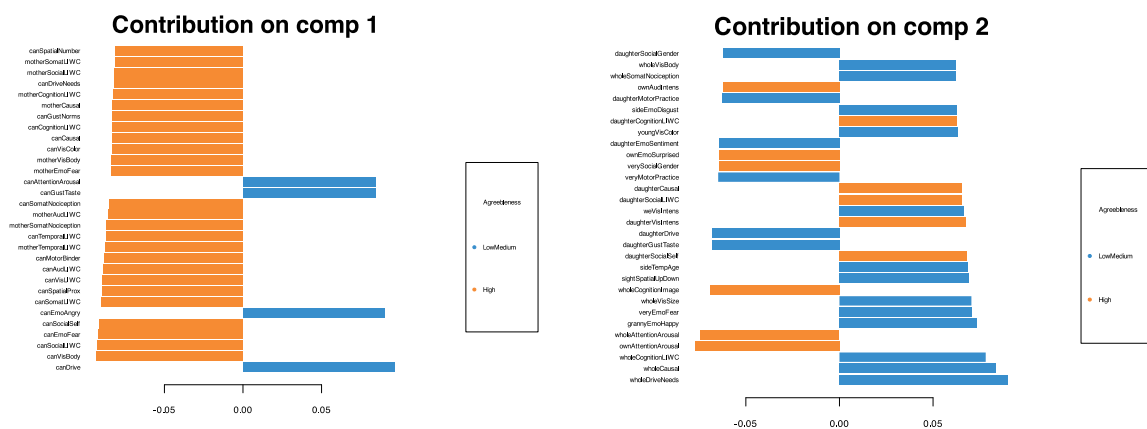


Fig. 5. Feature importance for Agreeableness, PIC dataset

Conscientiousness correlated positively with Agreeableness (0.41), Extraversion (0.25), Openness (0.23). Positive correlations are revealed for *time* timeEmoBenefit, timeEmoPleasant, timeSocialSelf, timeVisLIWC (negatively – timeEmoAngry, timeEmoDisgust, timeDrive), *own* ownVisIntens, ownEmoPleasant, ownSomatSurface (negatively - ownSomatNorms, ownEmoSentiment), *young* youngVisFace, youngVisIntens, youngVisNorms (negatively – youngEmoDisgust, youngCognitionAbstract), *human* humanVisFace, humanSomatSurface, *man* manVisSize, manSomatProprioception, manCognitionLIWC, manSocialSelf, manDriveNeeds, manEmoPleasant (negatively – manMotorPractice, manEmoAngry, manEmoSentiment). The error rate was high for Conscientiousness was 0.4 with ncomp=5 (Fig. 6).

Neuroticism positively correlated with Openness (0.24) and humanTempDuration (negatively – humanVisColor, humanVisNorms, humanEmoSurprised), weEmoSentiment, weEmoDisgust, weTempDuration (negatively – weVisColor, weEmoPleasant, weEmoHappy, weEmoBenefit), motherVisSize,

womanEmoSentiment, womanEmoAngry, womanEmoDisgust (negatively – womanSocialSelf, womanDriveNeeds, womanCognitionLIWC, womanVisNorms), wholeEmoHappy, AllVisIntens, AllSpatialUpDown, AllVisFace (negatively – AllEmoSentiment), daughterDriveNeeds, daughterCognitionLIWC, lifeSomatSurface, lifeGustNorms, lifeEmoPleasant.

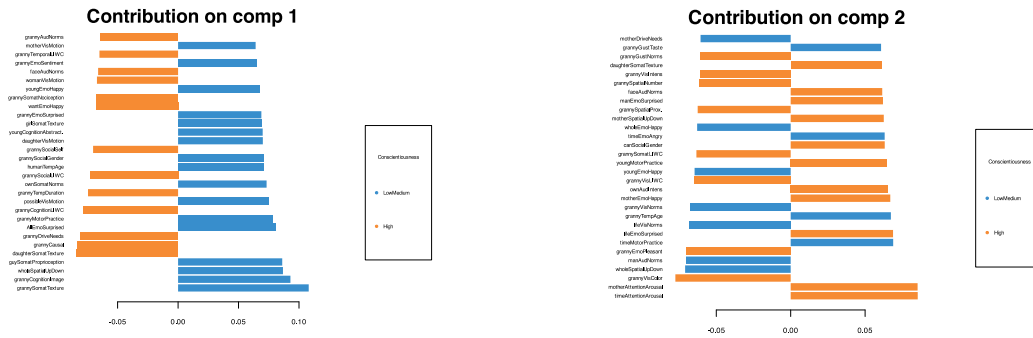


Fig. 6. Feature importance for Conscientiousness, PIC dataset

The lowest BER for Neuroticism 0.35 was obtained with mahalanobis.dist and 4 components. Loadings on PCs are presented in Fig. 7.

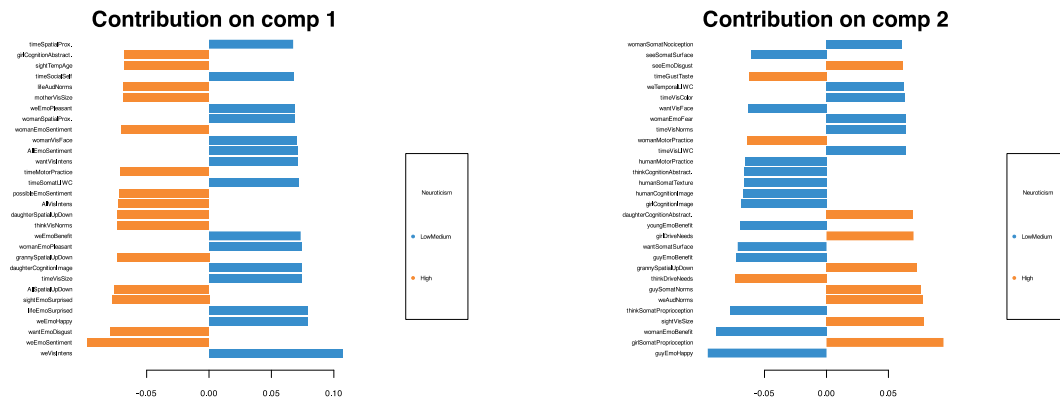


Fig. 7. Feature importance for Neuroticism, PIC dataset

Openness correlated with Extraversion (0.58), Agreeableness (0.45), Neuroticism (0.24), Conscientiousness (0.23). Positive correlations were revealed with humanCognitionAbstract, humanTempDuration, humanEmoHappy, youngCognitionLIWC, youngEmoFear, youngCausal, youngAudLIWC, youngSocialLIWC (negatively – youngEmoAngry, youngMotorPractice), meSocialLIWC, meSocialSelf, meSomatProprioception, (negatively – meDrive, meSocialGender), verySomatNorms, verySpatialNumber, veryVisNorms, veryVisColor, ownTemporalLIWC, negatively – wantEmoBenefit.

Openness was the hardest one for the discrimination with a minimal overall ER=0.20 but BER 0.48 (high

openness is detected much better, with an individual ER per class 0.12) (Fig. 8).

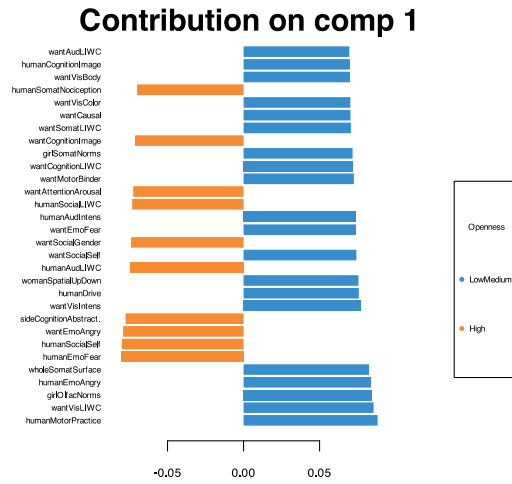


Fig. 8. Feature importance for Openness, PIC dataset

*Letter dataset*

*Exploratory analysis*

An exploratory analysis via PCA on letter dataset, after a preliminary check, was performed with 4 components (Fig. 9).

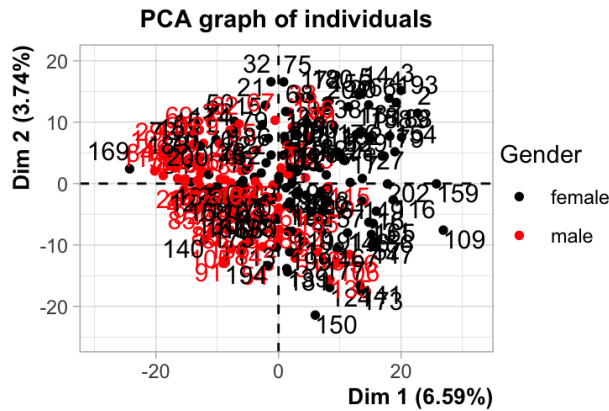


Fig. 9. PCA on Letter dataset

The first dimension is related to the factor “Gender” ( $R^2 = 0.2026373$ ,  $p < 0.00000001$ ), the same is true for Dim 2 ( $R^2 = 0.0244$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ). Among the features with the highest (among 0.5,  $p < 0.000001$ ) positive correlations with Dim 1 are different characteristics of the word very from RuLIWC (very\_TemporalLIWC, very\_EmoFear, very\_SocialSelf, very\_SocialLIWC, very\_SomatNociception, very\_AudLIWC), whole (VisLIWC, SomatLIWC, SomatNociception, whole\_AudLIWC, whole\_VisBody), love (love\_VisColor, love\_MotorBinder, love\_VisLIWC).



very\_EmoPleasant, very\_EmoBenefit, very\_SocialSelf, very\_AudLIWC, negatively – with very\_GustTaste, very\_Drive, very\_EmoSentiment, very\_EmoDisgust). The characteristics of these words as well as life, think, learn, study, see contribute most to the classification model (Fig. 11).

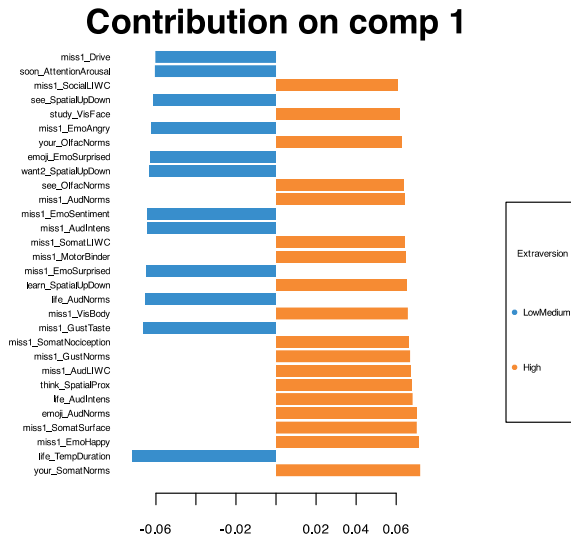


Fig. 11. Feature importance for Extraversion (Letter dataset)

The lowest BER for the agreeableness trait was 0.31 (ncomp=2). The most important words for these features (both in terms of correlation and classification) are already (EmoBenefit, DriveNeeds, MotorBinder), job (EmoHappy), life (VisColor), friend, love, think, see (Fig. 12).

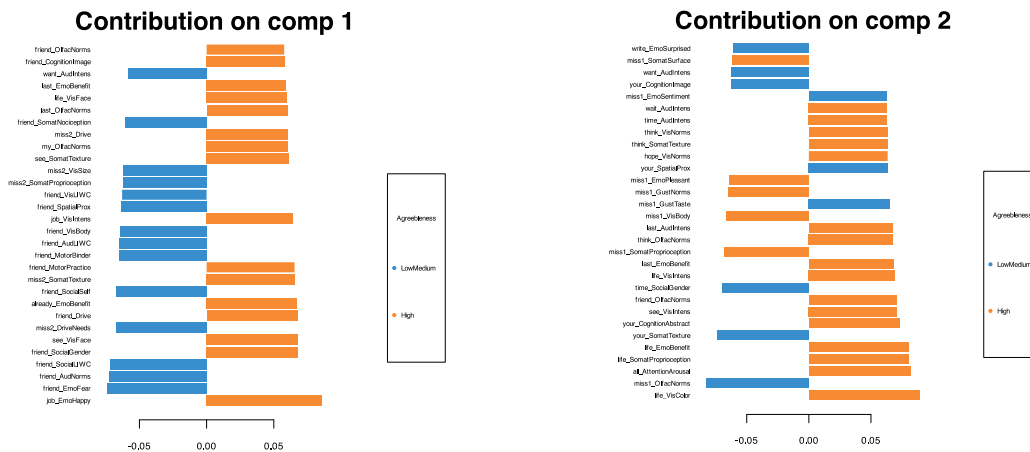


Fig. 12. Feature importance for Agreeableness (Letter dataset)

Conscientiousness is hard to predict with the overall BER = 0.41 (ncomp=3). Different words contribute to this trait detection with no clear pattern (friend, already, hope, think, man, life), with friend\_VisMotion, life\_VisMotion, already\_AttentionArousal, myEMoHappy, friend\_MotorPractice among characteristics of high

Conscientiousness, high values of manTemporalLIWC, manCognitionLIWC, lifeTempduration characterize low Conscientiousness (Fig. 13).

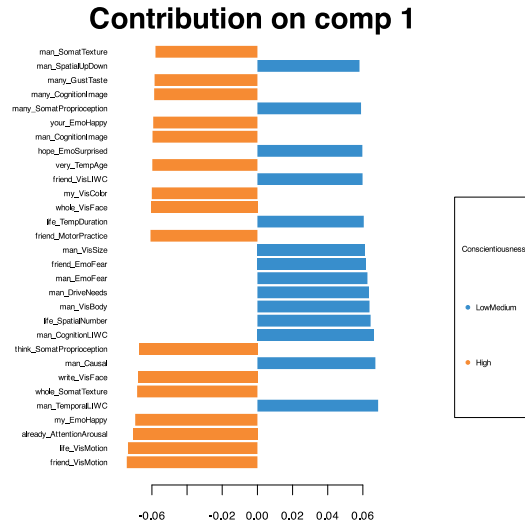


Fig. 13. Feature importance for Conscientiousness (Letter dataset)

The lowest BER for Neuroticism was 0.36 and obtained with ncomp=1. Among the features with the highest correlation with this feature are the semantic features of whole (whole\_VisLIWC, whole\_MotorBinder, whole\_VisBody, etc.), longago, see, miss1, day. This feature contributes to the classification, with a high level of day\_VisMotion, day\_MotorPractice, see\_EmoSentiment indicates low to medium levels, longago\_TempDuration, see\_EmoPleasant, see\_GustNorms – high levels (Fig. 14).

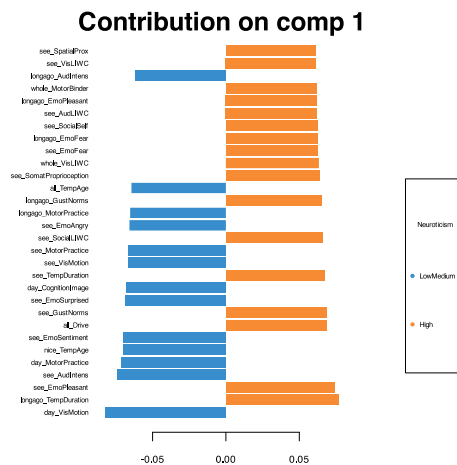


Fig. 14. Feature importance for Neuroticism (Letter dataset)

The lowest BER for openness = 0.45 with ncomp=2, overall ER=0.21. All models detected a high level with a low ER (up to 0.13). Among features with the highest positive correlation with Openness are the features of



write (OlfacNorms, VisNorms, CognitionImage), emoji (GustNorms, SomatSurface, SomatNociception – positively, EmoSentiment, EmoSurprised, VisMotion - negatively), very, nice, think, time, love. These features contribute to the classification (especially *write*) (Fig. 15).

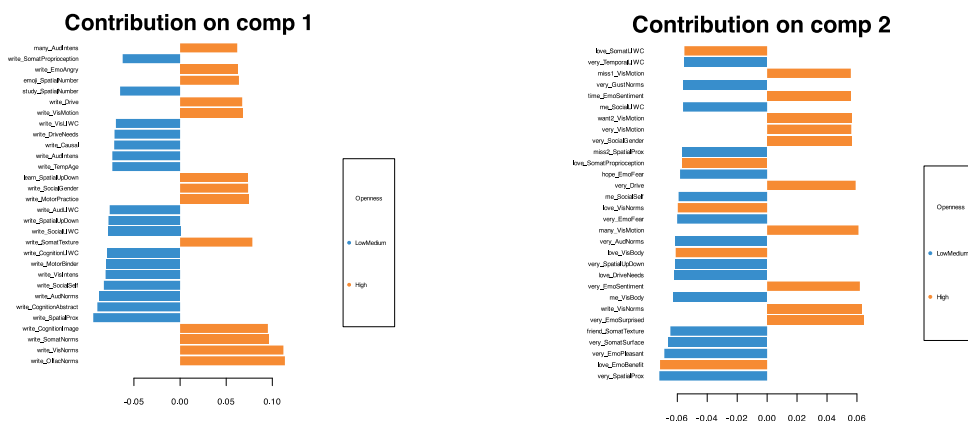


Fig. 15. Feature importance for Conscientiousness (Letter dataset)

The metrics of the constructed models (in terms of weighted accuracy, 1 - BER) are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Accuracies of the classification models

Genre	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness	AVR	Gender
PICTURE	0.65	0.64	0.6	0.65	0.52	0,612	0.61
LETTER	0.65	0.69	0.59	0.64	0.55	0.624	0.75

## Discussion

### Gender

A great deal of research is devoted to inferring an author’s characteristics from a text. Gender is the most popular factor which has been exhaustively studied in authorship profiling. However, as one of the latest reviews shows (HaCohen-Kerner, 2022), the gender accuracy results vary from 52% to 91% (most are less than 85%). The author of the above-mentioned finds these results “quite surprising” and expects “to see higher results when it comes to seemingly relatively simple types of classification especially by gender (only 2 categories) when a large number of teams have competed over the years”.

We claim that, in text-based gender detection, there is a strong need to take into account genre characteristics, i.e., such an important factor as the need for construction of the addressee and therefore necessity to play a corresponding gender role which dramatically affects the accuracies of the model and could potentially explain the diversity of the obtained predictive model metrics.

In recent years, DL methods have become widely used for gender classification tasks, however, contradictory results were obtained regarding their superiority over the classical ML methods (e.g.; SVM, LR, and RF) (Lopez-Santillan et., 2023, HaCohen-Kerner, 2022). The current SOTA for Russian informal texts (Sboev et. al., 2020) was obtained with such features as morphological binary vectors, FastText vectors, textual dependency tree structure fed to graph convolution network and LSTM resulting in f1-score 84%. A drawback of such models is the difficulty in assessing the features. For the other models obtained on the same data Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU, 1 Hidden Layer) was the most efficient algorithm, with an accuracy of 0.74+/-0.05 using the imp\_quarter feature selection technique.

The most popular features which are used as input for traditional machine learning algorithms, are word unigrams and bigrams and character 3–4-5 grams and number of words from predefined dictionaries (LIWC is the most popular one). However, in most cases, the authors did not explain why the combinations of these features were the most successful for the classification tasks under discussion. In case of using the LIWC-like features, the efficiency of the models is heavily dependent on the presence of such a word in text and on text length. Our approach, being highly interpretable, allowed us to obtain good results for the texts which imply the construction of the addressee and playing a gender role and does not have such drawbacks as those described above.

### *Personality traits*

Text-based personality traits prediction is also a popular direction of research, however, the list of the datasets for this task is limited due to the difficulties in obtaining the appropriate metadata. One of the closest to ours is PAN2015 dataset (Rangel et al., 2015) as having the shortest texts from 294 users Twitter tweets annotated with their Big Five scores. The best results (from 0.646 for consciousness to 0.713 for neuroticism) for this dataset was obtained by Yangfu et al. (2022) who also tackled this problem as a binary classification one and constructed a lexical psycholinguistic knowledge-guided graph of a neural model. They learn personality-aware word embedding that encodes psycholinguistic information in the continuous representations of words.

The authors claim the extraversion and neuroticism can be effectively extracted from a text, because people with neuroticism and extraversion traits often use modal particles and adjectives, while agreeableness personality trait in the text information is not obvious. As they constructed the lexicon to enrich the features with information on a sentiment, their approach is highly dependent on the overall text sentiment level and its content as they are focusing on particular words, on the one hand, and the connection of the predicted personality trait to emotions. However, their results are similar to ours in terms of the established connection of particular words and personality traits, but our approach is more sophisticated as we focus not only on the words themselves but also on their individual meanings. Our approach is not connected to sentiment detection as we analyze word meanings over the whole set of features.

For Russian, research in text-based Big-5 personality prediction is scarce. For example, Stankevich et al. (2018) predicted Big 5 traits (as 3-class problem) from a dataset of 165 VKontakte profiles. However, due to the sparseness of user-generated texts in their dataset, they used only very basic textual features (average numbers of words and sentences, use of punctuation and uppercase). Their reported F1 scores range from 36% for Conscientiousness to 53% for Agreeableness.

Similarly, Ignatiev et al. (2019) used both SVM and Random Forest approaches for a two-way classification of Big 5 traits from the dataset of 1,020 VKontakte profiles. They used lexical features, an aggression lexicon, user profile information, repost data, and reported F1 scores ranging from 61.75% on Openness to Experience to 73.75% on Extroversion. These approaches, however, are not comparable to ours since, first, their dataset consists of mostly non-user generated content, secondly, they also use non-linguistic features.

One of the largest dataset in Russian was gathered by Hull et al. (2021). It consists of 149K VKontakte posts from 288 consenting participants, with a total of 3.8M word tokens. They used BERT architecture as well as a traditional classifier with a traditional set of features (emoji, the most frequent words and char n-grams, function word to token ratios; NRC emotional lexicon tokens; frequency of morphological features, frequencies of top 100 (RNC) unigrams, etc.) and found out the superiority of the latter.

One trait where the advantage of the set of formal characteristics they used is particularly large is the Agreeableness trait, which might be explained by the usefulness of emoji, emoticons, and/or emotional words for these trait Agreeableness which pretrained model may be ignoring since such “words” may not have appeared in its original training data content. However, the problem of a great amount of non-user generated content which is typical for VKontakte is not discussed in either of the reviewed works.

## Conclusions

Despite a huge amount of research, the task of inferring an author’s attributes from a written text remains challenging. This is especially true for text-based personality trait detection. Recent works have applied deep learning techniques to this type of tasks, however, with limited success. A lot of works have reported the superiority of traditional algorithm over DL. The difficulties in interpretability also hinder the use of DL for AP tasks. However, traditional approaches usually involve using very basic, linguistically naïve features which adds little to our understanding of individual differences in language usage. Moreover, they are highly dependent on the context (the most frequent n-grams, words and so on).

In this paper, we propose a new approach for AP feature construction which is theoretically motivated and related to the analysis of individual word meanings which is assess through the analysis of the contexts of the most frequent (mostly) content words of the corpus. Using the methods of semantic relation extraction and a neurobiologically motivated set of word meanings, we constructed a set of features which describes the

contextual meaning of words. Using this methodology, we were able to achieve the accuracies of the models which are close to SOTA despite the fact that our dataset is quite small both in terms of the text length and the number of texts.

However, our aim was not predicting but gaining the interpretable features. Our approach could be applied to a text of any length and does not depend on the presence in the texts themselves of the words which are used to extract the semantic features.

Regarding the constraints and limitations of our approach, we conducted the experiments using only texts which were created in experimental settings. Therefore, experiments on the other datasets containing texts of different types will help to further improve the methodology. We also tested only one language model trained on the general corpus. Testing of the other types of language models is the next step of our exploratory study.

The Big Five personality traits are not independent, which is proved in our correlation analysis. In this study, we only predict each personality trait individually. In the future, we will design experiments for joint personality detection tasks.

Using another coding scheme for Big 5 scores as well as working with different questionnaires will also help to increase the validity of the proposed methodology. We also have plans to refine some categories with the appearance of new psycholinguistic databases as well as to test different context window sizes depending on the task at hand and text length. As we used only one classifier, an obvious direction of future research is testing the? other algorithms.

Despite a rather exploratory nature of the present study, we believe that using a novel feature set which describes the characteristics of individual word meanings will contribute to theoretically-driven authorship profiling. This work is only the first step in this direction. Future studies will be related to the collection of the databases of the typical (average) characteristics of the meaning of the most frequent content words (i.e.. key words of the culture) using the proposed methodology for different discourses with a known genre and an author's characteristics and incorporating this information into the predictive models.

## Acknowledgements

This study is supported by the grant of Russian Science Foundation no: 21-78-10148.

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## The Significance Influence of Lecturer Competence in Delivering Project Base Learning and Citizenship Education on The Formation of Pancasila Student Profile Through Blended Learning

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**Abstract:** On the one hand, the rapid progress of science and technology today means that learning can no longer be delivered using just one learning model. Blended learning is a necessity to be implemented in the learning system. On the other hand, each country has criteria for the profile of graduates to be achieved in education, where in the Indonesian context the Pancasila student profile is what is expected. Therefore, with this context, this research aims to show how significant the influence of lecturer competence in delivering project-based learning and Citizenship Education is on the formation of Pancasila student profiles through blended learning. This research was designed using quantitative methods by distributing questionnaires to Bina Nusantara University students in Jakarta who had taken Citizenship Education courses. From the results of data processing, it is known that lecturer competence in delivering project-based learning and Citizenship Education has a very significant influence on the formation of Pancasila student profiles. So, it can be concluded that the more competent the lecturer is in delivering project-based learning in Citizenship Education, the greater the influence on forming the Pancasila student profile through blended learning, and vice versa.

**Keywords:** lecturer competence, project base learning, citizenship education, pancasila student profile, blended learning

**Citation:** Benawa, A., Wardhani, R., & Prasetyaningtyas, H. (2024). The Significance Influence of Lecturer Competence in Delivering Project Base Learning and Citizenship Education on The Formation of Pancasila Student Profile Through Blended Learning. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1925-1936), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.



## Introduction

In this era of rapid progress in science and technology, learning that only relies on a one-way traffic learning system is no longer adequate where the teacher is everything and the only source of learning. Apart from learning having to be more interactive and making students a source of learning as well, a mixed learning system is needed which is better known as blended learning. Mixed learning or blended learning is not enough to only be carried out in the classroom, but also needs to be supported by learning outside the classroom. Wikipedia offers the the definition of blended learning or hybrid learning as an approach to education that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. According to Thorne, blended learning is a mixed system that combines two components and methods at once. The combination of these methods is e-learning and multimedia.(Thorne, 2003) Meanwhile, the learning implemented is in the form of virtual classes, streaming videos, online animated texts, and so on. According to Dwiyoogo, blended learning is learning that combined or mixed in nature. This method comes by mixing face-to-face learning with technology-based learning.(Dwiyoogo, 2021) According to Rusman, blended learning is a combination of two main elements. These two elements are learning in class and online, or learning by utilizing internet networks and website-based. Apart from that, there are several media technologies that are applied. For example email, video streaming, virtual classes, and so on.(Rusman, 2011)

So now citizenship education, which is one of the mandatory curriculum subjects in Indonesia, needs to be held not only with a classical tutorial system, but also with project-based learning, where students are invited to be able to learn by doing projects. For example, in the Indonesian context, the citizenship project course focuses on two big problems, namely intolerance and corruption, because these are the two issues that really undermine unity and integrity as citizens of the Indonesian nation. Therefore, lecturers in delivering citizenship education learning are required to master this project-based learning. Apart from project-based learning, blended learning also requires interaction between students and lecturers through online activities in the Discussion Forum format where the lecturer invites students to explore certain topics through interaction in online discussion forums. Blended learning also assumes that learning is carried out independently through assignments both personally and in teams. For this reason, remembering that citizenship education must also support the achievement of the Pancasila student profile, in this research we want to highlight how or to what extent the competence of lecturers, especially in delivering project-based learning and citizenship education, contributes significantly to the formation of the Pancasila student profile in learning with a mixed system or blended learning.

Education in Indonesia aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who have the skills, desires and good morals as stated in the National Education System Law.(Nasional, 2003) Education prepares students to become individuals who have knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behavior that will have a positive impact on students' daily lives in society.(Idris et al., 2012) Meanwhile, according to Mali Benyamin (Mikhael & others, 2016), Citizenship Education must bring students awareness to increasingly participate in realizing the Indonesian nation and state as a dignified and sovereign nation and state. These include actively

participating in realizing more democratic elections, law enforcement and human rights, better community welfare, for more advanced education, better health services, fairer infrastructure, and so on. To truly become an independent, dignified and sovereign, just and prosperous country, Indonesia is still facing problems including widespread corruption, forest destruction, moral decline, religious intolerance or fundamentalism, terrorism, as well as the continued strengthening of capitalism, identity politics, political oligarchy, discrimination, as well as the weakening of the Pancasila ideology, hoaxes, fake news, and so on. Regarding the condition of the nation, students are invited to care about threats to the ideology of the nation and state. If these challenges and obstacles are not overcome, Indonesia could fall into ruin.

The conditions needed for the Indonesian state to truly become an independent, sovereign, just and prosperous country are honesty, justice, kindness, hard work, cooperation (mutual cooperation), law enforcement and human rights, transparent and accountable state administration, competition. healthy politics. Citizens' commitment to maintaining state ideology and upholding multiculturalism is not immediately embedded in their citizens, especially in this case students. Instilling these values can be done through an institutionalized educational process. Higher education is the most strategic place to instill these values systematically and institutionally.

Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning the State requires every university to systematically and institutionally teach Citizenship Education in order to form students who have values such as honesty, fairness, kindness, love of the country, patriotic, innovative, responsible, with integrity, and have integrity respect.(Pohan, 2021) The state is aware that it can be formed through the educational process. Therefore, the state has made Citizenship Education a stand-alone subject and must be studied by every student, including students at Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Meanwhile, learning effectiveness certainly cannot be separated from the influence of lecturer competence in delivering courses. According to Spencer and Spencer, competency includes motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills. These are the fundamental characteristics that lead to effective performance in a job or situation.(Spencer & Spencer, 2010) Competency thus also concerns the lecturer's ability to carry out their duties based on the skills, knowledge and work attitudes required by them.(Irawati et al., 2022) Meanwhile Michael Zwell defined competence as an enduring trait that determines performance, including initiative, influence, teamwork, innovation, and strategic thinking. Competence is also often described as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.(Zwell, 2000).

Susilo expands competence by considering it as a person's ability to achieve, which includes elements such as imagination, knowledge, experience, emotions, passion, character, attitudes, skills and health.(Susilo & Sarkowi, 2018) Simamora defines competence as the skills, knowledge and abilities required for active work performance.(Simamora, 2015) Steven and Mary Ann explain that competency involves skills, knowledge, talents, values, directors, and personal characteristics that contribute to superior performance.(McShane et al., 2009).

Competency is very important for job performance in all fields, and job competency standards are needed to determine the required abilities. (Benawa & Silverius Lake, 2019) For lecturers, it is important to internalize and have pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence and professional competence. (Krisnamukti et al., 2020) These competencies include mastery of learning materials, implementation of evaluations, empathy, social sensitivity, responsibility, honesty, discipline and objectivity. (Alouw et al., 2021).

Lecturers' pedagogical competence, especially in the context of learning citizenship education courses, is related to their ability to deliver project-based learning. According to Saefudin (Berdiati & Saefuddin, 2014), project-based learning itself is a learning method that uses problems as the first step in collecting and integrating new knowledge based on experience with real life activities. This project base learning is carried out to help, encourage and guide students to focus on collaboration by involving group work and helping students to focus on their development in capturing problems and finding solutions to the problems they face.

Meanwhile, Goodman and Stivers (Goodman & Stivers, 2010) stated that project-based learning can be interpreted as a teaching approach that is built on learning activities and real tasks that provide challenges to students related to daily needs to be solved in groups related to the problems they face.

Thus, project-based learning emphasizes student-centered learning, because it is the students who carry out in-depth investigations of a topic, both the problem and the solution. Constructively, students explore or deepen their learning by taking a research-based approach to problems and questions that are meaningful, real and relevant. Project-based learning according to Grant (Tamim & Grant, 2013) is a learning model that can be applied by facilitators who want to create an active learning environment and ask students to focus on their development so that they don't just dwell on problems but look for solutions to the problems found. So, the benefits of project-based learning are that it improves problem solving skills, can improve collaboration skills, allows students to engage in active learning, improves students' critical and reflective thinking skills, helps students develop more complex problem solving skills, students are more involved and motivated in learning, thereby enabling lecturers to act as facilitators or companions in learning, improving the reputation of universities in society, and providing direct benefits to society. (Yustinus Suhardi Ruman Dian Anggraini Kusumajati, 2015).

Definition of The Pancasila Student Profile is a number of characters and competencies that are expected to be achieved by students, which are based on the noble values of Pancasila. (A., 2022) This is also in line with the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 22 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education & Culture. (*Definition of The Pancasila Student Profile*, 2023) More explicitly, the use of the establishment of the Pancasila Student Profile by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is (1) as translation of the goals and vision of education into a format that is more easily understood by all education stakeholders, (2) as a compass for Indonesian educators and students, and (3) as the ultimate goal of all learning, programs and activities in educational units. The Dimensions and Elements of the Pancasila

Student Profile are (1) Have faith, fear God Almighty, and have a noble character, (2) Global diversity, (3) Independent, (4) Team Work, (5) Critical thinking, and (6) Creative. (*Dimensi, Elemen, Dan Subelemen Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, 2023).

Have faith, fear God Almighty, and have a noble character mean that Pancasila students believe in and practice the values and teachings of their religion/belief. This is manifested in good morals towards oneself, fellow human beings, nature and the Indonesian state (nationalism).

Global diversity means that Pancasila students know and love their culture and country (nationalism), respect other cultures, and are able to communicate and interact between cultures. They also reflect on their experiences of diversity, so they can harmonize cultural differences to create an inclusive, just and sustainable society.

Independent means that Pancasila students must have an understanding of themselves and the situation they face, as well as self-regulation to achieve their goals and improve their quality of life.

Team Work means that Pancasila students carry out collaborations that are built on the basis of humanity and concern for the nation and state, so they can share with others.

Critical thinking means that Pancasila students who think critically analyze and evaluate all information and ideas well obtained. They are also able to evaluate and reflect on their own reasoning and thinking.

Creative means that Pancasila students are students who can produce original ideas, works, and actions. They also have the flexibility of thinking in finding alternative solutions to problems.

So, it can be mentioned several reasons for the importance of realizing the Pancasila Student Profile in this 21st century learning era which tends to apply a distance learning system:

1. The students have a strong mentality and character that are not easy falling into negative things;
2. Facilitate students to compete and adapt to changes that are fast and dynamic;
3. Preserving and passing on the noble values of Pancasila;
4. The way of thinking becomes more open and willing to accept any differences;
5. Familiarize students to have independent, critical and creative characters;
6. Have global abilities and skills, but still have character according to local values;
7. Preserving the spirit of team work, mutual respect and deep cooperation in every learning activity..

## Method

The research method used in this analysis is linear regression, 150 respondents were involved in this research by distributing questionnaires by random sampling method. All statistical calculations, including regression analysis, were performed using SPSS 22. The results of the SPSS analysis stored in Ms. Word consist of

Descriptive Statistics, Tests of Normality, ANOVA Table, and Coefficients Table. The measurement of variables in this research used a Likert scale that was adjusted to the needs of the study. Research variables measured using this scale have a gradation from negative (lowest) to positive (highest), and the target population in this research were students at Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta. The 150 respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the two independent variables, namely Lecturer Competence and Citizenship Education and dependent variable, namely the Pancasila Student Profile.

After the data was collected, the data were analyzed using path analysis with SPSS 22 software to determine the magnitude of the significance influence of Lecturer Competence in delivering Problem base Learning ( $X_1$ ) and Citizenship Education ( $X_2$ ) on the Pancasila Student Profile ( $X_3$ ).

## Results

From data processing with the SPSS 2022 program, the following results can be presented descriptive data as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
VAR00001	150	62.00	154.00	216.00	186.3400	13.81558	190.870
VAR00002	150	31.00	129.00	160.00	144.1600	7.49683	56.202
VAR00003	150	46.00	119.00	165.00	143.2533	11.05276	122.164
Valid N (listwise)	150						

Based on the table 1 descriptive statistics above, it is known that the minimum score of  $X_1$  variable (Lecturer Competence) is 154, the maximum score is 216, the mean is 186.3400, the standard deviation is 13.81558, and the variance is 190.870; meanwhile the minimum score of  $X_2$  variable (Citizenship Education) is 129,00 the maximum score is 160,00 the mean is 144.1600, the standard deviation is 7.49683, and the variance is 56.202; and minimum score  $X_3$  variable (Pancasila Student Profile) is 119,00 maximum score is 165,00 Mean = 143.2533, Standard deviation = 11.05276, and variance = 122.164.

To show the validity result of using the parametric statistics such as path analysis requires three things to be fulfilled, namely the data has a normal distribution, linear regression, and significant regression as described follow.

Table 2. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
VAR00001	0.050	150	0.200*	0.990	150	0.366

VAR00002	0.061	150	0.200*	0.983	150	0.065
VAR00003	0.066	150	0.200*	0.983	150	0.062

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

From Table 2, the result test of normality, it is known that the two variables are normally distributed, because the significance value in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov column is greater (>) than 0.050, such as X<sub>1</sub> (Lecturer Competence) is 0.200\* X<sub>2</sub> (Citizenship Education) is 0.200\* and X<sub>3</sub> (Pancasila Student Profile) is 0.200\*.

To test linearity, there is information, that if the value of Deviation from Linearity Sig. > 0.05, there is a significance linear relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. On the other hand, if the value of Deviation from Linearity Sig < 0.05, there is no significant linear relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

The results of the linearity test can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. ANOVA Table

			Sum of		Mean		
			Squares	df	Square	F	Sig.
VAR00003 *	Between	(Combined)	5705.966	53	107.660	0.827	0.774
VAR00001	Groups	Linearity	542.501	1	542.501	4.168	0.044
		Deviation from Linearity	5163.465	52	99.297	0.763	0.857
Within Groups			12496.407	96	130.171		
Total			18202.373	149			

From Table 3, the Deviation from Linearity Sig value is obtained. of 0.857 is greater than 0.05. So, it can be concluded that there is a significant linear relationship between variable X<sub>1</sub> (Lecturer Competence) and variable X<sub>3</sub> (Pancasila Student Profile).

Table 4. ANOVA Table

			Sum of		Mean		
			Squares	df	Square	F	Sig.
VAR00003 *	Between	(Combined)	4530.428	31	146.143	1.261	0.188
VAR00002	Groups	Linearity	13.879	1	13.879	0.120	0.730
		Deviation from Linearity	4516.549	30	150.552	1.299	0.163

Within Groups	13671.946	118	115.864
Total	18202.373	149	

From Table 4, the Deviation from Linearity Sig value is obtained. of 0.163 is greater than 0.05. So, it can be concluded that there is a significant linear relationship between variable  $X_2$  (Citizenship Education) and variable  $X_3$  (Pancasila Student Profile).

To test the significance, there is information, if the significance value (Sig) is smaller ( $<$ ) than the 0.05 probability, it means that there is an influence of X (independent variable) on Y (dependent variable). On the other hand, if the significance value (Sig) is greater ( $>$ ) than the probability of 0.05, it means that there is no effect of X (independent variable) on Y (dependent variable).

The following are the results of the significance test which can be seen at Table 5 in the ANOVA<sup>a</sup> table.

Table 5. ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17961.144	1	17961.144	11019.575	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	241.230	148	1.630		
	Total	18202.373	149			

a. Dependent Variable: VAR00003

b. Predictors: (Constant), VAR00001

From Table 5, it is known that the significance value (Sig) of 0.000 is smaller than the probability of 0.05, so it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of  $X_1$  on  $X_3$ .

Table 6. ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18098.383	1	18098.383	25757.674	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	103.991	148	0.703		
	Total	18202.373	149			

a. Dependent Variable: VAR00003

b. Predictors: (Constant), VAR00002

From Table 6, it is known that the significance value (Sig) of 0.000 is smaller than the probability of 0.05, so it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of  $X_2$  on  $X_3$ .

Table 7. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Standardized		t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Coefficients		



		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-56.668	3.577		-15.840	0.000
	VAR00001	0.155	0.043	0.193	3.592	0.000
	VAR00002	1.187	0.079	0.805	14.964	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: VAR00003

From the Table 7 above means that there is a positive direct effect of Lecturer Competence ( $X_1$ ) and Citizenship Education ( $X_2$ ) on the Pancasila Student Profile ( $X_3$ ) with a coefficient of 0.998. That means that Lecturer Competence variable and Citizenship Education variable together effect 99.8% on the formation of the Pancasila Student Profile, while the remaining 0.2% is effected by other variables which are not discussed in this research. Based on the table 7 above as the result of the data processing, a structural equation can be made as follow:

$$X_3 = 0.193 X_1 + 0.805 X_2 + \epsilon_1$$

The equation showed the significance direct influence of Lecturer Competence in delivering Problem Base Learning ( $X_1$ ) = 19.3% and Citizenship Education ( $X_2$ ) = 80.5% on Pancasila Student Profile with a coefficient totally of 99.8% and only 0.2% was influenced by other variables which were not discussed in this study.

## Discussion

From the results of the data processing, it was revealed that Lecturer Competence and Citizenship Education had a significant influence on the formation of the Pancasila student profile. These result are understandable considering that Lecturer Competence is oriented towards the lecturer's pedagogical competence in delivering project-based learning to help the students be able to deepen and apply noble values as citizens, so that it is conducive to realizing the Pancasila student profile. While Citizenship Education is oriented towards deepening and applying noble values as citizens, which are closely related to the dimensions of the Pancasila student profile, such as (1) Faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character, (2) Global diversity, (3) Independent, (4) Teamwork, (5) Critical thinking, and (6) Creative.(R & A.A., 2022; Tahsya Noer Oktafiyani Anissa Windarti, 2022)

Tahsya Noer Oktafiyani, Anissa Windarti, and Masruroh (Tahsya Noer Oktafiyani Anissa Windarti, 2022) in their research entitled The Effect of Lecturers' Competency on Students' Academic Achievement showed that there is a significant influence of lecturer competence on student academics achievements.

Garnis Maulidya in her research entitled Motivation and Competence of Lecturers in Improving Students Learning Achievement Elementya showed that lecturers have a high key role in improving the quality, relevance, efficiency and achievement of student learning.(Maulidya, 2023) Lecturers must optimally prepare theirs competence, because after all the competence of lecturers will reflect good performance as well. Lecturers who have competence must be able to motivate students with a variety of the latest knowledge and relevance in real life.

Sudarjo and Suyitno in their research entitled *The Effect Of Student Learning Motivation And Lecturer Competence On Student Achievement In Commerce Correspondence Learning* also stated that student learning motivation and lecturer competence have a positive and significant effect on student achievement. (Sudarjo & Suyitno, 2023) Even though the context is different, it is clear that lecturer competence does have a big influence on the achievement of learning objectives, which in citizenship education is the formation of a Pancasila student profile.

## Conclusion

From the results of the research above it can be concluded that the influence of Lecturer Competence in delivering Project Base Learning and Citizenship Education through Blended Learning are very significance to the formation of The Pancasila Student Profile as shown from the result of research data processing, namely that Lecturer Competence and Citizenship Education have significant positive direct influence (99.8%) on the formation of Pancasila student profile. Although there are other factors that also effect it, but it too small (just only 0,2%). Therefore, apart from going through formal Citizenship Education in schools, the values of Citizenship Education as well as those contained in the Pancasila student profile need to be further developed in everyday life as informal and non-formal education by role model of the Lecturers.

So, Lecturers' competence in delivering citizenship education courses using a project-based learning approach must continue to be improved in a blended learning system which involves assisting in the implementation of project-based learning, online learning through discussion forums and independent learning through personal and group assignments.

Hopefully this conclusion triggers the world of education to accelerate changes in innovation and creativity in terms of systems, methods, and learning content, that the Pancasila Student Profile continues to be built among the students, especially through increasing lecturer competency in delivering project-based learning in citizenship education courses which are also held in blended learning without excluding the informal or non formal education factors by distance learning..

## Recommendations

Therefore, it is recommended that training on project-based learning be important for lecturers who teach citizenship education. Apart from that, it is also necessary for lecturers to understand the urgency and relevance of citizenship education which must be directed to build Pancasila Student Profile.

## Acknowledgement

Thank you very much for Bina Nusantara University that has given supporting us to finished this research. This

research was made possible thanks to moral and material support through an internal grant from Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia.

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## “Who Said We Are Politically Inactive?”: Exploring Incentives to Political Participation Among Youths in Malaysia 15th General Election

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**Abstract:** In the lead-up to the 15th general election, political observers predicted low electoral turnouts among youth, particularly within the 18-24 age cohort, attributed to a pervasive sense of political fatigue borne from unrestrained political and economic developments between 2018 and 2022. The perception of politics as corrupted and politicians as insincere had ostensibly alienated young voters. Contravening these expectations, not only did young voters exhibit high turnout rates in the 15<sup>th</sup> general election, but they also actively participated in vote canvassing, challenging the narrative of youth disengagement. This study, anchored in the General Incentives Model (GIM), draws on in-depth interviews with 26 youth party activists to explore the catalysts behind their distinct engagement and the incentives they received when participating in politics. It uncovers that young activists leveraged TikTok to create impactful campaign content that not only addressed criticisms of their parties but also cast a spotlight on the failings of their adversaries, reaching a broad audience without the expectation of material compensation. Their involvement was driven by a blend of collective, altruistic, and expressive incentives, marking a departure in both form and motivation from older activists. This investigation into the resurgence of youth participation offers critical insights into the changing landscape of political engagement, underscoring the innovative strategies and intrinsic motivations propelling young voters to the forefront of electoral politics.

**Keywords:** Young voters; UNDI18; General Incentives model; Malaysian 15th general election

**Citation:** Wan Rohila Ganti, W.R.G. (2024). “Who said we are politically inactive?”: Exploring incentives to political participation among youths in Malaysia 15th General Election. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1937-1947), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The Parliament of Malaysia in the year 2021 has unanimously approved a constitutional amendment to (i) lower the country’s voting age from 21 to 18, (ii) allow automatic voter registration and (iii) make 18 the minimum age for elected representatives. Popularly known as the Undi18 Bill, it is a manifestation of Malaysia's commitment to empowering the voice of the youth and widening the democratic space in the country.

The recently concluded Malaysia 15th General Election (GE15) witnessed 2 million new voters age 18-21 years

were allowed to vote for the first time. This cohort of voters were mainly school leavers. Almost 1 million of them are now pursuing their studies at degree level at the government or private universities, meanwhile the other half is doing short vocational courses at government polytechnic or training centers. The rest are doing odd jobs as they just have a basic secondary school certificate. All of them are still dependent on their parents and unmarried since the youths in Malaysia culturally get married after they finish their tertiary education, around the age of 24.

### **Background of Study and Statement of Problems**

While Undi18 Bill was applauded as a bold decision taken by the newly elected Pakatan Harapan (PH) government, many were skeptical on the ability of youth age 18-21 to make political decision. Studies on Malaysian youth found that they have lack of interest in topics related to elections, democratization, the selection of quality leaders, and current issues (Zulkifli, Mokhtar & Mohd Zain (2023). In addition, the findings from the World Value Survey - Malaysia Chapter (2010-2014) found that there was a wide gap between youth political participation (65.4%) and adults (92.5%). This data is further strengthened by the turnout rate of the youth cohort (21-35 years old) in GE14 that scored much lower compared to the 40-59, 60-79 and 80 and above cohorts. The Malacca and Johor state elections in November 2021 and March 2022 also recorded low turnouts at the youth polling streams (21-35 years old); only 5 percent of turnouts respectively.

Political apathy among the youths worried Malaysian political stakeholders. Hypothetically, if the youth cohort age 21-35 years old scored low level of voting turnouts, the new youth from cohort 18-21 years old would score even lower. Previously, elections results would be easily expected by political pundits as the voting trends and voters' tendencies were straightforwardly influenced by bread-and-butter issues, religious sentiments and ethnic polarization. With the presence of significant number of young voters age 18-21, political observers expected massive change in the Malaysian voting trends. These very young voters have just left secondary schools, are not burdened by the country's economic downturn as they are fully dependent on their parents, never go to market and not aware of the rising price of the basic goods, never fuel a car, and never experienced low wage treatments at workplace. Their main focuses are securing university placement and suitable university courses that match their A-level results. Their political inclinations and demands are unclear. Studies found that the youths are not only having low level of political interests, they also have no knowledge on how a political system in Malaysia works. In fact, only 27% percent of university students in Malaysia registered as voters prior to GE14 (Kasmani, 2023).

Contrary to prevailing perceptions, new voters emerged as the decisive "kingmakers" in Malaysia's 15th General Election. They exhibited high voter turnout and played active roles in campaigning, notably utilizing platforms such as TikTok. Supplanting older party activists who traditionally relied on conventional campaign methods, they generated influential campaign content that not only addressed criticisms of their parties but also highlighted the shortcomings of their opponents, thereby reaching a wide audience. This phenomenon has prompted the initiation of this study to scrutinize the catalysts driving their distinctive engagement and the

incentives they receive when participating in politics.

### **Theoretical Framework of the General Incentives model**

The general incentives model of political participation refers to the individual's motivation to participate in political activities beyond a narrowly cast economic analysis of incentives and resources (Haute & Gauja, 2015). Prominent party membership researchers, Whiteley & Seyd, (2002) proposed seven incentives that motivate individuals to be actively involved in political parties.

The first incentive is selective process incentive. It is known as the psychological satisfaction derived from the process of participation itself. The entertainment values benefitted from being involved in political activities such as gaining an opportunity to meet like-minded people, participating in various political activities, learning about the political process at first hand and having access to better political information. The second one is selective outcome incentives. These are the positive outcomes of being a loyal voter, eventuated in the form of materialistic such as gaining politically appointed positions in the executive and legislative branches, developing a full-time career in party politics and acquiring government projects or contracts (Whiteley & Seyd, 2002).

The next incentive is collective incentive. People have a greater incentive to be active if their party is pursuing policies which closely congruence with their own policy preferences. They participate not only because they want to promote particular policy goals but also because they oppose the policy goals of other parties (Whiteley & Seyd, 2002). Collective incentives are always equated with ideological incentives. The ideology, manifestoes and directions of the party are the factors that motivate voters to be more engaged compared to those who have low attachment to the party policies. In contrast, the normative incentives are focusing at the compliance with social norms and the perceived opinions of significant people whose opinions they respect and value. Some voters receive a pressure that forces them to win the respect or approval from their circles, such as family tradition and the influence of educational institution, religious institution and peers (Back, Teorell, & Westholm, 2011). Some may choose to be politically active due to the obligations they feel towards the action, since being politically active is normal and it provides them with an opportunity to express their values and loyalties to the social norms (Gallagher, Liston, Marsh, & Weeks, 2002).

Individuals are also motivated by altruistic incentives in which they are bound by their emotional attachment to the party which has little to do with the policy positions it espouses, and they contribute without considering the costs and benefits of their actions (Young & Cross, 2002). Altruistic concerns are expressed in terms of idealistic goals, such as the desire to create a more compassionate and tolerance society (Young & Cross, 2002).

Finally, the expressive incentives can be described in relation with the act of publicly expressing one's perceived psychological, ideological and moral values attached to the party without fear. They proudly wear shirts with party logo, hung posters at the windows, posting, sharing and re-tweeting political statements at



social media and joining rallies. Thus, by getting involved with party activism, it provides a way of expressing their loyalty to the party (Back et al., 2011) and supporting the party's stand on certain values including ethnic supremacy, religion, human rights, economic justice, political equality or supremacy of the constitution.

## **Review of Literatures on Forms of Political Participation**

Political party activists engage in high-intensity political activities that are not performed by normal members and supporters. They take part in conventional and unconventional political activities like joining lawful public demonstrations, boycotting certain products to show their protest, signing petition, becoming a representative links to the community that is necessary for party interest aggregation and articulation, contacting party officials, representatives, and government officials to raise community issues, and facilitating political education. Political party needs participation at the grassroots level to convey its ideas, its traditions, stance, and its commitments. Having a durable base of party activists has helped parties win elections and stay connected with voters in between elections and has kept up voters to continuously support the party, as they might otherwise have stayed out of politics. As legal and registered party members, they have the rights to decide and choose party leadership, policies, and directions during the branch meeting or provincial convention.

When elections are around the corner, they recruit new party supporters and provide a base of possible volunteers for election campaigns, canvass potential voters, and conduct voter registration drives, define the image of the party, mobilize voters to the ballot, and oversee polling stations. In addition to sleepless nights, they also prepare, and coordinate election works like political rallies, political talks, candidate walkabouts and meet-and-greet sessions between candidates and voters. They hang-up party flags and posters, prepare foods and drinks to party force, distribute flyers, and hold flash mob campaigns near busy junctions.

Moreover, they become the administrator for party websites and other social media platforms by posting and tweeting the party's current programs and responding to visitors' comments. They openly wear or display a campaign badge or sticker related to the party on their clothing and/or vehicles. Since many political parties are almost reliant upon their activists, these political party activists also donate money to fund party programs. Furthermore, they organize fund-raising events like dinner, carnivals, and auctions (Haute & Gauja, 2015; Vecchione et al., 2015).

The leftist members are more active compared to right-wingers. They are more likely than right-wing citizens to contact officials, campaign, persuade others, cooperate, and protest; yet, they are less likely to cast a ballot. The activists that perceive themselves as ideologically distant from the government in power are more likely to engage in any mode of political action (Meer, Deth, & Scheepers, 2009). Conversely, Wauters, (2018) found that the party activists from pro-government parties are more likely to participate in what he calls 'direct actions' like boycotts and petition signing. Of all direct political action activities, joining street demonstrations is the most chosen activity among the party activists.

## Notes on Methodology

This qualitative study adopts an in-depth face-to-face interview. The informants were recruited based on a purposive sampling method, which a deliberate choice of informants was due to the qualities the informants possessed. The researcher browsed political party official Facebook accounts to trace potential young party activists, and approached the youth who were active and constant in giving comments and ‘likes’ over party posts, photos and posting their pictures of joining various party programs. Private messages were sent to more than 50 potential informants, yet only thirty –five potential informants responded, and only twenty-six of them fit to proceed with the interview. They included sixteen male party supporters and ten female party activists, ranging from 21 years old until 30 years old.

In order to establish credibility, the research data were analyzed following the six steps underlined by Ritchie, Spencer, & O’Connor, (2003). The first step was transcribing the interview transcripts into a written text. The transcripts were then manually labelled based on main themes and codes, based on six classifications of high – intensity political activities underlined by (Whiteley & Seyd, 2002). The codes were continuously ‘define’, ‘refine’ and ‘revise’ during the coding process. New codes were created when new themes emerged, and codes deemed no longer useful were deleted or merged with other codes. The next step validating the coding scheme, by checking the coding consistency based on the researcher’s understanding of the themes. The fifth step was the most critical step. Its success relied almost wholly on the researcher’s reasoning abilities. This step involved making sense of the themes or categories identified, making inferences, and presenting the researcher’s reconstructions of meanings derived from the data, exploring the properties and dimensions of themes, identifying relationships between themes, uncovering patterns, testing themes against the full range of data, and crossing-referencing case analysis to discover similarities and differences between participants. Lastly, the research findings were presented.

## Results and Discussions

The results are organized according to two main themes identified: forms of political participation, and political incentives to boost motivation of party activists. All informants have an account on social media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tik Tok. They mentioned that apart of personal postings, most of their postings are related to political issues, their involvement in party programs, and their social media friends are mostly from the circle of their political party. This is congruent with the findings of Taru, (2016) and Velasquez & LaRose, (2014) that social media users openly and publicly express their political beliefs and party affiliations within the context of their online activities. They join an online political party's group like Friends of BN (Barisan Nasional) (<https://www.facebook.com/frensofmalaysia/>) or Friends of PAS (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Friends.of.pas/>) or becoming Facebook friends with political figures like Members of Parliament, party leaders, and party candidates can be likened to the political act of placing a party's sign in one's front yard. Smeltzer & Keddy, (2010) commented that it is also possible for social media users to

self-identify political leanings and party affiliations on their personal Facebook profiles, which can be used to locate others with similar views. Through an increased realization that others also share common political views, it may become possible to further normalize counter-hegemonic political activities and help neutralize government propaganda and media control.

“As my daily activities are mostly related to party, most of my IG postings are related to politics. I posted up political statuses, shared postings from other activists, shared the statuses from party leaders, shared e-posters, tagged my friends, gave my comments on others’ posts. Even most of my social media friends are mainly political figures and political activists.” (Informant#7)

The narratives of the posting, the double-meaning photos, the exposures of political scandals are the soft-power of social media, capable of influencing one’s political perception. The informant revealed:

“Using social media does not entail you to become an IT saver. It is the fastest, easiest, cheapest and most impactful medium of campaign. So the cyber troopers, mostly the party activists have to fully utilize this medium. We utilize social media to the maximum. We share the Live Videos of political talks, lives from Parliament, and other video taken from PAS IT Center. I think the main factor PAS won the votes from the youth because of our fully utilization of social media.”(Informant#10)

Other than social media, Tik Tok has become another medium of cyber activism. The Digital News Report 2021 by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University found that 51% of news consumers in Malaysia use Tik Tok to find, share or discuss news in a given week. It permits election propaganda like messages and videos to be spread speedily. Unlike Facebook or Instagram, Tik Tok does not entail users to follow others. The Tik Tok videos will be automatically shared on Facebook, Reels and, Shorts platforms. The informants mentioned that they utilized Tik Tok extensively during the campaign period. They mentioned:

“Tik Tok is more reachable, the audience is wider. It is free. Mostly, the Tik Tok videos are simpler, shorter and easy to digest. But I have to try to avoid hatred videos, intimidation, spread slanders, fake news.” (Informant#20)

Social media also witness party activists from different political parties bickering and saying harsh words to each other just to defend their political parties and their leaders. The debates became worst when they started using dirty words and playing the religion and race cards. The informants mentioned:

“That is common to have hot debates on social media. I myself would defend the party to my level best when they are accusing Tok Guru, for example. Usually, I encounter back with e-posters and facts provided by the IT men in PAS. I can say I have to study a little bit and understand the issue to speak to the opponents. If not, I will be bashed by them, and sometimes, if I give wrong statements, they would print screen it and become their credit” (Informant#10)

It is concluded that PAS youths were more aggressive and became the pioneer in using social media to disseminate political information, and give awareness and understanding to the public about the mess that had been done by the government. Later, it was fully utilized by all political parties, until a cybertrooper team is formed to simplify political information in the form of e-posters, catchy graphs and charts, and animated chronology of political cases. Nevertheless, social media has also become a place for party activists to refute their opponents and discredit others who do not agree with them.

The interview data on what motivates young political party activists to engage in party works yielded that they were motivated by three main themes: collective ideology, altruistic and expressive incentives. Everyone subscribes to a set of political beliefs and values that guide their behavior, either consciously or unconsciously. An individual's political ideology is shaped by his/her socialization when helping to form the attitudes and beliefs of other party members. Differences in age, gender, social class, and income are all associated with differences in socialization and life experiences, and consequently in attitudes and beliefs. The level of youth's attachment and loyalty to the party also determines ideological beliefs. Strongly attached activists are more ideologically driven than the weakly attached ones. Inflexible party activists, those who uphold party principles strongly, are much more ideologically driven than pragmatists (Whiteley, Larsen, Goodwin, & Clarke, (2021).

All pro-UMNO informants mentioned that they are attracted by UMNO's ideology to protect and empower the rights of the Malay. UMNO's ideology is comparable with informants' political conviction to see the superiority of the Malays. They mentioned:

“We got independence because of UMNO. Without UMNO, Malaysia would be destined differently. In Malaysia, even though Malays are majority, Chinese are rich. They control our economy. They slowly want to claim their rights. I cannot imagine if UMNO is not existed, the fate of the Malays, who is going to fight for our rights? Malaysia will be Singapore. May be the 13 May riot will happen again.” (Informant#13)

The data above yield three glaring points. Firstly, the informants are grateful to UMNO as it had struggled for the independence of the country. The perception that all affairs related to the country's independence should be indebted to UMNO, has increased the spirit of nationalism among UMNO supporters, but indirectly belittling the supporters of other parties (Mohd Faidz et al., 2011). Secondly, UMNO envisioned a Malaysia ruled by Malays, so naturally, Malays would be granted special rights and privileges. The concept of the Malay supremacy has been manipulated by the UMNO elites to preserve the hegemony of the party and their positions in Malaysian politics. From the perspective of the Malays, the increase in Chinese electoral victory would be a disaster, as political control is deemed a counterbalance (i.e. consolation) to the Malays' own impoverished economic situation. The UMNO elites have chosen to capitalize on the fear that the special rights of the Malays and their religious superiority are under threat by mobilizing ethnic and religious sentiments to gain more Malay votes. UMNO precisely targets rural Malay constituencies to make use of the situation and to instill the fear of losing special rights and religious superiority among Muslim-Malays (Hamayotsu, 2013).

The third point mentioned by the informants is the domination of Chinese, especially DAP, in economy and politics. The Malays are worried they would be left behind, and become the second-class citizens in their own land. UMNO's campaign narrative always emphasizes that DAP has the real power in the opposition pact, portrayed as no more than a proxy for anti-Malay and anti-Islamic forces bent upon destroying Malay-Muslim hegemony with financial help from pro-regime change movements like Open Society Foundation.

Meanwhile, all pro- PAS informants mentioned that PAS' ideology to establish an Islamic state in accordance with the framework of the Quran and Sunnah has become the utmost attraction over their activism with PAS. Their political convictions seemed to be parallel with what PAS upholds. The interview data yield that the surface of the party is secondary as its substances matter. They mentioned:

“Our ultimate goal in this life is to enter Paradise, to get Allah's blessings. Allah clearly said that there is no separation between Islam and politics. There is no such thing as separating Islam and politics. That is secular. That is *taghut* (one who does not rule by that which Allah has revealed). That is what UMNO is doing. They don't trust the capability of Islam in ruling the country. They are afraid of Islamic state. In PAS, Islam is the main reference. Islam leads. We are proud to tell other countries that Malaysia is an Islamic state.”(Informant#4)

Extracting the verbatim response above, two main points are worth a ponder. Firstly, PAS informants are motivated by the ideology of PAS because only PAS is seen serious and effortful in implementing the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah in the state. All informants were able to synthesize the symbiosis among electoral politics, ibadah, and the attainment of Allah's blessing. Secondly, they believe that their involvement and activism with PAS is to attain the blessing from Allah and thus, be rewarded. They mentioned:

“Performing daily ibadah like five times – a day prayer, paying zakat and performing hajj is relatively easy. But Islam is beyond that. It covers law, economy, politics, crime and other social systems. We need an Islamic state to ensure all these aspects are running in a way Allah orders.”(Informant#12)

In the context of incentives to political participation, scholars agreed that political parties provide collective goods, which potentially affect everyone regardless of whether or not they are members or supporters of a political party. It is assumed that youth party activists receive particular private incentives over their activism, as they are not that naïve in spending their valuable time, money, and energy just for the sake of collective goods. Scholars argued that they receive 'selective incentives' or inducements to participate. These selective incentives are private goods, in the sense that anyone who does not join will not receive them. Selective incentives must be important enough to overcome the problem in situations where the temptations to free ride are great (Poletti et al., 2019).

Fiorina (2002) comically described that finding motivation through the selective process can be considered as being hungry for fame. The chance to meet and greet party leaders, to take photos with them, and to upload those photos on social media to be praised by family and friends is truly a rewarding experience. Other than that,

becoming among the first to get the scoop on political information like the election date, the list of election candidates, the probability of cabinet reshuffling, and the political scandals involving high profile figures, is fulfilling and exciting, as others would be amazed with one's 'accurate' political predictions. Being recognized by everyone in the streets over one's activism with a political party allows an activist to feel important and valuable. One's capability in taking action and solving other people's problems makes an activist popular, consequently being invited to community feasts, being interviewed by reporters over local issues, and being able to expand social network deemed important for business. These informants shared their exciting experience:

"I can say, high fever would be recovered when I join party programs [Laughing]. When I am doing party works, time flies so fast, sometimes up to 2 – 3 am in the morning. Apart from spending my free time with my family, I can mostly be found at party office. My wife really understands my commitment to party. Not to mention election period, it will be double triple busy. I surely sleep at party office." (Informant#9)

The verbatim statements above yield similarities between any party informants, where they found emotional satisfaction to be with the party. Psychologically, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs describes that people crave the social needs of love, acceptance, inclusiveness, and the sense of belonging. The informants would feel safe and secure when surrounded by like-minded people, as they felt that they could support each other. Even the small gesture of supporting friends on their Facebook timeline is meaningful enough:

"Whenever I put up any political status on my social media, of course I would be teased, or challenged by friends from rival parties. But simply reading comments from my friends that support my status, it is more than overwhelming." (Informant#8)

Similarly, the chance to mingle with political figures and to be recognized by them cannot be simply enjoyed by anyone in order to emphasize that laymen rarely have such an opportunity to meet political figures. Therefore, it is understood why others would be amazed when party activists upload their photos with prominent political figures like the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister. Observation on the social media accounts of 19 informants showed that all of them had uploaded personal photos with political figures. For example, they uploaded their photos with Prime Minister Ismail Sabri, Chief Minister Dr. Samsuri, PAS figure Haji Abdul Hadi, and PAS celebrity Ustaz Azhar Idrus, whom they met during their party's annual general meeting and closed-door party programs. The photos generated positive comments from their social media followers, with most comments expressing envious remarks over the informants' encounters with highly prominent political figures; some commenters hope to get similar opportunities in the future.

## **Conclusion**

Contrary to popular opinion that individual's main intention to involve in politics is to gain material rewards and promising positions, this study found that the ultimate motivations towards political party activism among



young party supporters were the ideology of the party and the satisfaction and contentment they receive by joining and mingling around with politically like-minded people. Hierarchically, party supporters are at the lowest rank of the party yet they are the most committed and devoted to party principles and offered the hardest jobs since they need to attend lengthy evening meetings and help with canvassing and electioneering. They are more concerned with ideological purity than electoral popularity. In terms of political participation, they chose to use social media as the best and most impactful platform to campaign. These two findings clearly proved that the way young party supporters play politics are far different with old party workers.

## Recommendations

Attracting young party activists can be challenging as they often tend to remain neutral or undecided. However, an examination of youths who opt to actively engage in political activities reveals that they can serve as valuable assets to political parties. Their adeptness at conveying political messages through various accessible methods underscores their potential significance. Therefore, political parties ought not to underestimate the capabilities and capacities of young individuals and should incorporate them into the formulation of party strategies.

## Acknowledgements

The researcher wishes to express gratitude to all informants who generously participated in interviews and openly shared their political perspectives. Additionally, acknowledgment is extended to the Faculty of Law and International Relations at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia, for their support of this research endeavor.

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## **Influence of Financial Intermediation Institutes on The Welfare of The Population in The Western European Countries: A Comparative Analysis**

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**Abstract:** Throughout the history of the origination and development of the economy, financial intermediation has served to reduce transaction costs, which has had a stimulating effect on the economic system. On the other hand, financial intermediation at certain stages, replacing the real sector of the economy, could cause economic crises, unjustifiably inflating the money supply. The period after World War II was a period of prosperity and development of the economies of Western Europe. The struggle and unity of opposites, which manifests itself in the synergy of capitalism and social justice, leads to the formation of a new society. All the difficulties of this period undoubtedly affected the well-being of the population. In such difficult conditions, financial intermediation could play an important role in developing the economic potential of Western European countries. Was this really the case? The article makes an attempt to find an answer to this particular question. The purpose of this study: - to determine the impact of the financial intermediation institutions on the well-being of the population in Western European countries. We use the methodology of chrono-discrete monogeographic comparative analysis proposed by Demichev (2019) for legal institutions.

**Keywords:** Economic growth, financial intermediaries, population welfare, life expectancy at birth, human capital index

**Citation:** Turyan, K. (2024). Influence of Financial Intermediation Institutes on the Welfare of the Population in the Western European countries: a comparative analysis. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1948-1969), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### **Introduction**

The article submitted on consideration is the result of arguments from another article of the same author (Turyan, 2023) the "Influence of financial intermediation institutions on the welfare of the population in the post-Soviet countries: A comparative analysis". Many colleagues noted that it would be desirable to conduct a comparative analysis of the impact of financial intermediation institutions and also on the example of developed economies. This article is the first in a series. In it, the author attempts to review statistical data and carry out an empirical analysis of the above topic. Since the statistical data of the countries considered in the study have high reliability and a 50-year history, the author will consider conducting a regression analysis based on the results of this study in the future. The purpose of the study will be identifying the mathematical connection between the

influence of financial intermediation and the well-being of the population.

Financial intermediation represents both an economic tool and a domain of economic activity with the primary objective of addressing the needs of the population. In this context, the needs take precedence as fundamental factors, while the activity itself assumes a secondary role. Evaluating the effectiveness of economic growth involves considering the dynamics of gross income and per capita income. However, a more comprehensive assessment is reflected in social efficiency, which is judged by the extent to which the population's needs are satisfied, viewed through the lens of overall societal welfare. The paramount importance of the population's well-being is emphasized as a crucial factor in ensuring a satisfactory quality of life for citizens.

Certain scholars, define well-being as the satisfaction level regarding essential goods. Adam Smith (1776) regarded financial intermediation as a means of generating wealth and alleviating poverty by aligning personal and public interests. This definition underscores the correlation between financial intermediation and wealth levels, as it has been established that these intermediaries reconcile the interests of various stakeholders. Consequently, consumers experience a heightened level of satisfaction when utilizing financial services that contribute to increased income and acceptable investment risks for the population.

Notably, T. Campanella (2009) and E.G. Morelli (1953) associate well-being with an equitable distribution of goods in society, emphasizing the role of financial intermediation in enhancing overall well-being by facilitating the flow of excess of resources to the shortage. The United Nations (UN) employs a comprehensive diagnosis spanning various aspects, including employment, health, nutrition, demographic conditions, education, and human freedom, to assess the well-being of a population. Additionally, the UN highlights socioeconomic sustainability as a critical element, contingent upon the development of financial markets.

Financial intermediation enhances the well-being of individuals both materially and spiritually. In material terms, these intermediaries contribute to the growth of savings for a segment of the population, reduce transaction costs, and secure more income with less risk through investments. This enables meeting future needs, sustaining the standard of living for the elderly and people with disabilities. For participants in the financial market who are borrowers, financial intermediaries expand possibilities for immediate needs, facilitate quality medical treatment, assist in acquiring real estate, and support access to paid education. Without financial intermediaries, the current consumption level of borrowers would be lower.

From a moral standpoint, financial intermediaries, by increasing investment reliability, instill confidence in the future and better health. The time saved through intermediary services can be redirected to fulfilling other needs, such as recreation. Empowerment through borrowing allows people to feel more comfortable in the current period.

Financial intermediaries, as value-generating organizations, play a crucial role in increasing GDP and ensuring overall economic growth. These institutions, generally taxpayers, contribute to expanding state budget revenue,

enhancing the state's ability to meet the population's needs. Additionally, financial institutions enable the financing of innovations from a country's internal reserves, fostering opportunities for future economic development.

However, it's important to acknowledge the associated risks with financial intermediation. Overestimating one's capabilities when using borrowed funds can lead to an inability to fulfill obligations and a noticeable deterioration in financial situations. Dishonest behavior by financial intermediaries, aggressive service imposition, and citizens lacking information on the cost of credit products are potential risks. Addressing these issues requires state regulations and the promotion of financial literacy among the population.

The correlation between the activities of financial intermediaries and economic growth is a debated topic in the scientific community. Supporters, like Bagehot (1920) and Hicks (2003), emphasize the importance of capital markets in stimulating economic growth, citing historical examples. On the contrary, Robinson (2000) points to the inverse relationship between economic growth and financial institutions. Qualitative assessment, considering customer satisfaction, reputation building, and global financial market competition, is crucial in evaluating the growth rate and development of financial intermediation.

Global economic trends significantly impact financial intermediation due to its association with the international movement of funds. Therefore, developing a system to reduce risks and dependence on international counterparts is essential.

Economists also highlight the dependence of financial intermediation on inflationary trends. Rising inflation reduces the activity of financial intermediaries, leading to an increase in "financial disintermediation" when investors and savers engage in transactions directly. To foster the development of financial intermediaries, controlling the inflation rate becomes imperative.

To study the general trends in the development of Western European countries, it is necessary to clarify the object of analysis. The concept of Western Europe is usually interpreted in two meanings - political and scientific-geographical.

From a political perspective, the term "Western Europe" is a relatively recent construct that gained prominence following the division of European countries into two distinct camps, namely socialist and Atlantic, in the aftermath of World War II. The active utilization of this term commenced during this post-war period.

The states of the first block fell into the zone of influence of the USSR. Geographically, they were located closer to the Soviet Union, which was located to the east, and therefore the region they represented soon began to be called Eastern Europe. If you look at the map of the continent, the geography of the socialist bloc included the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, and Hungary.

The states of the Atlantic bloc - the bulk of the rest on the continent - fell into the zone of US influence. Located to the west of the socialist countries, they began to be called Western Europe.

There is also a scientific and geographical context in which the term in question can be revealed. Based on one of the interpretations, we should talk about the division of Europe:

- to the northern part, which is represented by the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, Finland and Iceland;
- to the central part, represented by Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Switzerland;
- to the eastern part, which is represented by the European part of Russia and Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova;
- to the southern part, which is represented by the Balkan states, Romania, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Malta, and the European part of Turkey;
- to the western part, which is represented by France, Great Britain, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Gibraltar, Andorra, Monaco.

Thus, in a scientific and geographical sense, Western Europe is significantly inferior in scale to that determined on the basis of political criteria.

According to the author, "Western Europe" should be understood as a group of European states united along political or cultural-geographical grounds. From this point of view, for the purpose of research, when we say Western Europe, we mean countries and territories that during the Cold War were in the zone of influence of the United States, and were also the founders of the European Community (Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark, Iceland, Spain (since 1982), Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, France, Germany (since 1955)).

The purpose of this study: - to determine the impact of the financial intermediation institutions on the well-being of the population in Western European countries.

Tasks:

- Conduct a comparative analysis of economic development indicators of Western European countries.
- Perform a comparative analysis of the well-being of the population.
- Trace the relationship between the level of development of financial intermediation and the well-being of the population in Western European countries.

## Method

We propose employing the Chrono-Discrete Monogeographic Comparative analysis methodology introduced by A.A. Demichev for legal institutions (2019) in examining the dynamics of socio-economic processes. This

adapted methodology for economic objects encompasses the utilization of various methods, approaches, and theoretical concepts to analyze diverse economic phenomena occurring in the same geographic region, characterized by changes in economic formations over time. In our specific case, we are focused on the geopolitical shift that transpired in the economic foundation of Western European countries post-World War II, marked by the rise of socialist tendencies and the integration of central planning elements into government administration. This transformative period gave rise to a mixed economic model in Western European countries.

The concept of Chrono-Discrete Monogeographic Comparative Analysis (CdMCA) involves a nuanced approach to comparative analysis, departing from traditional methods. In traditional comparisons, institutions, ideas, or concepts are typically assessed across different countries or similar constructs within the same historical period. However, CdMCA introduces unique elements:

**Monogeographic:** This term implies that the comparison is made within a single country, focusing on state institutions, ideas, concepts, etc., that existed within that specific geographical boundary.

**Chrono-discrete:** "Chronos" (time) and "discreteness" (separation, division) highlight that the institutions being compared experienced a time gap in their existence due to various reasons. This temporal separation is not merely a pause but signifies a distinct break in tradition. CdMCA compares not the evolution of the same institution over time but rather similar institutions that emerged in different historical periods, lacking direct continuity.

The concept draws inspiration from the "challenge-and-response" law formulated by the English historian A.D. Toynbee (1939). According to this law, civilizations must respond adequately to internal and external challenges; failure results in decline, while successful resolution allows for continued development.

The CdMCA methodology encompasses scientific approaches, principles, and methods for studying elements of historical and modern reality within a single country, wherein interruptions in legal traditions occurred.

## Results

### **Dynamics of main indicators of economic development.**

#### *Comparative analysis of GDP.*

Here, we examine the fluctuations in the primary gauge of economic advancement, namely GDP. We endorse the perspective put forth by M.Yu. Golovin and R.S. Greenberg (2021) that GDP retains its paramount status as an indicator of economic progress, facilitating cross-country comparisons of economic growth dynamics. Employing statistical data, we conducted a comparative evaluation (Table 1) to juxtapose the standings of different nations. The timeframe selected for analysis spans from 1970 to 2022, as this period encompasses pertinent data for all countries involved.

Table 1. Rating of Western European countries in terms of GDP in US dollars at current prices

Place	Countries	1970	Place	Countries	2022	Dynamics
	World	2,997,270,495,500.10		World	100,562,011,134,034.00	
1	Germany	215,838,448,137.66	1	Germany	4,072,191,736,089.51	-
2	France	148,456,359,985.83	2	United Kingdom	3,070,667,732,359.21	↑
3	United Kingdom	130,682,295,637.12	3	France	2,782,905,325,624.52	↓
4	Italy	113,395,315,985.13	4	Italy	2,010,431,598,465.38	-
5	Spain	40,992,995,008.32	5	Spain	1,397,509,272,054.48	-
6	Netherlands	38,164,716,625.07	6	Netherlands	991,114,635,529.19	-
7	Belgium	26,706,196,046.79	7	Norway	579,267,365,866.34	↑↑
8	Denmark	17,075,457,585.20	8	Belgium	578,604,103,123.35	↓
9	Norway	12,814,194,863.30	9	Denmark	395,403,906,582.00	↓
10	Portugal	8,108,235,704.32	10	Portugal	251,945,377,529.39	-
11	Luxembourg	1,457,768,455.02	11	Luxembourg	82,274,812,250.92	-
12	Iceland	526,704,545.47	12	Iceland	27,841,648,044.38	-

Source: World Bank, statistics of main indicators of economic development

Throughout the examined period, there were alterations in the ranking: Great Britain moved from third place to second, overtaking France; Norway sharply increased its GDP, moving from 9th position to 7th, which is primarily associated with the oil crisis of the 70s; Belgium and Denmark dropped one position in the rankings.

Table 2 presents a comparison of share volumes within the structure. Germany occupies the largest share in the GDP structure, but over the past period 1970–2022 its contribution decreased by 3.54%. A strong reduction occurred in the share of Italy – by 2.66%. France reduced its share by 2.55%. At the same time, the share of the following countries increased: Spain (plus 3.17%); Norway (plus 1.87%); Great Britain (plus 1.58%); Netherlands (plus 1.04%); Portugal (plus 0.48%); Luxembourg (plus 0.31%); Denmark (plus 0.17%) and Iceland (plus 0.1%). The increase in Belgium's share was 0.02%.

Table 2. Shares in the total GDP of Western European countries

Countries	1970	2022	Change
Germany	28.62%	25.07%	-3.54%
France	19.68%	17.14%	-2.55%
United Kingdom	17.33%	18.91%	1.58%
Italy	15.03%	12.38%	-2.66%
Spain	5.44%	8.61%	3.17%
Netherlands	5.06%	6.10%	1.04%
Belgium	3.54%	3.56%	0.02%
Denmark	2.26%	2.43%	0.17%
Norway	1.70%	3.57%	1.87%
Portugal	1.08%	1.55%	0.48%
Luxembourg	0.19%	0.51%	0.31%
Iceland	0.07%	0.17%	0.10%

Source: World Bank, statistics of main indicators of economic development



In general, the contribution of Western European countries for the period 1970–2022 decreased by 9.01%, and as of 2022, it amounts to 16.15% of world GDP.

Looking at GDP growth in Western European countries from 1970 to 2022 at current prices, it can be noted that it increased the most in Luxembourg (55.4 times), Iceland (51.8 times), the smallest increase was observed in France (17.7 times) and Italy (16.7 times) (Table 3).

Table 3. Rating of Western European countries by GDP growth rates from 1970 to 2022 at current prices (according to WB methods)

Countries	GDP at current prices, USD billion		Growth in 52 years %
	1970	2022	
Luxembourg	1.46	82.27	5,543.89
Iceland	0.53	27.84	5,186.01
Norway	12.81	579.27	4,420.51
Spain	40.99	1,397.51	3,309.14
Portugal	8.11	251.95	3,007.28
Netherlands	38.16	991.11	2,496.94
United Kingdom	130.68	3,070.67	2,249.72
Denmark	17.08	395.40	2,215.63
Belgium	26.71	578.60	2,066.55
Germany	215.84	4,072.19	1,786.69
France	148.46	2,782.91	1,774.56
Italy	113.40	2,010.43	1,672.94
World	2,997.27	100,562.01	3,255.12

Source: World Bank, statistics of main indicators of economic development

In the modern period from 2015 to 2021, all countries experienced GDP growth (calculated based on constant local currency) from 2015 to 2019.

In 2020, GDP contracted in all Western European countries. The decline in GDP was caused by the virus pandemic and global trends (Table 4).

Table 4. West-European' GDP growth (annual, %) (according to the WB methodology)

Countries	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Belgium	3.14	2.38	3.72	2.32	2.86	2.04	1.27	1.62	1.79	2.26	-5.36	6.29	3.25
Den-mark	1.48	3.03	3.75	2.34	1.87	2.34	3.25	2.82	1.99	1.49	-1.99	4.86	3.82
France	2.92	2.11	3.92	1.66	1.95	1.11	1.10	2.29	1.87	1.84	-7.78	6.82	2.56
Germany	5.26	1.54	2.91	0.73	4.18	1.49	2.23	2.68	0.98	1.06	-3.70	2.63	1.79
Iceland	..	..	4.99	6.12	-2.83	4.44	6.30	4.19	4.89	1.81	-7.24	4.33	6.44

Italy	1.99	2.89	3.79	0.82	1.71	0.78	1.29	1.67	0.93	0.48	-8.98	6.99	3.67
Luxembourg	5.32	1.43	6.94	2.48	3.76	2.27	4.98	1.32	1.22	2.32	-0.80	5.10	1.55
Netherland	4.18	3.12	4.20	2.05	1.34	1.96	2.19	2.91	2.36	1.96	-3.89	4.86	4.48
Norway	1.93	4.16	3.32	2.69	0.79	1.86	1.16	2.46	0.83	1.12	-1.28	3.90	3.28
Portugal	3.95	4.28	3.82	0.78	1.74	1.79	2.02	3.51	2.85	2.68	-8.30	5.50	6.69
Spain	3.78	2.76	5.25	3.65	0.16	3.84	3.04	2.98	2.28	1.98	-11.33	5.52	5.45
United	0.73	2.53	4.09	2.67	2.43	2.39	2.17	2.44	1.71	1.60	-11.03	7.60	4.10
World	2.80	3.08	4.52	4.00	4.54	3.08	2.81	3.39	3.29	2.59	-3.07	6.02	3.08

Source: World Bank, statistics of main indicators of economic development

### Dynamics of GDP per capita.

Now, we will evaluate the dynamics of GDP per capita in constant 2015 US dollars. Over the 52 years from 1970 to 2022, the indicator increased maximum in Luxembourg (by 203.15%), Norway (197.87%); the minimum growth rate was in Italy (109.09%), France (121.03%) (Table 5). Iceland is not included in the collection because it began publishing statistics in 1995.

Table 5. Ranking of GDP per capita growth rates (constant 2015 US\$) in West-European countries

Countries	1970	Place	Countries	2022	Place	Rate of increase 2022/1970
Luxembourg	35,513.80	1	Luxembourg	107,660.14	1	203.15%
Denmark	26,927.96	2	Denmark	60,113.09	3	123.24%
Norway	26,735.83	3	Norway	79,638.75	2	197.87%
Netherlands	21,362.85	4	Netherlands	49,979.85	4	133.96%
United Kingdom	19,722.86	5	United Kingdom	47,232.27	5	139.48%
Germany	17,894.30	6	Germany	43,032.14	7	140.48%
Belgium	17,849.49	7	Belgium	44,075.86	6	146.93%
France	17,605.64	8	France	38,913.94	8	121.03%
Italy	15,736.18	9	Italy	32,902.67	9	109.09%
Spain	11,436.03	10	Spain	27,434.88	10	139.90%
Portugal	7,658.74	11	Portugal	22,112.74	11	188.73%
World	4,918.17	12	World	1,287.15	12	129.50%

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

The following changes have occurred in the ranking of countries: Denmark moved from 2nd to 3rd place; at the end of 2022, the highest GDP per capita indicators were noted in Luxembourg - 107,660.14 US dollars, Norway - 79,638.75 US dollars, Denmark - 60,113.09 US dollars; Norway increased its place in the ranking by 1 position and took 2nd place in terms of GDP per capita, overtaking Denmark; Belgium's position rose from 7th

place to 6th position. The remaining countries maintained their positions.

The dynamics of the growth rate of GDP per capita before 1999 varied significantly across countries, but after the introduction of a single currency (euro) the indicators smoothed out ( Figure 1, 2 ).

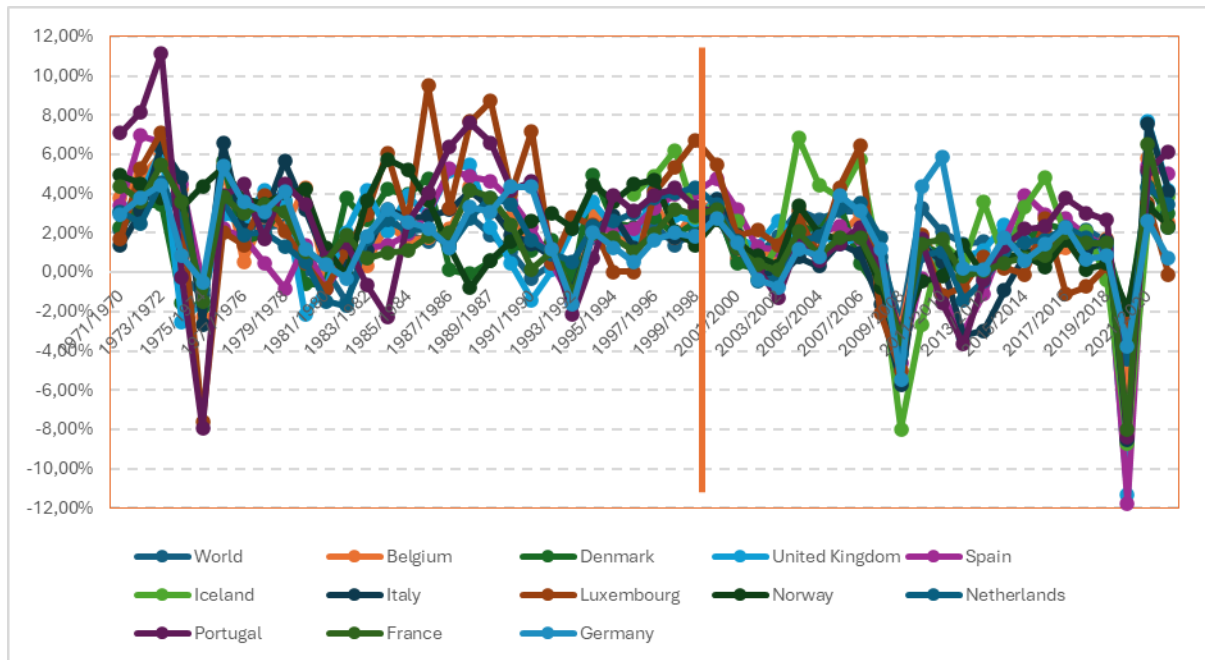


Figure 1. GDP per capita growth rate from 1971 to 2022

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators\

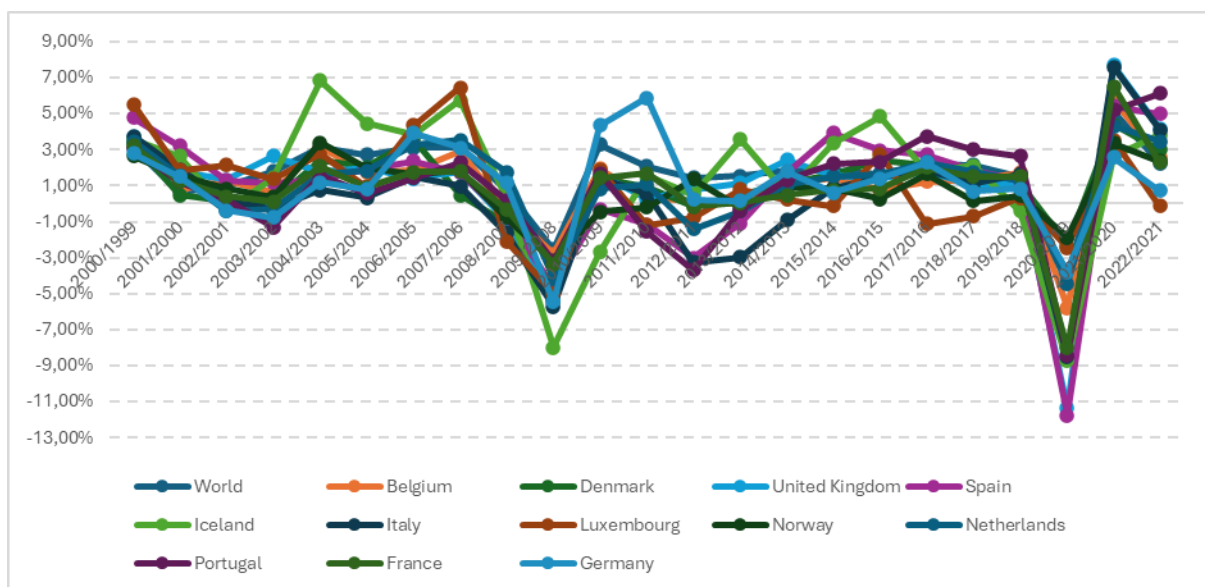


Figure 2. GDP per capita growth rate from 1999 to 2022

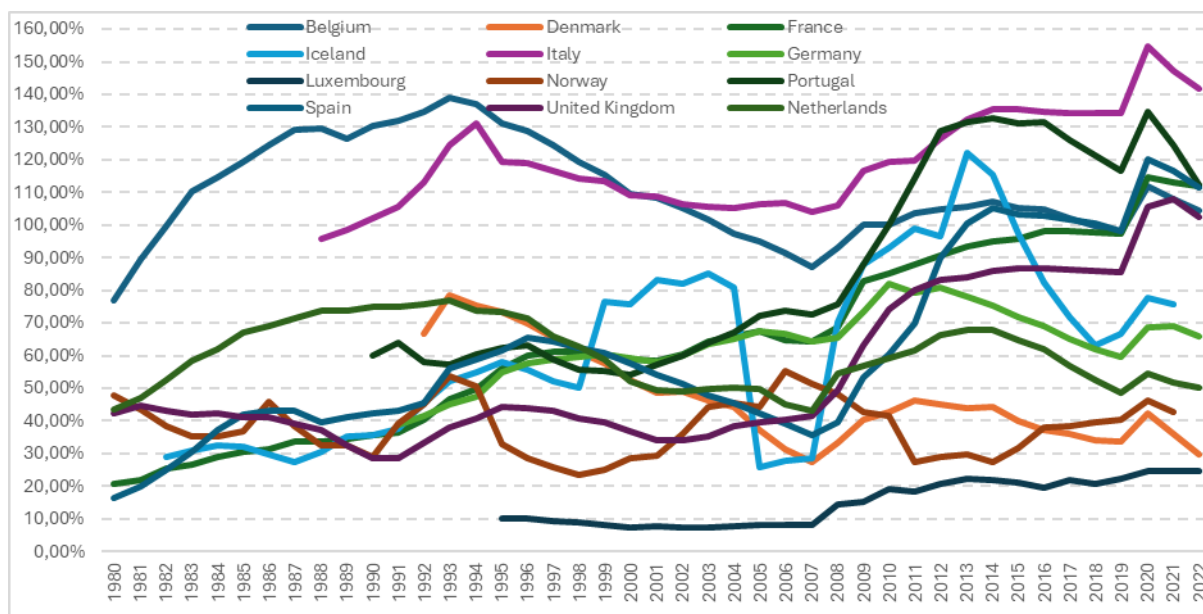
Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

In 2020, all Western European countries showed a decline in the indicator, the maximum in Spain (by 11.76%) and the UK (by 11.36%), associated with restrictions introduced to combat COVID -19. In 2021, the dynamics corrected; in all Western European countries, the indicator increased by an average of 4.9%.

*Dynamics of public debt.*

Systematized and standardized statistics for Western European countries have been available since 1980. The growth of GDP in the countries under consideration was accompanied by an increase in the share of government borrowing in GDP. In general, for the period in all countries the dynamics of public debt is unstable, with a growing trend ( Figure 3).

Figure 3. Dynamics of general government gross debt in GDP in West-European countries from 1980–2022.



Source: <https://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/>

Across the duration of the period, public debt experienced a rise in all the countries under examination (refer to Table 6). The growth rate is strikingly different across countries: the growth was almost 43 times in Spain (42.52 times), in France (21.23 times); Public debt increased more than 10 times in the UK (12.26 times). In other countries, the growth rate of public debt is much less: from 9.55 times in Luxembourg (it should be noted that data for the country are available from 1995) to 1.17 times in Denmark (data from 1992).

Table 6. Dynamics of external debt in West-European countries, in millions of US dollars

Country name	Year	Data	Year	Data	Growth rate, times
Belgium	1980	94.827	2022	608.701	6.42
Denmark	1992	102.102	2022	119,606	1.17

France	1980	146.271	2022	3,105,646	21.23
Italy	1988	858.635	2022	2,911,298	3.39
Germany	1991	731.202	2022	2,711,576	3.71
Luxembourg	1995	2.115	2022	20,192	9.55
Norway	1980	30,727	2021	209.371	6.81
Portugal	1990	47,832	2022	292,884	6.12
Spain	1980	37,213	2022	1,582,453	42.52
United Kingdom	1980	257.102	2022	3,151,536	12.26
Netherlands	1980	84,513	2022	506,017	5.99

Source: <https://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/>

Looking at the volume of public debt as a share of GDP, significant changes can be noted in most countries (Table 7).

Table 7. Dynamics of public debt in GDP in West-European countries from, %

Country name	1995	2021	Change
Belgium	131.30	108.00	- 23.30
Denmark	73.20	36.00	- 37.20
France	56.10	112.90	56.80
Germany	54.90	69.00	14.10
Iceland	58.07	75.58	17.51
Italy	119.40	147.10	27.70
Luxembourg	10.10	24.50	14.40
Netherlands	73.20	51.70	- 21.50
Norway	32.74	42.70	9.96
Portugal	62.20	124.50	62.30

Source: <https://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/>

Let's consider the period between 1995 and 2021, for which statistics are available for all countries under consideration. In Belgium, the volume of public debt in the structure of GDP decreased by 23.3% and amounted to 108% of GDP. In France, Italy and Portugal, the share of public debt increased (by 56.8%, 27.5% and 62.3% respectively) significantly exceeding the limit of 100% of GDP at 112.90%, 147.10% and 124.50%. In other countries, the share of public debt ranges from 24.50% in Luxembourg to 69% in Germany in the structure of GDP.

*Development dynamics for financial mediation institutions*

Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (% of population ages 15+).

The development of financial intermediation in Western European countries can be analyzed, inter alia, by examining the dynamics of account holders in financial institutions. In general, for the period from 2011 to 2021 (data for earlier periods are not available), the percentage of people holding accounts in financial institutions mostly remained stable ( Figure 4).

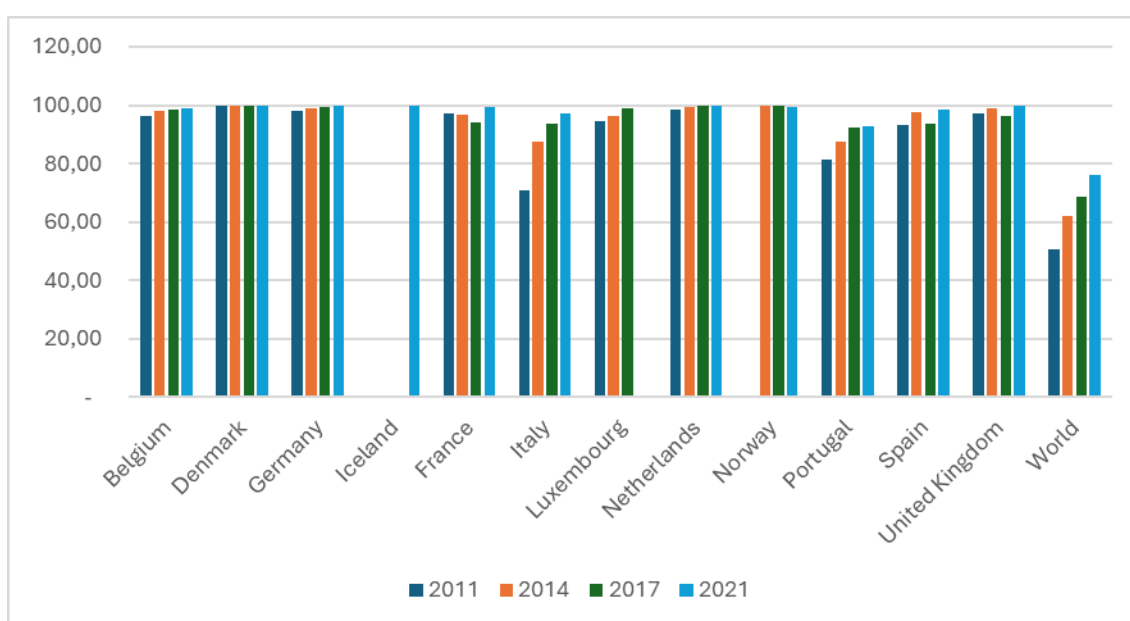


Figure 4. Dynamics of account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (% of population ages 15+).

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

In the period under review, growth was observed in Italy (from 71% in 2011 to 97.3 in 2021) and Portugal (from 81% in 2011 to 92.6% in 2021).

Taking into account the changes in the evolution of Private and public credit bureau coverage (% of adults ), the following trends can be noted in the number of individuals or firms listed in private and public credit bureaus with current information on repayment history, unpaid debts or outstanding credit: in France the figure increased by 282% from 12.30% in 2004 to 47% in 2019, in Italy by 101.69 from 65% in 2004 to 131% in 2019; in Belgium, the growth rate was 79.36% - from 53.30% in 2004 to 95.60% in 2019; in Spain 65.80% from 45.90% in 2004 to 76.10% in 2019; in the Netherlands there was an increase from 64.50% in 2004 to 98.70 in 2019 (53%); in Portugal there was a sharp increase in the indicator from 2010 (83.40%) to 2013 (123.20%), but then the situation stabilized and as of 2019 the indicator was 107.90% ( Figure 5).

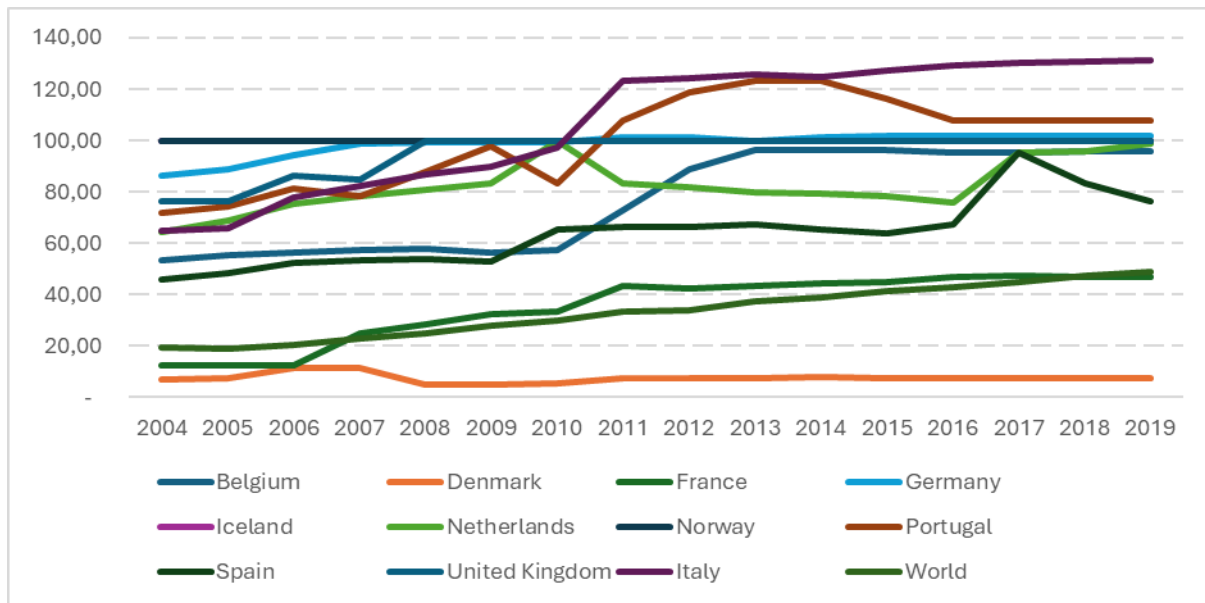


Figure 5. Dynamics of Private and Public Credit Bureau Coverage (% of adults).

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

*Dynamics of overdue debt*

Next, we will evaluate overdue debt, which shows the efficiency of lending ( Figure 6).

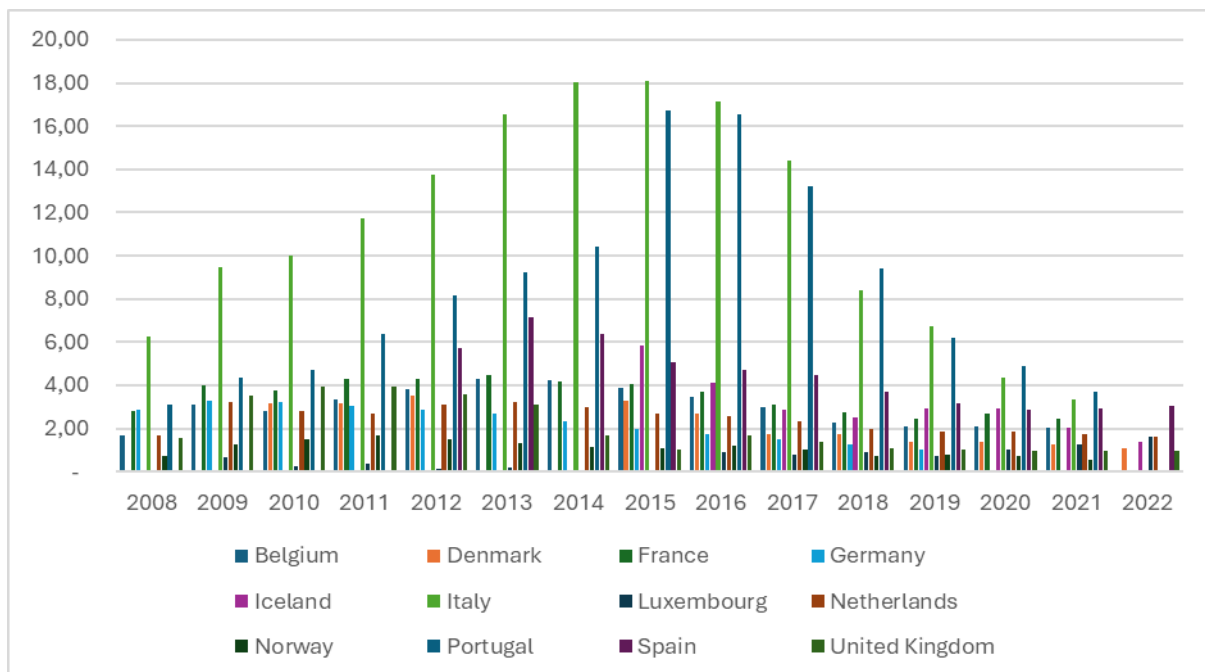


Figure 6. Share (%) of overdue debt in total lending.

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

During the period from 2008 to 2021, the following changes occurred:



1. The share of overdue debt increased from 2008 to 2015 in Italy and Portugal, reaching 18% and 16.74% respectively in 2015, followed by a decrease to the 2008 level, and in Italy to 3.35%. During this period, there was an increase in overdue debt in Spain. However, we note that Spain began publishing statistics in 2012, which makes its data less indicative.

2. In other Western European countries, the share of overdue debt fluctuated in the two percent range and remained largely stable.

The ranking of countries by the share of overdue debt for 2021 is presented in Figure 7.

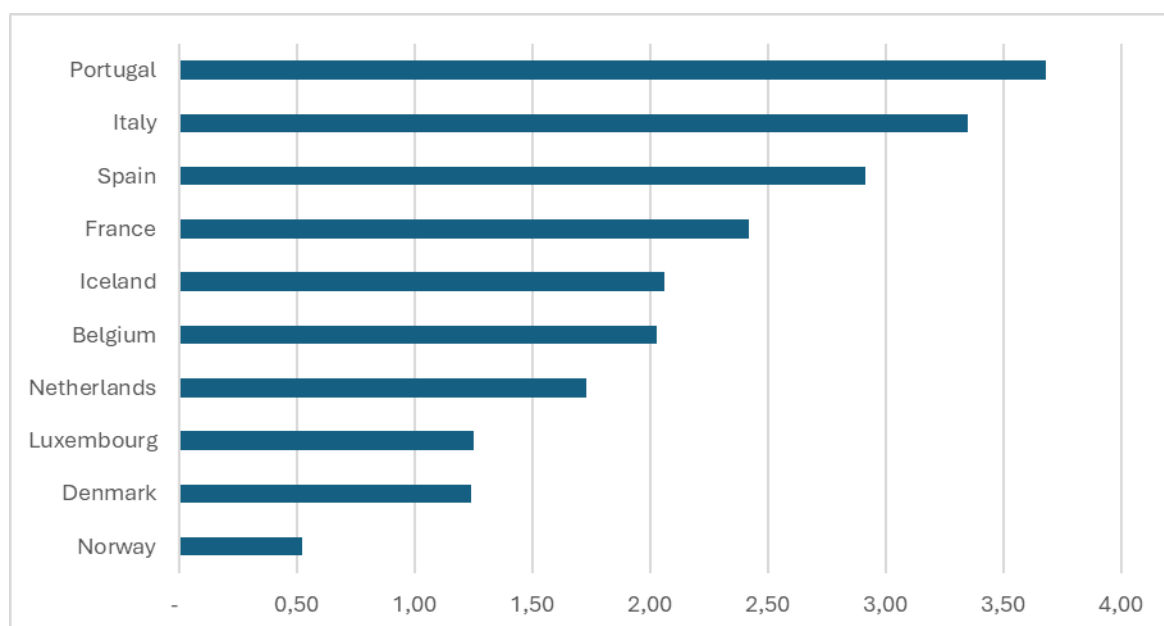


Figure 7. Ranking of countries by the level of overdue debt as of 2021, % of total debt

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

As can be seen from the figure, Portugal has the largest share of overdue debt – 3.68%; Italy is in second place - 3.35%, followed by Spain - 2.92% and France - 2.42%. The group of countries with medium level of debt reduction is formed by Iceland, Belgium and the Netherlands. Reduced levels of overdue debt were observed in Luxembourg and Denmark. In Norway the figure is the smallest and is 0.53%.

### Assessment of welfare dynamics

#### Human capital index

Let's explore the primary indicators of the population's well-being in Western European countries and perform a comparative analysis of key factors that delineate the well-being of the populace. An encompassing measure of human development is the Human Capital Index (HCI), which encompasses life expectancy, educational components, and health status. Figure 8 illustrates the ranking of Western European countries based on their Human Capital Index levels.

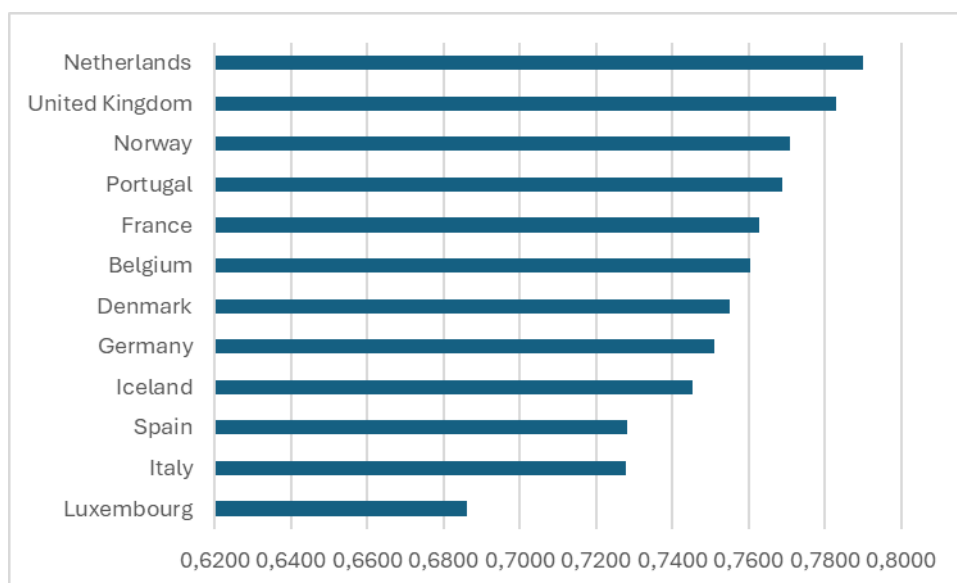


Figure 8. Human capital index in the West-European countries, as of 2020

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

As can be seen from the figure, the first position is occupied by the Netherlands with an HCI of 0.7899. The UK is in second place with an indicator of 0.7829. Next, with a noticeable difference, comes Norway with an HCI of 0.7711. This is followed by a group of countries with approximately the same values: Portugal (0.7689); France (0.7627); Belgium (0.7604). Denmark (0.7551) and Germany (0.7512) are slightly less. Next comes Iceland with an indicator of 0.7453 and Spain and Italy with indicators of 0.7283 and 0.7278, respectively. Luxembourg closes the ranking with 0.6861.

Table 8 shows the dynamics according to the World Bank.

Table 8. Dynamics of changes in the human capital index

Country name	2010	2017	Growth rate,	2018	Growth	2020	Growth	Growth
Belgium	0.7527	0.7570	0.57	0.7628	0.76	0.7604	-0.31	1.02
Denmark	0.7487	0.7740	3.37	0.7708	-0.41	0.7551	-2.04	0.85
France	0.7569	0.7650	1.07	0.7560	-1.18	0.7627	0.90	0.77
Germany	0.7607	0.7950	4.50	0.7638	-3.93	0.7512	-1.65	-1.26
Iceland	0.7552	0.7400	-2.01	0.7434	0.46	0.7453	0.25	-1.31
Italy	0.7503	0.7690	2.50	0.7529	-2.10	0.7278	-3.33	-2.99
Luxembourg	0.7002	0.6920	-1.17	0.6924	0.05	0.6861	-0.90	-2.01
Netherlands	0.7971	0.8000	0.36	0.8030	0.38	0.7899	-1.63	-0.90
Norway	0.7706	0.7710	0.06	0.7685	-0.32	0.7711	0.33	0.06
Portugal	0.7426	0.7760	4.49	0.7834	0.96	0.7689	-1.85	3.54
United Kingdom	0.7655	0.7810	2.03	0.7770	-0.51	0.7829	0.77	2.28
Spain	0.7083	0.7430	4.90	0.7362	-0.92	0.7283	-1.07	2.82

Source: World Bank, statistics of main indicators of economic development

Considering the dynamics over 10 years from 2010 to 2020, it can be noted that in 5 countries there was a decrease in the HCI: in Italy by 3%, Luxembourg by 2%, Iceland - 1.31%, Germany - 1.26%, the Netherlands - 0.9%. Strong growth was observed in Portugal (3.54%). The indicator increased in Spain by 2.28%, in the UK - 2.28%. In Belgium the growth was 1.02%, Denmark 0.85% and France 0.77%. A slight increase was observed in Norway (0.06%).

Positive dynamics of the index in all countries, with the exception of Iceland and Luxembourg, was noted in 2017 compared to 2010 - the maximum increase was in Spain (4.90%) and Germany (4.50%), the minimum in Norway - 0.06%.

In 2018, compared to 2017, negative dynamics were observed in seven countries: Germany (3.97%), Italy (2.10%), France (1.18%), Spain (0.92%), Great Britain (0.51%), Norway (0.32%) and Denmark (0.41%).

In 2020, compared to 2018, there were negative dynamics in 8 countries - the index decreased from 0.31% in Belgium to 3.33% in Italy. An increase in HCI was recorded only in France (0.90%), Great Britain (0.77%), Norway (0.33%) and Iceland (0.25%).

#### *Life expectancy at birth.*

Let us next consider the individual components of the welfare assessment by estimating the life expectancy at birth. Table 9 analyzes the dynamics over 60 years.

Based on the results of 2021, the leaders in terms of life expectancy at birth are Spain, Norway and Iceland, where the indicator varies from 83.18 years to 83.12 years:

- Spain ranks first with an indicator of 83.18 years, since 1960 this indicator has grown by 20.36%, the country has risen from 9th place to 1st in the ranking of Western European countries;
- in second place is Norway with an indicator of 83.16 years, over 61 years there was an increase of 13.07%, the country remained in the same position;
- Iceland is in third place with an indicator of 83.12 years, during the period under review there was an increase of 12.68%, in the ranking the country dropped by 2 positions, in 1960 it was the leader in life expectancy (73.76 years).

Italy lags slightly behind the leading countries: at the end of 2021, it is in 4th place with an indicator of 82.80, during the period there was an increase of 19.78%, the country rose 2 positions in the ranking ( Figure 9).

Note that the largest increase in life expectancy at birth was noted in Portugal – 26.66%, Luxembourg – 20.64%, and Spain – 20.36%. The smallest growth was observed in the Netherlands – 10.99%.

Table 9. Dynamics of change in life expectancy at birth, years

Name countries	1960	Place	1970	Place	1980	Place	1990	Place	2000	Place	2010	Place	2021	Place	Change, years (2021-1960)	Change, %, (2021-1960)	Change of position (2021-1960)
World	50.89	13	57.84	13	62.23	13	65.19	13	67.70	13	70.67	13	71.33	13	20.43	40.15	
Belgium	69.70	7	70.97	9	73.21	9	76.05	7	77.72	10	80.18	9	81.89	7	12.19	17.49	0
Denmark	72.18	4	73.34	4	74.10	5	74.81	11	76.59	11	79.10	11	81.40	9	9.23	12.79	-5
France	69.87	6	71.66	7	74.05	6	76.60	5	79.06	3	81.66	3	82.32	6	12.46	17.83	0
Germany	69.06	10	70.45	10	72.80	10	75.09	10	77.93	7	79.99	10	80.90	11	11.84	17.14	-1
Iceland	73.76	1	73.93	2	76.85	1	78.04	1	79.65	2	81.90	2	83.12	3	9.36	12.68	-2
Italy	69.12	8	71.56	8	73.94	7	76.97	2	79.78	1	82.04	1	82.80	4	13.67	19.78	4
Luxembourg	68.59	11	69.59	11	72.21	11	75.44	9	77.87	8	80.63	7	82.75	5	14.16	20.64	6
Netherlands	73.39	3	73.59	3	75.74	2	76.88	3	77.99	6	80.70	6	81.46	8	8.07	10.99	-5
Norway	73.55	2	74.09	1	75.67	3	76.54	6	78.63	5	81.00	5	83.16	2	9.61	13.07	0
Portugal	64.01	12	67.07	12	71.21	12	73.97	12	76.31	12	79.03	12	81.07	10	17.07	26.66	2
Spain	69.11	9	72.03	5	75.35	4	76.84	4	78.97	4	81.63	4	83.18	1	14.07	20.36	8
United Kingdom	71.13	5	71.97	6	73.68	8	75.88	8	77.74	9	80.40	8	80.70	12	9.57	13.46	-7

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

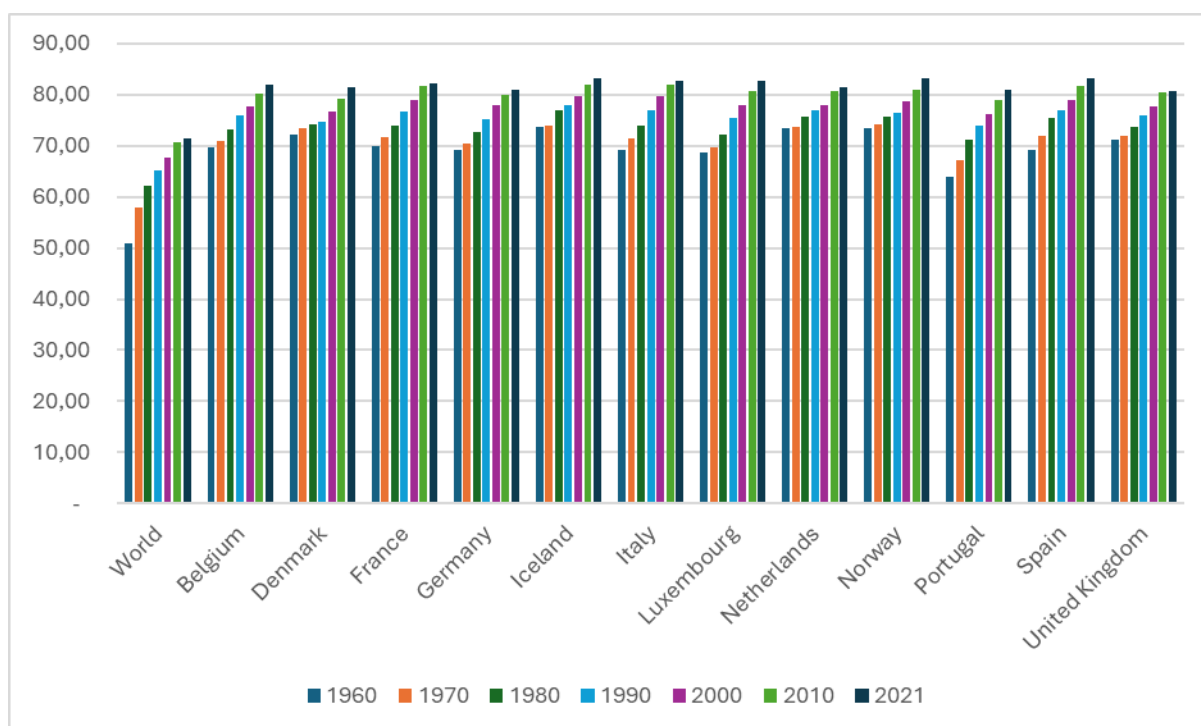


Figure 9. Dynamics of life expectancy at birth, years

Source: World Bank, Statistics of Key Economic Development Indicators

## Discussion

Currently, the Western European economy is evolving amidst substantial external and internal pressure, with crisis phenomena affecting the socio-economic systems of integration group countries. The advancement of financial intermediary institutions holds the potential to expedite recovery from the crisis and foster an

improvement in the well-being of the population. If appropriately supported, financial intermediation can serve as a catalyst for financial market development. It is crucial, at this economic stage, to articulate universal principles and algorithms for the growth of financial intermediary institutions applicable in markets to enhance economic security.

O.B. Tikhomirova (2013) highly values the role of financial intermediaries, viewing financial intermediation as a driver for innovation and the development of the service sector. Presently, various theories define financial intermediation differently and assess the relationship between financial market structure and population well-being in diverse ways.

The debate over the ratio of banking to non-banking sectors in the financial intermediation market persists. Norden L. (2015) underscores the role of banks in the development of the SME lending market. Simultaneously, the correlation between financial instrument development and population welfare growth is highlighted by many researchers (Beck T., Demirgüç-Kunt A., Levine R. (2004), Glotova (2019), Musabeh A., Alrifai K., Kalloub M. (2020), Haan J., Pleninger R., Sturm J. (2021), Wesley E, Peterson F. (2017)). The significance of the Central Bank in financial intermediation development is widely recognized, considering interactions between various financial intermediaries such as banks and insurance companies, as well as banks and pension funds.

Claessens S. (2009) contends that competition in the financial sector, as in other sectors, matters for allocative, productive, and dynamic efficiency. We align with V.M. Pishchulov's (2021) perspective, asserting that the type and specifics of financial intermediaries' specialization can impact transaction speed in the economy, influencing economic growth and population well-being. Financial and insurance intermediaries play a crucial role in enhancing economic security by mitigating operational risks, particularly in regional financial markets (Kozminykh (2020)).

We advocate for a comprehensive development of financial intermediary institutions, encompassing investment funds, financial cooperatives, pension funds, and more.

Based on the results of the study, it can be noted that countries with high indicators in the field of economic development and well-being of the population (Luxembourg, Iceland, and Norway) also demonstrate a high degree of use of financial instruments. These countries are experiencing dynamic growth in GDP per capita. The most backward countries in terms of this indicator are Portugal, Spain, and Italy. However, participation in a single socio-economic space has a positive effect on the growth of the quality of life in these countries. The consequence is an increase in life expectancy and a leveling off of this indicator.

The Human Development Index highlights the identified trends - Portugal, Spain and the UK show the highest indicators. The Netherlands was and remains the leader in the indicator throughout the entire publication period of the indicator (from 2010 to 2020) with a level of 0.79. The minimum is in Italy (the figure has decreased by 3% since 2010) and Spain (the rate has increased by approximately 3%).

The dynamics of overdue debt does not show a direct relationship with development indicators, but the dynamics themselves are similar across countries: the most favorable situation is observed in Norway and the UK.

## Conclusion

Financial intermediation serves as a catalyst for economic development and contributes to improving the overall welfare of the population by better meeting needs and increasing national income. Considering the dynamics of economic development of Western European countries after the Second World War, one can clearly note that:

- The GDP of Western European countries increased significantly from 1970 to 2022, but their share in world GDP decreased due to the rapid industrial development of Asian countries. At the same time, we must also consider the transfer of industrial production from developed countries to developing countries that began in the 70s and sharply intensified in the 80s.
- Public debt of Western European countries has also increased, in some cases exceeding 100% of GDP, which, together with the next point, appears to be one of the consequences of the consumer economy and the stimulation of consumer demand by governments.
- Account ownership and credit bureau coverage indicators showed the development of financial intermediation in Western European countries, but also highlighted some risks and challenges.
- The human capital index and life expectancy at birth reflect the well-being of a population, which varies across countries and over time.

Throughout this exploration, we have delved into amidst substantial external and internal pressures, the Western European economy is currently undergoing significant evolution. Crisis phenomena are impacting the socio-economic systems of integration group countries. Financial intermediary institutions play a decisive role in this context, as they have the potential to expedite recovery from the crisis and enhance the well-being of the population. When appropriately supported, financial intermediation can act as an accelerator for the development of financial markets.

Some researchers highly value the role of financial intermediaries, viewing financial intermediation as a driver for innovation and the development of the service sector. Currently, various theories define financial intermediation differently and assess the relationship between financial market structure and population well-being in diverse ways. The debate over the ratio of banking to non-banking sectors in the financial intermediation market persists. Simultaneously, many researchers highlight the correlation between financial instrument development and population welfare growth. The significance of the Central Bank in financial intermediation development is widely recognized, considering interactions between various financial intermediaries such as banks and insurance companies, as well as banks and pension funds.

Based on the study results, it is evident that countries with high indicators in economic development and population well-being (such as Luxembourg, Iceland, and Norway) also exhibit a significant utilization of

financial instruments. These nations are currently experiencing dynamic growth in GDP per capita. Conversely, the least advanced countries in terms of these indicators include Portugal, Spain, and Italy. However, participation in a unified socio-economic space has a positive impact on the overall quality of life in these countries, leading to increased life expectancy and stabilization of this indicator.

The Human Development Index sheds light on these trends. Portugal, Spain, and the UK display the highest HDI indicators. Notably, the Netherlands consistently maintains its leadership position in the HDI throughout the entire publication period (from 2010 to 2020), with a score of 0.79. In contrast, Italy has experienced a 3% decline since 2010, while Spain's rate has increased by approximately 3%.

Regarding overdue debt dynamics, although there is no direct relationship with development indicators, the patterns remain similar across countries. Notably, Norway and the UK exhibit the most favorable situations in this regard.

The article concludes that financial intermediation has both a positive and negative impact on the well-being of the population, depending on the level of development, regulation, and innovativeness of the financial sector. The article also suggests some directions for future research, such as conducting regression analyzes to establish the causal relationship between financial intermediation and well-being and comparing the results with other regions of the world.

It should be noted that due to the paucity of data on the Human Development Index (data are available for only three years), it is necessary to carry out lengthy preparatory work to retrospectively obtain the above-mentioned data.

## Notes

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

No funding received.

These data were derived from the following resources available in the public domain:

<https://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/>,

<https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>

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## Hardware Implementation of Simplified Fuzzy Logic Speed Control for Induction Motors

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**Abstract:** Fuzzy logic control systems have gained widespread use in motor drives due to their effectiveness in managing intricate and nonlinear systems. However, the implementation of such systems can present computational challenges when dealing with extensive fuzzy rules, demanding significant resource allocation. To address this issue, a simplified fuzzy logic speed controller has been developed to reduce computational complexity and hardware requirements while preserving high performance. This article introduces a simplified Fuzzy Logic (FL) Controller that integrates vector control and space vector pulse width modulation (SVPWM) for regulating an inverter-fed induction motor. Evaluations and comparisons were conducted among simplified standard rule controllers, including 25-rule, 9-rule, and 7-rule variations, alongside the simplified 5-rule FL controller. The experimental validation employed hardware components like an induction motor, controller, inverter, current and voltage sensors, and a DSP board. The experimental findings indicate that the optimised membership functions (MFs) of the 5-rule controller exhibited a recovery from load disturbances 10ms faster than those of the 7-rule counterpart, performing nearly as well as the 9-rule controller. This suggests that the proposed controller shows promise for deployment in high-speed motor applications like traction systems and electric cars, demonstrating a robust ability to swiftly overcome load disturbances.

**Keywords:** Fuzzy Logic Controller, Induction Motor, Speed Control, Membership Functions, Scaling Factors

**Citation:** Salleh, Z., Patakor, F., A., & Koo, K., E. (2024). Hardware Implementation of Simplified Fuzzy Logic Speed Control for Induction Motors. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1970-1981), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The development of vector control technology allows induction motors (IM) to be used for variable speed drives and motion control (Biswal & Satpathy, 2021). The vector control method makes use of the dynamic mathematical model of the induction motor and allows for separate flux and torque management. An induction motor can be regulated similarly to an independently stimulated dc machine (Mudigondla et al., 2023). Due to its difficulty, nonlinearity, and inaccuracy, the Fuzzy Logic Controller (FLC) has demonstrated its effectiveness as a recognition controller because to its challenging quantifiability in scientific plant regulation. Several studies (Zidani et al., 2019) proposed using the FLC to control speed in vector control of induction motor drives. Researchers (Dems & Komez, 2022) proved that FLC can provide good dynamics and resilience of drive performance. An AC induction motor may consume more energy than necessary. The use of FLC can lower the amount of energy expended by the induction motor during starting or when operating at less than full load (Menghal & Jaya Laxmi, 2016).

However, due to the high operational complexity and considerable memory requirements in either hardware or software, the FLC implementation in motor drives is limited in various ways. Researchers (Farah et al., 2021; Salleh et al., 2017b) used several approaches, including scaling factor modification, rule set adjustment, and editing the membership function. Because of the numerous characteristics, FLC adjustment is more difficult than traditional PI controller adjustment (Krishna Veni et al., 2019). Several researchers have investigated FLC parameter tweaks that could have a significant impact on overall performance (Talib et al., 2018).

Adjusting scaling factors is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of the FL Controller, significantly impacting FLC performance (Farah et al., 2019). Scholars, employing the trial-and-error method, have sought to refine scaling factor values (Maheswari & Shanthi, 2018). Calibration is vital since alterations in scaling factors can influence system stability, oscillation, and damping (Farah et al., 2021). Strategies for reducing FL controller rules in vector control of induction motor drives often involve lowering the number of rules through decreased membership function (MF) numbers. Experts commonly create rule sets with MF columns to derive the output of the controller from MF input or output relationships. (Fahassa et al., 2017). Investigating reduced MFs, (Talib et al., 2017) explored 7x7, 5x5, and 3x3 FLCs, producing 49, 25, and 9 rules, respectively. These approaches offer insights into optimizing FLC systems, acknowledging the multifaceted impact of scaling factors and rule reduction on performance.

Researchers also discovered that decreasing MFs and rules affects drive performance while improving computational efficiency. In contrast, pushed for a simplified FLC approach that would reduce the processing overhead for high-performance IM drive control. Some researchers used 5x5 MF matrices with seven rules, ensuring operation across the range. However, no consideration was given to the optimization of membership functions for the robust speed controller.

Therefore, this research has focused on a new optimised MFs 5-rule FL controller to lessen the high computational burden and maintain robustness and high-performance standards. Both the inputs and outputs for the FLC were scaled with three different factors; speed error,  $G_e$ , change in speed error,  $G_{ce}$  and change in output,  $G_{cu}$ . The adjusting of the  $G_{ce}$  was chosen since it has greater impact on dynamic responsiveness.

## Method

### Fuzzy Logic Controller Design

An accurate model of induction motor is essential in designing high-performance drive systems. A consideration of the steady state as well as the dynamic mode is essential. The proposed system as shown in Fig. 1 consists of three main components: the motor and mechanical load, the inverter, and the controller.

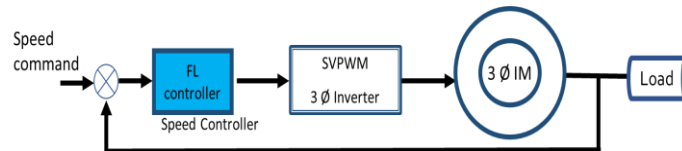


Fig. 1. Fuzzy Logic controller applied to an electrical drive

The FL controller structure can be illustrated in Fig. 2. Speed error,  $e$ , and change of speed error are considered the input linguistic variables and the current component torque,  $i_{qs}^*$  is considered the output linguistic variable.

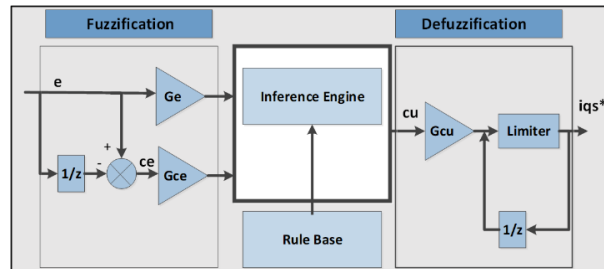


Fig. 2. Structure of Fuzzy Logic Controller

Therefore, the relationship function of FLC can be written as:

$$i_q(n) = \int_{discrete} \Delta i_q(n) = f(\Delta e(n), \Delta \omega_m(n)) \tag{1}$$

change in speed error is

$$\Delta e(n) = \Delta \omega_m(n) - \Delta \omega_m(n - 1) \tag{2}$$

speed error is

$$\Delta \omega_m(n) = \omega_m^*(n) - \omega_m(n) \tag{3}$$

$\omega_m(n)$  is actual speed,  $\omega_m^*(n)$  is speed reference and  $f$  denotes a nonlinear function.

### Scaling factors

For appropriateness, the inputs and the FLC's output were scaled with three factors:  $G_e$ ,  $G_{ce}$ , and  $G_{cu}$ . The  $G_e$  and  $G_{ce}$  factors are selected to stabilise the error signal,  $e$  and the change of speed error,  $\Delta e_n$  respectively. So that these remain within the limit of -1 to +1.  $G_{cu}$  is the output scaling factor for change in output fuzzy. If the value of  $\Delta e$  is small, then  $G_{cu}$  need to be reduced, and if  $\Delta e$  is big, then  $G_{cu}$  need to be increased.

By using the method in (Salleh et al., 2017a).  $G_{ce}$  and  $G_e$  are computed using known motor data. The rated speed of the motor, 184.3rad/s, is assumed to be the maximum speed error,  $\omega_{e_{max}}$  of the motor. Therefore, the scaling factor  $G_e$  for the motor is determined using the following calculation:

$$G_e = \frac{1}{2\omega_{e_{max}}} \quad (4)$$

$$G_e = 0.002713$$

Meanwhile, the  $G_{ce}$  is determined based on the change of speed,  $\Delta\omega$ . Thus,  $G_{ce}$  can be determined by the following equation (Talib et al., 2017):

$$G_{ce} = \frac{1}{ce} = \frac{1}{\Delta\omega} \quad (5)$$

The change of speed  $\Delta\omega$  for forward-reverse motor operation can be calculated by an equation ((5) based on the rated inertia,  $J_n = 0.008217$  and the maximum torque,  $T_{max} = 19.794$  given by the manufacturer. The sampling time is 20 $\mu$ s.

$$T_{max} = \frac{2J_n}{p} \left( \frac{\Delta\omega}{T_s} \right) \quad (6)$$

Therefore, Equation (5) is calculated as:

$$T_{e_{max}} = \frac{2J_n}{p} \left( \frac{\Delta\omega}{T_s} \right)$$

$$\Delta\omega = \frac{pT_{e_{max}}}{2} \left( \frac{T_s}{J_n} \right)$$

$$\Delta\omega = \frac{4(19.794)}{2} \left( \frac{20\mu}{0.008217} \right)$$

$$\Delta\omega = 0.0964$$

Therefore,

$$G_{ce} = \frac{1}{ce} = \frac{1}{\Delta\omega} = \frac{1}{0.0964} = 10.373$$

The drive's optimum performance can be achieved by tuning the  $G_{ce}$  because it has more impact on the dynamic response. By tuning the  $G_{ce}$ , the coefficient can be expressed as.

$$\text{Tuned } G_{ce} = \beta G_{ce} \quad (7)$$

Where  $\beta$  represents the tuning factor within the band of values.

$$0 < \beta < 1$$

The initial scaling factors used in this study are  $G_e=0.002713$ ,  $G_{ce}=10.373$ , and  $G_{cu}=2$ . (Increase  $G_{cu}$  to value 2 for this investigation to limit the system's rapid defection from the desired operating point and speed up the system's recovery to the desired operating point).  $G_e$  and  $G_{cu}$  remain as constant parameters. The influence of  $G_{ce}$  is investigated by increasing or decreasing the  $G_{ce}$  by measured for every 10% change in the input scaling factor.

#### *Reducing Fuzzy Rules and Optimizing Membership Functions*

The rule base is a matrix that determines the controller output based on the input(s) since it stores the input/output relationship. This work employs Mamdani's type rule to create a natural structure for transforming personal data into fuzzy 'IF... THEN' rules. In this level, the inference engine, which executes the rule base, handles the input variables  $e$  and  $ce$ . Researchers typically use the 49-rule foundation to achieve fully digital speed control for ac motors. The linguistic variables utilized for input and output parameters are specified as: NL is Negative Large, NM is Negative Medium, NS is Negative Small, ZE is Zero Error, PS is Positive Small, PM is Positive Medium, and PL is Positive Large.

In this investigation, the simplifying method is used to nine rule bases. The error must use all the MF function groups. Meanwhile, the error change has dramatically altered in a short period of time throughout the speed command change; in most other instances, the signal is based on modest and zero values. Consequently, only the PS, NS, and ZE of the MFs are important while designing the rules. The use of ZE for change of error will stabilise performance in steady-state conditions.

Additionally, NS and PS are utilised to achieve steady-state conditions and endure disturbances in load during the transition time. However, NL and PL functions to prevent or decrease overshoot but are not used in this design system. By taking this strategy, only 5- rules Table 30 is utilised in the simplified technique rather than the 9-rule. for 3x3 MF rules-based matrix as follows:

1. Rule 1: If  $e$  is NS and  $ce$  is ZE, then  $cu$  is NS
2. Rule 2: If  $e$  is ZE and  $ce$  is NS, then  $cu$  is NS
3. Rule 3: If  $e$  is ZE and  $ce$  is ZE, then  $cu$  is ZE
4. Rule 4: If  $e$  is ZE and  $ce$  is PS, then  $cu$  is PS
5. Rule 5: If  $e$  is PS and  $ce$  is ZE, then  $cu$  is PS



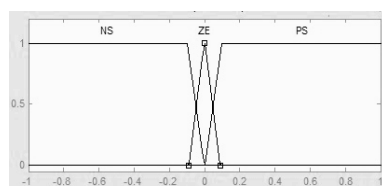
The membership functions can be refined through adjustments made to FLC at the peak of the MFs in the motor system to boost the system's resilience. The drive system's appropriate response can be made when the MFs converge e and ce but are divergent for the cu.

To optimise the ZE rule, modify its length and raise the upper limit value of all membership functions (MFs) associated with the variables error (e(t)) and change of error (ce(t)).,  $\mu_{ZE}(e(t)) = [-0.098, 0.098]$  and  $\mu_{ZE}(ce(t)) = [0.09, 0.09]$  will make the speed controller more responsive to small changes in the speed error, resulting in broad control.

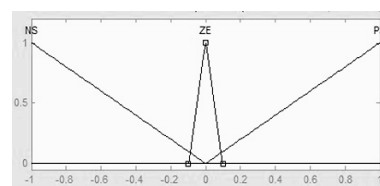
To guarantee the drives encompass different speeds from forward to reverse execution, the merit of the third NS and PS rule's base must be less than the  $\mu_{ZE}(e(t))$  and  $\mu_{ZE}(ce(t))$  specified in Fig. 5 . This method will be used to apply three different simple rules: 5, 7, and 9. Fig. 3, Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 show the optimised MFs of 9-rule, 7-rule, and 5-rule.

Table 30. Proposed Rule Base simplified 5-Rule

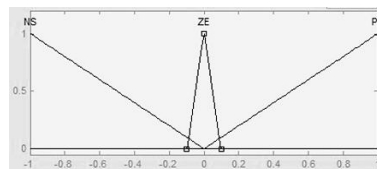
e	ce				
	NL	NS	ZE	PS	PL
NL					
NS			NS		
ZE		NS	ZE	PS	
PS			PS		
PL					



(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig. 3 Optimised 9-rule MFs. (a) speed error, (b) change in speed error, and (c) change in q-axis reference current, cu

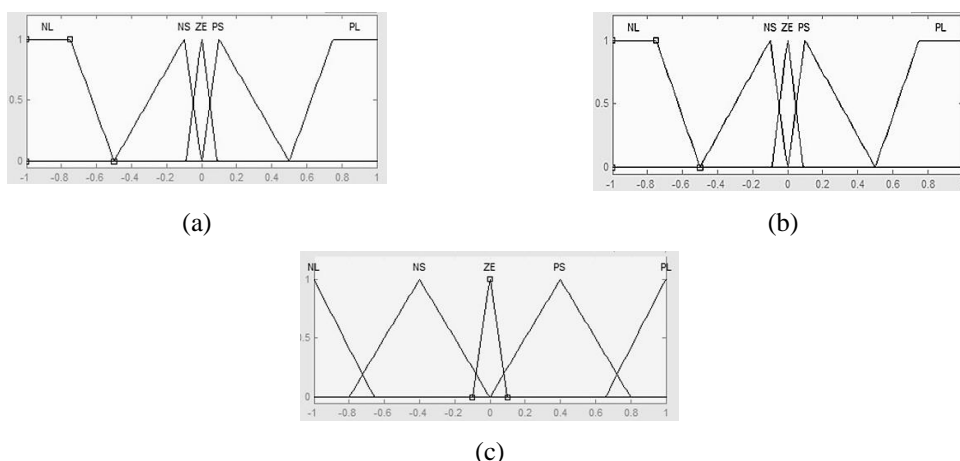


Fig. 4. 7-rule MFs were optimised for (a) speed error, (b) change in speed error, and (c) change in q-axis reference current,  $i_{cu}$

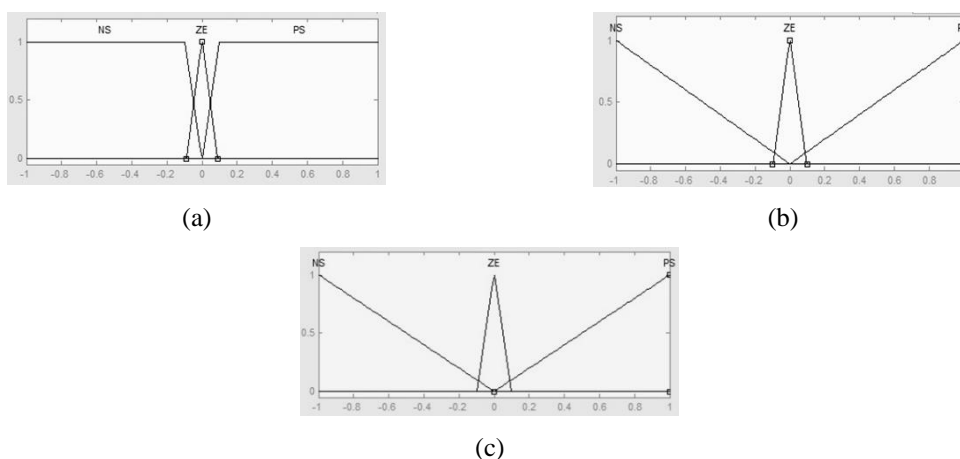


Fig. 5. 5-rule MFs optimised for (a) speed error, (b) change in speed error, and (c) change in q-axis reference current,  $i_{cu}$

## Outline of the Experimental Configuration

### Induction motor drives

The hardware configuration (Fig. 6) involves DSP TMS320F28335, Texas Instruments' high-voltage Digital Motor Control (DMC), auxiliary circuit, hall effect current sensor, and encoder input interface. The computer, serving as the host during program debugging, connects to the DSP through the parallel port. Code Composer Studio (CCS) version 8.0 translates field-oriented control into "C" language code. Currents  $i_a$  and  $i_b$  from two induction motor inputs are measured using a current sensor. An encoder tracks rotor speed, transmitting data to the DSP board via analogue-to-digital converters. Code Composer captures and stores the data on the computer.

### Induction Motor

The motor used in this experiment is a 1.5 horsepower squirrel cage induction motor, 415V, 3 phase. The motor

parameters are listed in. Table 31. A classical no-load test and a locked rotor test are carried out to obtain the motor's parameters.

Table 31: Induction Motor Parameters

Parameter	Value
Stator resistance, $R_s$	4.3 $\Omega$
Rotor resistance, $R_r$	2.9 $\Omega$
Stator inductance, $L_s$	0.3 H
Stator leakage inductance	0.01H
Rotor inductance, $L_r$	0.3 H
Rotor leakage inductance	0.01H
Mutual inductance, $L_m$	0.29 H
Moment of inertia, J	0.008217 $\text{Kgm}^2$
Number of poles	4
Max load	6Nm

*Three-phase Voltage Source Inverter*

The drive circuit used in the experimental work is a flexible inverter (Flexi-inverter) integrated with the Digital Motor Control board from Texas Instrument. This Flexi inverter board allows development to be done with an AC induction motor by this inverter. The features of Flexi-inverter, as shown in Fig. 7.

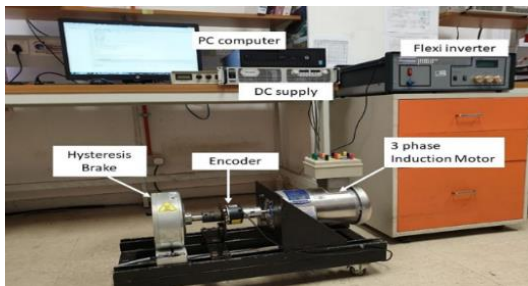


Fig. 6. Experimental setup for IM drive

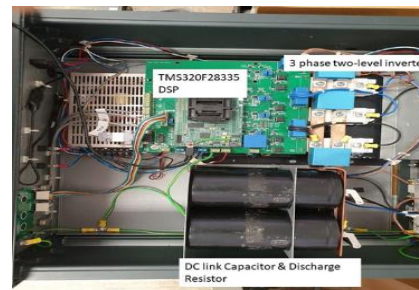


Fig. 7. Flexi-inverter

**Results and Discussion**

**Operation of the drive without load**

The speed response for the step speed reference in the experimental results is illustrated in Fig. 8 to Fig. 10. The PI speed controller exhibited the fastest response compared to the optimised MFs 9-rule, optimised MFs 7-rule, and the proposed optimised MFs 5-rule FLC. However, it took longer to achieve a steady state compared to the three optimised FLC simplified MFs, resulting in a shorter settling time.

The PI speed controller produced over 50% overshoot, with oscillations during the settling time, worsening at lower step speed commands. Conversely, the optimised MFs 9-rule, optimised MFs 7-rule, and optimised MFs 5-rule FLC showed excellent speed tracking for various commands. At the rated speed of 1760 rpm in Fig. 8, optimised MFs 5-rule and 9-rule had a 2.4% overshoot, and optimised MFs 7-rule had 1.3%. At half the rated speed (880 rpm) in Fig. 9, optimised MFs 7-rule showed a faster response with 6.25% overshoot, compared to optimised MFs 9-rule and 5-rule with 11%, maintaining the same settling time at 0.09s. At a low speed of 220 rpm as shown in Fig. 10, optimised MFs 7-rule showed a 1.36% overshoot, compared to 6% for optimised MFs 5-rule and 9-rule. All three achieved a steady state at nearly the same time, at  $t=0.07s$ .

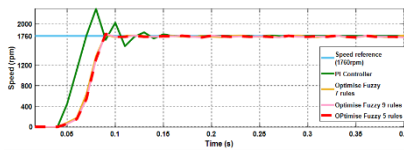


Fig. 8. Results for speed response 1760 rpm, no-load

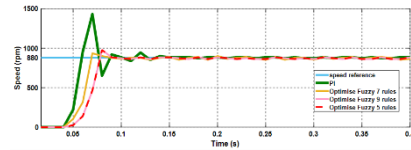


Fig. 9. Results for speed response 880 rpm, no-load

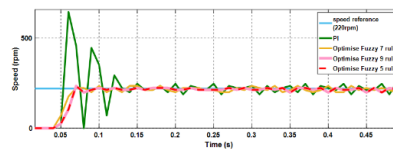


Fig. 10. Results for speed response 220 rpm, no-load

*Operation of the drive with load*

Experimental results for half-rated load (3 Nm) in Fig. 11 to Fig. 13 reveal that the proposed controller, optimised MFs 5-rule, matches the performance of optimised MFs 9-rule. In Fig. 11, load disturbance rejection times are 10ms for optimised MFs 5-rule and 20ms for optimised MFs 7-rule. Both controllers exhibit a speed drop from 1760 rpm to 1757 rpm, with approximately 0.51% and 0.57% overshoot for optimised MFs 5-rule and optimised MFs 7-rule, respectively. Oscillations occur for 8ms at the start of optimised MFs 7-rule speed command.

At 880 rpm in Fig. 12, optimised MFs 5-rule recovers from load disturbance in 5ms compared to 35ms for optimised MFs 7-rule. Consequently, the speed drops to 860 rpm for optimised MFs 5-rule and 865 rpm for optimised MFs 7-rule, with overshoot at 11.8% and 6.6%, respectively.

For low speed (220 rpm) depicted in Fig. 13, the proposed optimised 5-FLC performs well. Load disturbance causes a slight speed drop to 215.5 rpm for optimised MFs 5-rule, recovering in 7ms. In contrast, optimised MFs 7-rule undershoots to 213.9 rpm, requiring 24ms to settle, with overshoot at 6.4% and 2.27%, respectively.

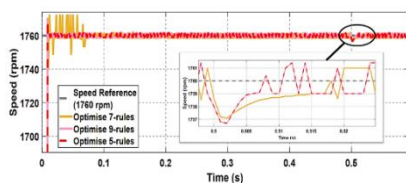


Fig. 11. Results for load (3 Nm) at speed 1760rpm

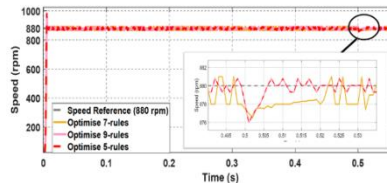


Fig. 12. Results for load (3 Nm) at speed 880 rpm

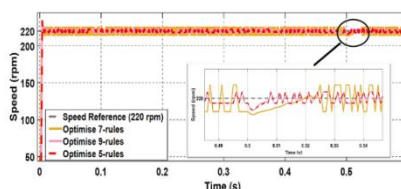


Fig. 13. Results for load (3 Nm) at speed 220 rpm

The experimental results for a 6Nm load are detailed in Fig. 14 to Fig. 16. Fig. 14 depicts the outcomes of a 1760 rpm speed response with a 6N load disturbance for both controllers, optimised MFs 5-rule, and optimised MFs 7-rule FLC. The motor speed decreased from 1760 rpm to 1753 rpm for optimised MFs 5-rule and to 1754 rpm for optimised MFs 7-rule. Both controllers displayed a return time to speed control, with optimised MFs 5-rule and 7-rule taking 13ms as well as 15ms, respectively.

For the half-rated response of 880 rpm, Fig. 15 shows a significant drop in speed from 880 rpm to 859.5 rpm for optimised MFs 5-rule, but disturbance elimination took only 7.8ms. In comparison, optimised MFs 7-rule took 43ms to recover. Fig. 16 demonstrates a potential application of low speed with the proposed optimised MFs 5-rule. When a full-rated load of 6 Nm is applied, the controller effectively readjusts the motor speed control. The speed command of 220 rpm slightly decreased to 212.9 rpm, with a rapid recovery in 7ms. In contrast, with optimised MFs 7-rule, the speed undershoots to 209.5 rpm and requires 23ms to diminish disturbance.

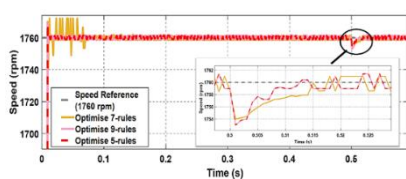


Fig. 14. Results for a 6Nm load at rated speed 1760 rpm

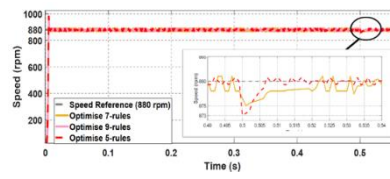


Fig. 15. Results for a 6Nm load at rated speed 880 rpm

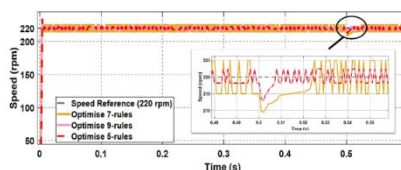


Fig. 16. Results for a 6Nm load at rated speed 220 rpm

## Conclusion

The experiment looked at motor drive performance in both no-load and loaded settings. The PI speed controller, while the quickest, had more than 50% overrun and oscillations. In comparison, the suggested optimal MFs 5-rule FLC, which included optimised MFs 9-rule and 7-rule, demonstrated greater speed tracking and balanced performance. Under loaded conditions, the proposed controller (optimised MFs 5-rule) matched the optimised MFs 9-rule. At 880 rpm, optimised MFs 5-rule recovered faster than optimum MFs 7-rule, demonstrating its efficiency. At low speeds (220 rpm), the suggested optimised 5-FLC outperformed the optimised MFs 7-rule in terms of recovery time. The use of hardware to demonstrate the proposed controller's capacity to manage ever-changing motor dynamics and non-linear load disturbances more well across a wide speed range, including rated speed, half-rated speed, low speed, and reverse forward rotation.

## Recommendations

The new simplified algorithm has shown improvements in speed performance across various speed ranges. However, there are opportunities for further enhancement and future research. Recommendations include:

1. Utilizing optimization techniques such as particle swarms, genetic algorithms, and neural networks to fine-tune scaling factors.
2. Implementing online tuning of fuzzy logic controller parameters, which involves adjusting the height and width positions of membership functions to optimize the system.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the supporting given by Politeknik Melaka and Department of Polytechnic and Community College (PolyCC), MOHE, Malaysia for their support.

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## Analysis of the Methodology and Impact of the Competencies of the Comprehensive Exam in Logistics and Transportation Engineering


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**Abstract:** In the current panorama of higher education in Ecuador, the Reglamento de Régimen Académico del Consejo de Educación Superior (RRA) establishes several alternatives to get a university degree, one of them is the comprehensive exam. This mode of evaluation is based on the comprehensive review of the knowledge acquired by students during their professional training, through a case study and a theoretical evaluation. This scientific article details the methodology adopted by the Logistics and Transportation Engineering program of the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) to implement the comprehensive exam. The methodological strategy of the Logistics and Transportation Engineering career involves the integration of the specific academic domains of the career, followed by the practical application in the resolution of problems relevant to the field of study. These academic domains allow students not only to acquire key competencies, but also to demonstrate their knowledge in the real field. Following the implementation of this methodology, an evaluation of its effectiveness was carried out, considering the academic results, the percentage of students who passed versus those who did not, and a survey aimed at collecting the students' perception of the methodology employed.

**Keywords:** Comprehensive, Education, Engineering, Exam.

**Citation:** Díaz, F., Ortega, J., Parreño, C., & Palacios, J.C. (2024). Analysis of the Methodology and Impact of the Competencies of the Comprehensive Exam in Logistics and Transportation Engineering. In M. Shelley & O.

T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1982-1992), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Nowadays within university organizations and institutions there are several components to measure and evaluate students' knowledge, one of the most commonly used components are the comprehensive exams, which aim to measure and evaluate the knowledge, skills and experiences of students (Raj Adhikari, 2010). Universities coincide that passing the comprehensive exam is a fundamental requirement for getting a university degree (W. P. Anderson et al., 1984). Likewise, another use given to comprehensive exams is to filter students who present weaknesses in specific topics of knowledge, thus seeking, through the identification of the weakness, create activities that reinforce and improve the student's understanding in a specific topic (M. S. Anderson & Swazey, 1998).

Comprehensive exams have been used since the 1930s as a method either to enter an educational institution (college, university) or in order to get a degree (bachelor's, master's, PH.D.) (Estrem & Lucas, 2003). This prolonged use has meant that its format has changed over time and varies according to the disciplines (Ashrafi-rizi et al., 2023). Across engineering fields, this exam has been implemented in several universities and countries, e.g. the Fundamentals of Engineering exam (FE). It is a nationwide exam in the United States that is designed to measure and evaluate the knowledge of engineering students and professionals (Malani & Koehn, 2005). At the University of Toronto, the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering offers the opportunity for students to get a degree through a comprehensive exam (Gollish et al., 2018). Moreover, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) uses comprehensive exams for medical licensure in the United States (Gesundheit, 2020).

Comprehensive exams vary from institution, university, faculties and departments to others, there is no structure or format for their application or institutions that regulate their use (Van Ackeren et al., 2012). In general, the application of comprehensive exams can range from passing a subject to passing a degree (bachelor's, master's, PH.D.) (Al-Doughmi et al., 2006). Also, the modality of the exam could be either online or face-to-face, according to the knowledge that the students are intended to be assessed, hence it can include different disciplines with different learning aims (Shachar & Neumann, 2010). Therefore, this scientific article, through a survey, aims to collect information on the perception that students have about the methodology used in the comprehensive exam in the career of logistics and transportation engineering.

## Method

This research focuses on assessing the comprehensive exam and its impact on the competencies of students in the Logistics and Transportation program at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL). According to

Altamirano Vaca & Rodríguez (2018), this modality of graduation emerges as a viable alternative, integrating both practical and theoretical aspects in its assessment, with the aim of optimizing the terminal efficiency rate. To achieve the proposed objectives, a quantitative methodology was adopted, focusing on exploring the perceptions and experiences of students regarding the entire comprehensive exam process.

The study covered two regular academic periods, evaluating the comprehensive development of the exam. During these periods, students were involved in activities related to the exam, collecting data through a survey specifically designed to measure their experiences and perceptions.

The research highlighted three fundamental aspects: 1) the development stage, which includes workshops on the specific academic domains of Logistics and Transportation and the development of a practical case according to Mora Aristega et al. (2017), this practical case or graduation project is based on research processes; 2) the evaluation stage, which contemplates both theoretical and practical components, as established by the Higher Education Council (2013); and 3) the reflection and valuation after the exam, a crucial stage to discuss and validate the effectiveness of comprehensive exams in verifying learning, skills, and competencies (Ponce Ruiz et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a mixed methodological approach was implemented, integrating quantitative and qualitative elements in a research design that allows for a deep understanding of the student experience. This approach seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the exam in terms of academic outcomes and student perceptions. The study population included students from the Engineering in Logistics and Transportation at UTPL who participated in the comprehensive exam, with an analysis focused on 34 students distributed over two academic periods.

### **Development of the Comprehensive Exam**

The development stage of the comprehensive exam was divided into two regular academic periods. In the first regular academic period, four workshops focused on essential academic domains for the Logistics and Transportation career were held. These workshops addressed topics such as supply chain optimization, reverse logistics strategies, and transportation optimization, including route and cost optimization. The methodology of these workshops combined the literature review of the topics addressed with the current reality of the country and was carried out in groups, culminating in a group oral presentation. In the second regular academic period, the focus shifted to the individual development of a practical case, aimed at solving a real problem related to the career, based on literature review and specific methodologies for problem-solving or implementing optimizations.

### *Evaluation of the Comprehensive Exam*

As established by the Consejo de Educación Superior, the evaluation of the comprehensive exam comprises two

components: one theoretical and one practical. The theoretical evaluation consists of a written exam, while the practical is based on the oral defense of the practical case before a panel. The weighting of the grades is distributed as follows: activities carried out during the regular academic period represent 30% of the final grade, the written exam 35%, and the evaluation of the practical case along with its oral defense another 35%.

### *Reflection and Valuation of the Comprehensive Exam*

The valuation of the comprehensive exam was based on two fundamental aspects: first, the conduct of a survey targeted at students; Participation was 70.50% of the student body, as their participation was not mandatory, which provided a confidence level of 90% and a margin of error of 10%. The purpose of this survey was to collect students' perceptions regarding the exam. The data collection methods included surveys that contained both open and closed questions, distributed after the completion of the exam.

Topics covered included the demographic profile of the participants, their motivations for choosing this graduation modality, their level of involvement in the proposed activities, the clarity of the instructions received, the relevance of the exam for their professional development, and a self-assessment of their preparation to face the exam. The second aspect considered focused on analyzing the average grades achieved by the students, as well as the overall percentage of those who passed.

This detailed methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the comprehensive exam, highlighting the importance of the development and evaluation phases in the educational process of the Engineering in Logistics and Transportation students. It also provided valuable insights into how these phases contribute to their professional development.

## **Results**

The evaluation of the comprehensive exam revealed significant results in several aspects. First, regarding the age distribution of the students who participated in the survey, 41.7% were in the range of 26 to 30 years, followed by 16.7% in the range of 20 to 25 years. Likewise, the age groups of 40 to 45 years and 56 to 60 years each accounted for 16.7%, while students aged 31 to 35 years made up 8.3%. The diversity in the age of participants highlights the accessibility and appeal of the career in a distance learning modality, considering this analysis important for a better understanding of the dynamics of the comprehensive exam (see Figure 1).

Regarding gender, 83.3% of the participants were male, and 16.7% were female. Motivation for choosing the comprehensive exam as a graduation option was also analyzed, finding that 58.3% chose it for being a direct assessment of knowledge, 41.7% for the flexibility in preparation, 33.3% for personal preference, and 25% for personal or professional circumstances, as well as confidence in their mastery of the topic. 8.3% selected it for involving a lower workload (see Figure 2).

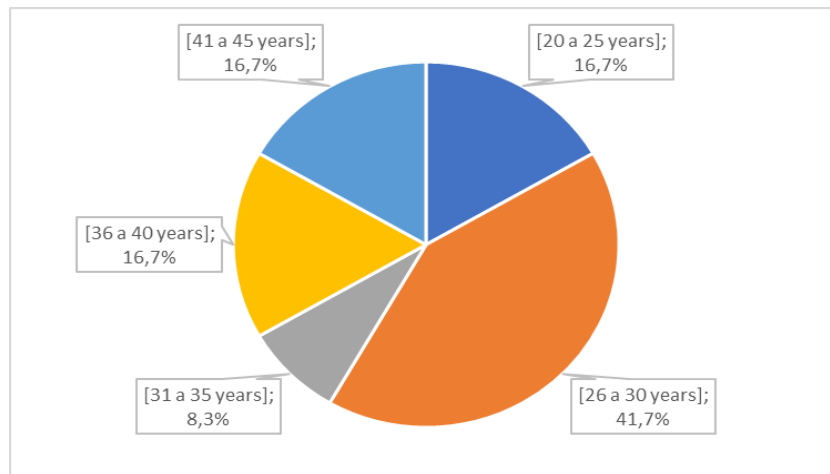


Figure 1. Age range of students

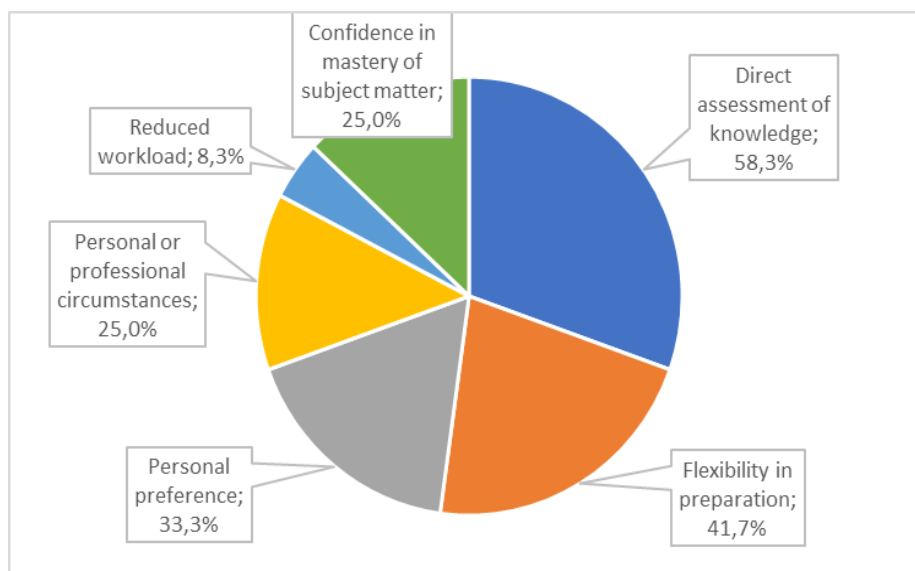


Figure 2. Motivation for choosing the complex exam

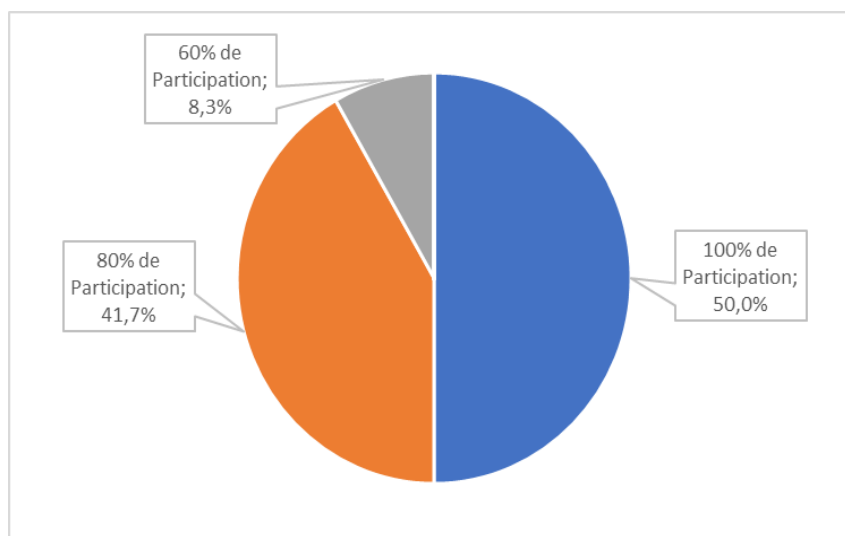


Figure 3. Participation in comprehensive exam activities

As for the level of participation in activities, 50% of the students attended 100% of them, including tutorials, reviews, and assignment submissions, among others. 41.7% participated in 80% of the activities, and 8.3%, in 60%, thus highlighting the high student involvement during the process of the comprehensive exam (see Figure 3).

Regarding the clarity of the methodology of the comprehensive exam, 33.3% considered it very clear, another 33.3% clear, while 8.3% found it somewhat confusing, and 25% very confusing. This suggests that, despite the complexity of the activities, a majority of the students understood the methodology from the start (see Figure 4).

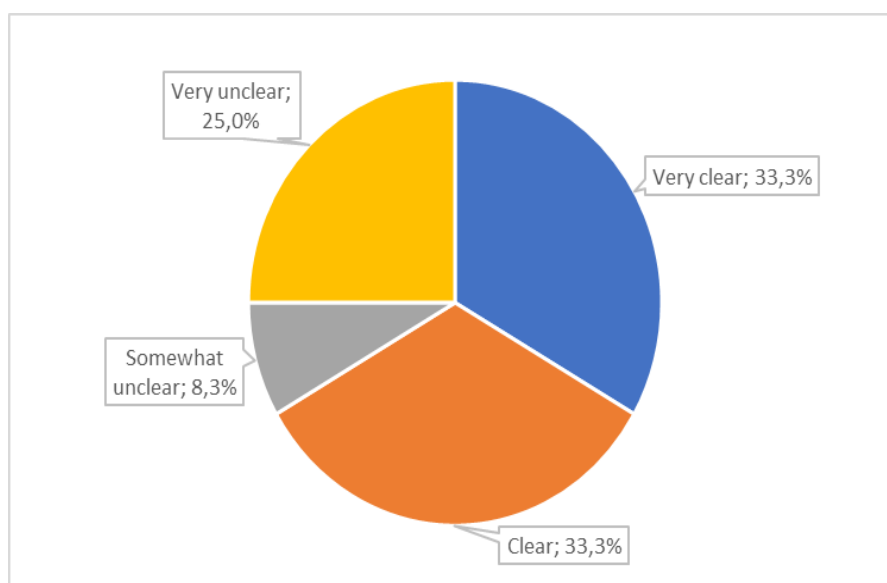


Figure 4. Clarity of the comprehensive exam methodology

Concerning whether the content and development of the exam adequately reflected what was learned during training, 50% of the students rated it a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, 25% a 4, 8.3% a 3, and 16.7% a 2, showing high satisfaction with the content of the comprehensive exam (see Figure 5).

When asked about the contribution of the workshops to reinforcing the academic domains of the career, 41.7% of the students gave a rating of 5, 50% a 4, and 8.3% a 3. This indicates that the workshops were effective in reinforcing the knowledge acquired during the career (see Figure 5).

Regarding the development of practical cases, 66.7% of the students considered that they enriched their academic training and provided them with useful tools for their professional future, giving a rating of 5, 25% gave a 4, and 8.3% a 3 (see Figure 5), evidencing the added value of this graduation modality in their education.

Finally, regarding the selection of the type of questions in the written exam to evaluate their knowledge and skills, 33.3% of the students rated with a 5, 25% with a 4, 8.3% with a 3, another 8.3% with a 2, and 25% with a 1 (see Figure 5). This result shows mixed opinions, reflecting some dissatisfaction regarding the type of essay

questions selected and the orientation of the questions towards practical cases.

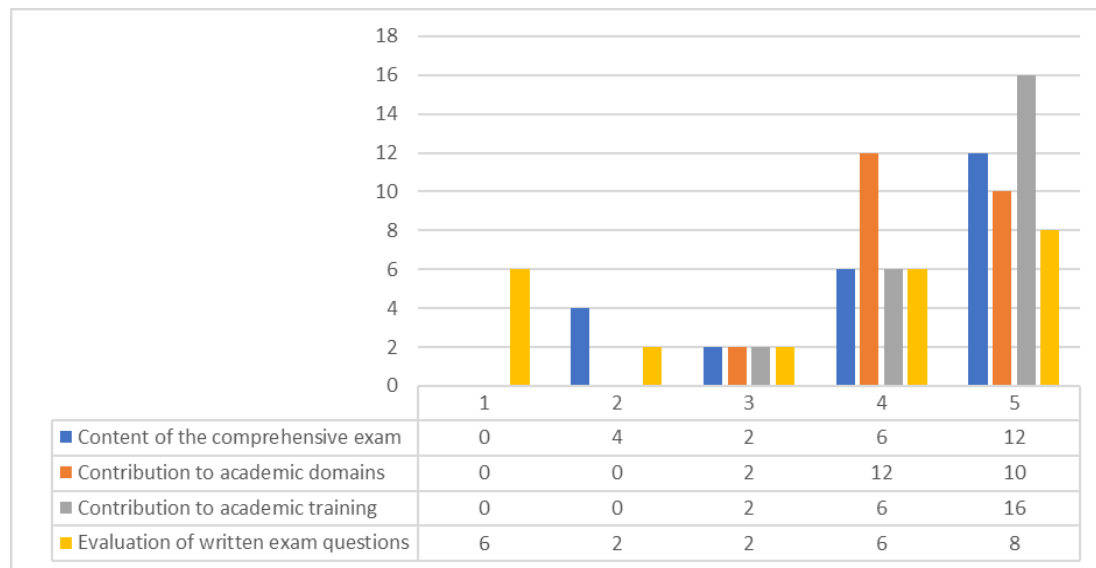


Figure 5. Students' perceptions of the comprehensive exam.

The comprehensive analysis of the survey conducted among students reflects a generally positive perception towards the comprehensive exam. Students positively valued the contents addressed during the exam, as well as its contribution and reinforcement to the knowledge acquired in the program, highlighting that these elements enriched their academic training in preparation for their professional future. The only area with more neutral results related to the format and type of questions of the written exam used for evaluation.

Regarding the academic results of the comprehensive exam, notable achievements are observed, especially during the first academic period, where workshops were conducted in groups. At this stage, students achieved a 100% pass rate, with an average grade of 8.52 out of 10, a median of 8.53, the highest grade recorded was 9.29, and the lowest was 7.66.

During the second academic period, performance varied, as not all students initially passed the comprehensive exam. Out of 34 students, 10 needed remediation, and after this, 50% managed to pass. Therefore, the average for this period was 7.92 out of 10, with a median of 7.96, the highest grade was 9.24, and the lowest was 5.55. Overall, 85.3% of the students passed the comprehensive exam. It's important to mention that 29.3% required remediation, and 14.7% did not manage to pass.

This analysis reveals that the comprehensive exam had a positive impact in academic terms, especially notable during the first academic period due to the high grades obtained. However, in the second period, the averages decreased, which could be attributed to the complexity of the practical cases to be solved and the written exam, highlighting areas of opportunity to improve the evaluative process and ensure uniformly high performance at all stages of the exam.



## Discussion

The study on the methodology and impact of competencies evaluated through the comprehensive exam in the Logistics and Transportation Engineering program at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) underscores the importance and effectiveness of the comprehensive exam in higher education. This approach is particularly relevant in specialized areas such as logistics and transportation engineering. The findings concur with other research, such as that conducted by Ponce Ruiz et al. (2022), which examines academic management for graduation through comprehensive exams at the University Uniandes Quevedo – Ecuador. This research highlights the marked interest of students in participating in this new mode of graduation and finds similarities in grade averages, observing high academic performance with an average above 8/10. Additionally, it points out that the comprehensive exam offers a more integrative, creative, and effective graduation process.

The implementation of this type of exam, which amalgamates theoretical and practical components, addresses the need for a more holistic evaluation system that surpasses traditional methods, limited to written tests. This methodology represents a step forward towards a more applied education and relevant for the needs of the professional field, crucial in disciplines with a strong emphasis on the practical application of knowledge. Bernardes Carballo et al. (2018) also emphasize that the comprehensive exam integrates theoretical and practical components, applying them to the development, analysis, and discussion of practical cases related to the professional field. The discussion highlights the need for a comprehensive educational approach that evaluates not only theoretical knowledge but also the ability to apply it in practical situations. Moreover, it underlines the importance of continuously reflecting on evaluative practices to ensure their inclusiveness, equity, and alignment with the professional competencies required in the students' future careers.

The research also indicates a significant increase in the terminal efficiency rate, aligning with other studies, such as that of Romero-Ortega & Sanz-Cabrera (2017), who underline the importance of this increase. However, they emphasize that research training is crucial and should be considered as a highly significant element.

Nevertheless, certain challenges and areas for improvement are identified, based on students' perceptions and academic outcomes. One of the main challenges is the design and selection of questions for the written exam, suggesting a need for their continuous review to ensure they are representative of the desired competencies and aligned with the students' learning experiences.

## Conclusion

The study on the methodology and the effect of the competencies evaluated through the comprehensive exam in the Logistics and Transportation Engineering program at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) reveals several fundamental aspects. It highlights the effectiveness of the applied methodology in the assessment of student competencies, underscoring the vital importance of including theoretical and practical elements in the

evaluative process. Workshops and the development of practical cases are recognized as effective tools to consolidate learning during professional training and prepare students for their future work, showing a positive impact on their academic education.

Students' perception of the comprehensive exam is predominantly favorable, particularly highlighting the content and methodology used. This reflects the significance of such planning in their professional growth. However, areas for improvement have been identified regarding the type and focus of questions in the written exam, pointing out the need for a review and adjustment of the evaluations to better meet the expectations and abilities of the students.

Academically, the results was positive, especially during the first academic period, achieving a 100% pass rate compared to the second academic period which had a lower pass rate of 85.3%, indicating challenges with handling practical cases and the written evaluation. This highlights the need for continuous refinement of the comprehensive exam methodology to ensure consistent and high performance throughout all phases of the exam, with the aim of improving the terminal efficiency rate.

## Recommendations

To optimize the comprehensive exam process in the Logistics and Transportation Engineering program, a series of strategic actions are recommended. It is essential to improve the design of the written exam questions, ensuring their alignment with the desired competencies and the students' learning experiences. There should be an increase in practical application by integrating theoretical and practical components in the evaluative process, applying them in the development, analysis, and discussion of practical cases relevant to the professional field. Encouraging reflection and continuous improvement is crucial to ensure evaluative practices are equitable and aligned with future professional competencies. It should be considered that research training must be emphasized as a crucial component, aligned with the increase in the terminal efficiency rate. Optimizing academic support is fundamental, ensuring that instructors provide the necessary support, especially for the preparation of practical cases and written evaluations. Promoting active student participation in all activities related to the exam will improve their understanding and performance. Finally, it is important to conduct a systematic review of the exam methodology, based on student perceptions and academic outcomes, to identify and address areas for improvement, thereby ensuring a more effective and beneficial exam process for all involved.

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## Urban Segregation and Service Provision Bias in A Tier II City, India

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**Abstract:** Christians and Muslims are other religious groups, and Hindu natives inhabit Siliguri. The study investigates religious settlement segregation and bias in service provision using Census data, the Dissimilarity Index, and a primary survey. Wards (labelled as zones), similar to tracts in the America, have been selected at a macro level through electoral data, and intra-zone habitat clusters are zoned at a micro level using electoral boundaries. It presents the mapping of native population distribution through transcripts using people's narratives, images, and stories. This is the first micro-level religion-based settlement study of a Tier II city in India, as ethnic data is unavailable in the Census and has remained undocumented previously. We have strained to fill in the gap-related studies due to a lack of data, using electoral data and primary surveys, which essentially become tedious to validate. It is a case example of partiality in differently composed zones within the city corporation boundary, leading to group exclusion and deprivation of the few on the ground. The study contributes to understanding SDG goal 11, aiming towards an "Inclusive City", which should be underscored as an imperative realm for policy framing and execution.

**Keywords:** Inclusive city; Service provision; Right to the city; Dissimilarity index; Primary survey

**Citation:** Saba, B. & Gupta, S. (2024). Urban Segregation and Service Provision Bias in A Tier II City, India, *Proceedings of ICRES 2024- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 1993-2005), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Urban segregation is a globally acknowledged concern in terms of service provision. One of the primary components of the sustainable development goals (SDG) is creating equitable, secure, environmentally sound urban areas and communities. India lies somewhere in between compared to the countries globally (Roland Hodlera, 2021). A myriad of literature has revealed the existence of Segregation across the globe. Boundaries and differences pertain to tangible and intangible inter and intra-connections between communities. As already proven in earlier studies, an eminent division exists between the haves and have-nots (Kempen, 1994). Developing an interdisciplinary capacity allows the formation of a social place in ways that link the visible, communal, monetary, ecological, and traditional magnitudes of growth. In addition to all these, focusing on the linking of public unity, communal attachment, and struggle firmness leads to cohesion (Morrison, 2011).

Segregation appears to be in tandem with Sassen's argument that even if some borders of society get removed, some intangible borders remain that become immensely tedious to penetrate into (Sassen, 2012).

Moreover, storytelling plays a vital role in implementing the planning process. A paper titled "Storytelling as a Method in Spatial Planning" by (Maartje Bulkens, 2014) mentions that stories assist people to be informed and elaborately comprehend their surroundings. It discusses narrative interviewing and its analysis of how stories help make a better sense of the surrounding world. Furthermore, the paper has used "storytelling" as a substitute for better know-how of how participation in the planning process is evident in Wageningse Eng, Netherlands. These talks have an on-ground application about the physical paradigms of the city landscape as well as the capability of the stories to influence the entire planning exercise. Another paper, "Out of the Closet: The Importance of Stories and Storytelling in Planning Practice" by Leonie Sandercock, discusses how vital storytelling is in planning. She emphasises that stories form the core of any planning procedure. It takes in the inferences from society and humankind about their dwellings and methods of behaving in that place (Sandercock, 2011). She also states that storytelling would be vital in analysing the policies and researching them further. Most vitally, through the talks and analysis of the questions, the people's interest comes to the foreground as to what should be considered in the planning process.

On-ground knowledge gives planners the required awareness about how the public understands participation in planning and how they tend to tackle such issues (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012). Thus, it establishes the need for the planner to delve into the quantitative analysis method for measuring the issues on the ground. A participatory approach would help in better documentation of the issue. Zitcer, mentions that planner-authors should question the way of story-telling in order to be sure of the fact that they do not elevate the risks that incur in the process of communication (Zitcer, 2017). The paper structure involves, firstly, comprehending spatial Segregation at a global level through literature study and, secondly, understanding the relation between homophily and spatial Segregation. Thirdly, zone selection in the city was followed by a primary survey for ground truthing. Finally, we draw on the discussions and conclusion.

### **Urban Segregation and its Implication**

Urban segregation has had varying impact on a city's evolution and existence. For instance, Helsinki's Housing and Land Use programme for 2012-2015 targets making houses for myriad social groups with different tenures. Thus providing a better quality of life for all residents. It even suggests that the mix of social groups must happen at the block level. Fig. 1 shows the spatial concentration of the different regions' different races. Sample 1 shows the stark agglomeration of Blacks in one region and whites in others, and sample 2 shows the settlements of both groups at certain intervals. Sample 3 shows an almost even distribution of both the communities in the settlement and sample 4 shows an intermediate transition zone between the settlements of both communities, where the mix of both can be seen. Sample 5 offers a repetitive pattern of sample 4. Pattern 5 is the most desirable form for any city among all the sample patterns. Also, in terms of crime, it has been observed that diverse cities have a lesser crime rate.

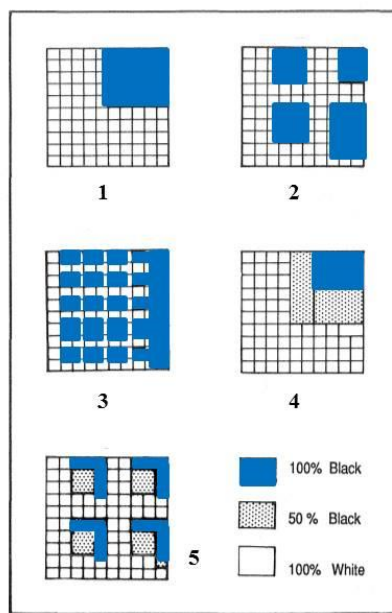


Fig. 1. Sample Patterns 1-5  
adapted from (Denton, 1993)

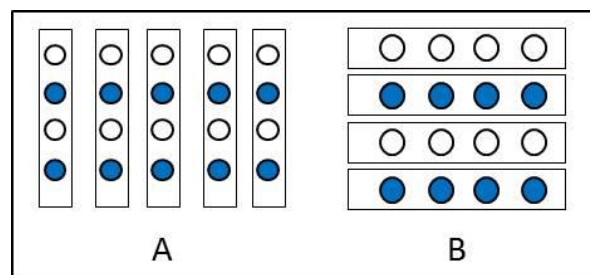


Fig. 2. Sample Patterns A and B, adapted from (Denton, 1993)

Fig. 2 shows the composition of two groups in a hypothetical city. Part A shows an even distribution of both groups and Part B shows an uneven distribution. The various segregation methods give a specific value to the zone or the city for which the calculation is done. However, when the Segregation exceeds a specific limit, it is further termed as Hyper-segregation. Such a method for defining Hyper-segregation was given by Massey and Denton in 1993. They gave a cut-off for the various indices used for quantifying Segregation. If the index crosses the cut-off, the study area is said to be Hyper-segregated. For metrics of evenness, 0.7 was the cut-off, for metrics of isolation and concentration, 0.8 was the cut-off, and so on. Later, various modifications were made to the cut-off, and a simplified general cut-off of 0.6 was adopted for all the indices. This was given by Massey and Denton in 1993. This rule can be followed only when the indices range from 0 to 1. (Denton, 1993). Furthermore, complying with the SDG, "Sustainable Development Goal" No.11 (Sustainable cities and communities), points out that making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable for all makes the need to look into the issue a global concern.

### *Segregation/ Homophily in Urban Planning*

Homophily is a gradual process that emerges and local behaviour results in a global structure. Planners could be assumed to be writers who write the story of the city fabric, and it can be seen in the city structure (Throgmorton, 1992). Planners play a transitional role in the forming of the social geography of a city. Regulation of space in terms of its Governance as well as usage adds to its intrinsic value to be dominated or to dominate (Bhide, 2017). If some borders of society get removed, some intangible borders remain that become immensely tedious to penetrate (Sassen, 2012). There is a need to understand and analyse not just how the space



is built for the public but also how the public is built in space (Ramsbotham, 2005). Developing an interdisciplinary capacity allows the formation of a social place in ways that link the visible, communal, monetary, ecological, and traditional magnitudes of growth (Morrison, 2011). Urbanism in India expands more than boundaries to understanding the structure formed from individual and group efforts that are collectively done on domains of power and dominance (Coelho, 2021). Homophily is the theory that people tend to be similar to those they associate with. The fractured social network structure reflects the forces that intensify social Segregation. Social Segregation is also strengthened by geographical barriers like distance and formal or informal boundaries. However, little is known about how urban geography, inequality, and social network structure are related. Homophily is the theory that people tend to be similar to the people they associate with. Due to mechanisms of social ties that form clusters, social networks magnify inequalities. The social network in diverse structure reflects the forces that intensify social Segregation.

*Segregated cities globally*

If we delve into spatial justice and how the spaces have been used to direct or deject people, the concept emphasises the social production of social space. It states how a space can be used to harass, exploit and dictate to bring about social regulation and correction (Frédéric Dufaux, 2017). A space can be used to exploit and dictate to bring about social regulation and correction. For planners, being able to plan in a multicultural setting ought to be essential. (Friedmann & Kuester, 1994).

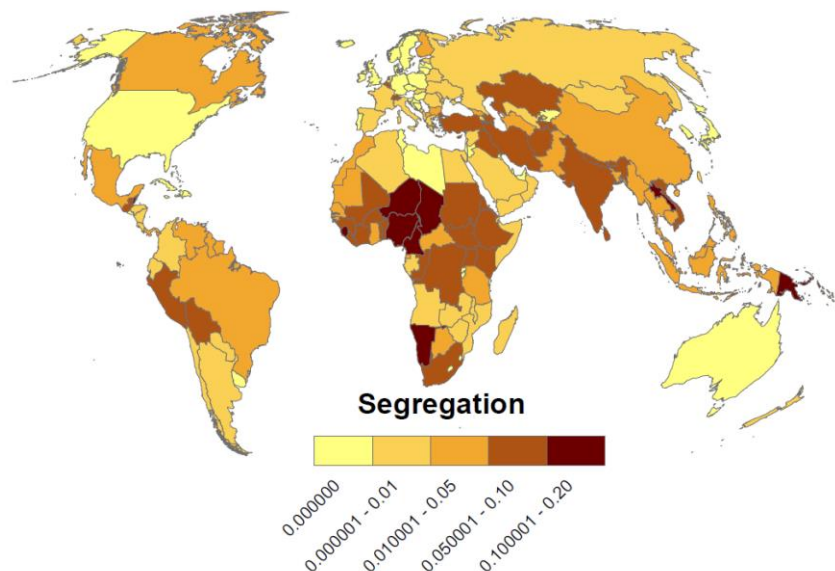


Fig. 3. Segregation across the world (Hodler et.al, 2021)

*Segregation in India*

India is widely known for its diverse demographic composition. "Spatial Inequalities in Big Indian Cities" by Pranav talks about spatial Segregation based on caste. It elaborates on the methodologies that can be used for the

quantifying of Segregation at a particular place. (Sidhwani, 2015). It mentions the "index of segregation", which is a better-modified version of the "index of dissimilarity", in which the index of dissimilarity is the measure of evenness. It is the most widely accepted method across the world. The paper compares the degree of Segregation in the 10 largest cities of India. It was found that Ahmedabad and Kolkata had higher Segregation by caste than Segregation due to the availability of other services. Sidwani extensively used the Gorard Index of Segregation (S) in this paper to measure the degree of Segregation comparatively in the cities (Sidhwani, 2015).

The above index of Segregation uses the population of a particular category in the zone, the total population of that category, the total population in that zone and the city's total population. The following ten cities were ranked for Scheduled caste/scheduled tribe population using the Gorard Index of Segregation. It was found that Kolkata ranked highest, followed by Surat, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Delhi, Jaipur, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Mumbai as least. Kolkata had a value of 0.350, followed by Surat, which had a value of 0.288, and Ahmedabad, which had a value of 0.282.

Ahmedabad is among the top three cities having Segregation due to caste. Furthermore, it was also found that Segregation due to caste differences was more than Segregation due to socio-economic status in these cities. (Sidhwani, 2015). A correlation was also established between the population belonging to ST/SC and their access to In-house drinking water, In-house latrines and Two-wheelers. It was found to have a significant relation between the caste composition and the provision of amenities.

Furthermore, more research has compared the various states of India for religious Segregation. It is found that Ahmedabad is the most segregated, followed by Hyderabad, Delhi, Bangalore, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Cuttack, Lucknow, Kozhikode, and Jaipur as the least segregated cities (Suswind, 2017). However, what remains to be studied is Segregation at a micro level. We have attempted to study at this level and to quantify Segregation in the provision of amenities, if any. There are indices of evenness, indices of concentration, and clustering. The concentration index considers the relative density of the settlement, but it does not give the real scenario of Segregation in the place as a region with a high density might have a minority group residing with less interaction. However, the above indices consider only the population or density in the calculation of the index value.

In Indian context, the studies mentioned and researches have been done at State level or District level, data unavailability being one of the prime reasons. The only macro level study carried in Indian context, quantitatively measures segregation at State level. However, the qualitative aspect remains ignored. Studies has been carried out for ST, SC, OBC and General category. The religion of the sample population remain unemphasised due to unavailability of data in census. The studies carried out in Illinois, Chicago and America has emphasised on social production of a space, how story-telling in urban planning and place-making alters the inclusive outlook of a city. Though, division due to caste is diminishing in India. However, it is observes same for religion as well in many parts of India.

### *Study city*

Siliguri City is located in West Bengal, India. It is the gateway to the east part of the country and is known for its diverse habitats. It ranges from migrants to natives as well as tourists. The city jostles with business and trade activities that bring people to the city. Siliguri forms the most evident city for the entrance to North Bengal and Sikkim. It is a subdivision with 47, including Matigara, Naxalbari, Phansidewa and, Kharibari C.D. Blocks and Siliguri Municipal Corporation. Forming the gate to North East India, Siliguri is a transit hub and a tourist catchment area. Siliguri Municipal Corporation, with a population size of 2,94,546, consists of 151535 males and 143011 females. The community population comprises 91% Hindu, 5% Muslims, 0.9% Christians and 0.2% Sikhs, with the Muslim population mainly concentrated towards the city centre and the Majority Hindu population widely spread in the city. With the neighbouring district capital of Jalpaiguri, the city forms a "Twin Cities" partnership. The city encompasses parts of the Indian state of West Bengal's Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. Three things that make India's northern region famous are beverage, wood, and travel. It is located on the shores of the Mahananda and Teesta rivers in the the base of the Himalayas. Siliguri is the third-biggest city in West Bengal, behind Kolkata and Asansol. West Bengal's Siliguri is strategically significant because it is easily accessible from four foreign borders: Bangladesh, China, Nepal, and Bhutan. Additionally, it connects mainland India with the Northeast. Nestled in the Eastern Himalayan foothills, Siliguri serves as a central hub for trade and transportation. Thus, serving as a route for domestic as well as international migrants.

### *Quantifying segregation: Dissimilarity Index*

The index has been used to study three wards (zones) in Siliguri. Zone 2 having a mixed composition and economically moderate, zone 6 having Bihari Muslims and economically weak and zone 26 comprising Bengali Hindus and are economically strong. Segregation or Dissimilarity index is the measure of the evenness of the communities' distribution within the study area. A higher dissimilarity index represents a highly unequal representation of both communities. A lower dissimilarity index represents an almost equal representation of both communities. The formula used in the segregation index has been elaborated in the literature study above, As proposed by Duncan and Duncan in 1955: Segregation Index.

$$D = 0.5 \times \sum \left| \frac{b_i}{B} - \frac{w_i}{W} \right|$$

$w_i$  = % of the Majority in the zone.

$B$  Total number of minorities in the city.

$W$  = Total number of Majority in the city.

### *Dissimilarity Index for Hindu, Muslim and Mixed ethnic composition zones in Siliguri- a tier II city*

The strong, moderate, and weak economic conditions were obtained from the ownership of assets in the zone based on household census data in 2011. When compared with weak and strong zones, it is observed that the

moderate zone is highly segregated in terms of the location of drinking water, electricity, LPG connection and availability of assets. The reason is that a section of the zone is well attached to the main road with commercial shops and good connectivity to the periphery, and the other section of the zone retains good intra-connectivity. The weak zone has the presence of all eminent infrastructures within the zone: *Dargah*, *Madarsa* in the vicinity, Girls high school, *Qureshi mohalla*, *Darbhangra tola* and *Sultan Fateh* burial ground.

Table 4. Dissimilarity Index and Ranks for the three zones

Zones	Community composition		Location of drinking water within premises		Electricity		Latrine facility within premises		LPG/PNG		Scooter/Motorcycle/Moped	
	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R
Zone 6 (Bengali Hindus and Economically Strong)	0.039	26	0.023	1	0.038	1	0.045	1	0.036	1	0.027	1
Zone 6 (Bihari Muslims and economically weak)	0.105	1	0.002	3	0.001	3	0.010	3	0.005	3	0.004	3
Zone 2 (Mixed composition and economically moderate)	0.004	3	0.014	2	0.008	2	0.019	2	0.020	2	0.022	2

Zone 2: Mixed composition (Bengali, Bihari and Nepali) zone and Context

Moderate zone, compared with its surrounding zones, is observed to be most segregated in terms of Latrine facilities, LPG provisions and asset availability. The reasons are its well-planned prime location in the city, community diversity in the zone and good connectivity to its adjoining zones.

Table 5. Dissimilarity Index and Ranks for Moderate Zone 2

Mixed composition and	Community composition	Location of drinking water	Electricity	Latrine facility within	LPG/PNG	Scooter/Motorcycle/Moped
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economical y moderate with Context	on		within premises		S		R		S Value		R		
	S	R	S	R	S	R	S	R	S	R	S	R	
	0.0	2	0.02	1	0.038	1	0.04	2	0.036	1	0.027	1	
	39		3				5						
	1	0.1	1	0.01	3	0.02	2	0.08	1	0.03	2	0.016	2
		61		3		9		3		5			
	3	0.0	3	0.01	2	0.01	3	0.01	3	0.01	3	0.013	3
		09		9		8		1		9			

Zone 6: Bihari Muslim Zone and Context

A weak zone, when compared with surrounding zones, is observed to be not segregated compared to others in terms of drinking water, electricity, latrine provision, LPG supply, and availability of assets. The reasons identified are good intra-connectivity, dominance of one particular community, and a common livelihood for all.

Table 6. Dissimilarity Index and Ranks for weak zone 6

Bihari Muslims & Economically Weak_____with Context	Community composition		Location of drinking water within premises		Electricity		Latrine facility within premises		LPG/PNG		Scooter/ Moto rcycle /Moped	
	S	R	S	R	S Value	R	S	R	S	R	S	R
	0.105	1	0.002	5	0.001	4	0.010	6	0.005	5	0.004	5
	0.097	2	0.022	1	0.012	1	0.024	2	0.016	1	0.015	2
	4		0.022	3	0.005	4	0.012	1	0.020	3	0.007	4
	7		0.004	5	0.012	3	0.011	2	0.013	4	0.013	3
			0.012	3	0.011	2	0.013	4	0.013	3	0.020	1

8												
	0.003	6	0.015	2	0.012	1	0.011	5	0.015	2	0.015	2
1												
0	0.001	7	0.002	5	0.010	3	0.007	7	0.007	4	0.010	3
1												
1	0.006	4	0.005	6	0.011	2	0.026	1	0.002	6	0.004	5
1												
8												

Zone 26: Bengali Hindu Zone and Context

A strong zone, when compared to the surrounding zones, is observed to be least segregated in terms of community composition but significantly segregated in terms of electricity provision, LPG connection, and asset availability. The reason is the presence of two dominant occupations of the residents: one being involved in "goshala", cow rearing and milk supply, and the other is dominated by tuition centres and other educational clubs.

Table 7. Dissimilarity Index and Ranks for Strong Zone 26

Bengali Hindus & economically Strong with Context	Community composition		Location of drinking water within premises		Electricity		Latrine facility within premises		LPG/PNG		Scooter/Motorcycle/Moped		
	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R	S Value	R	
Bengali Hindus and Economically Strong zone 26	0.004	2	0.014	4	0.008	5	0.019	3	0.0	3	0.022	4	
Surrounding zones	8	0.004	2	0.012	5	0.011	3	0.013	5	0.0	4	0.020	5
	9	0.005	1	0.023	3	0.018	2	0.018	4	0.0	3	0.030	3
	27	0.005	1	0.031	2	0.028	1	0.028	2	0.0	2	0.032	2

25	0.0009	3	0.039	1	0.010	4	0.035	1	0.0	1	0.037	1
34												

Primary survey

The survey was conducted within the zone premises in and around the residences, as the focus was to elicit responses in a natural setting. The empirical observations are drawn from conversations with 50 respondents from zone 2, 40 from zone 6, 40 from zone 26. Survey was carried on weekends between 9:30am to 4pm and evening time during work days, between 3 pm to 6 pm. Survey was conducted at varied locations within the zone: At the centre, residences near the roads, near community clubs and community institutions. Some questions that were characteristically asked to all respondents was about: the ease of accessibility to public places, duration and ownership of their stay in the residence, places where they belong to, reasons for staying in the locality, activities that they share, reasons for safety and satisfaction in the specified area, stay experiences around the zone, provision of water supply, electricity and solid waste disposal, reasons of attachment with a particular.

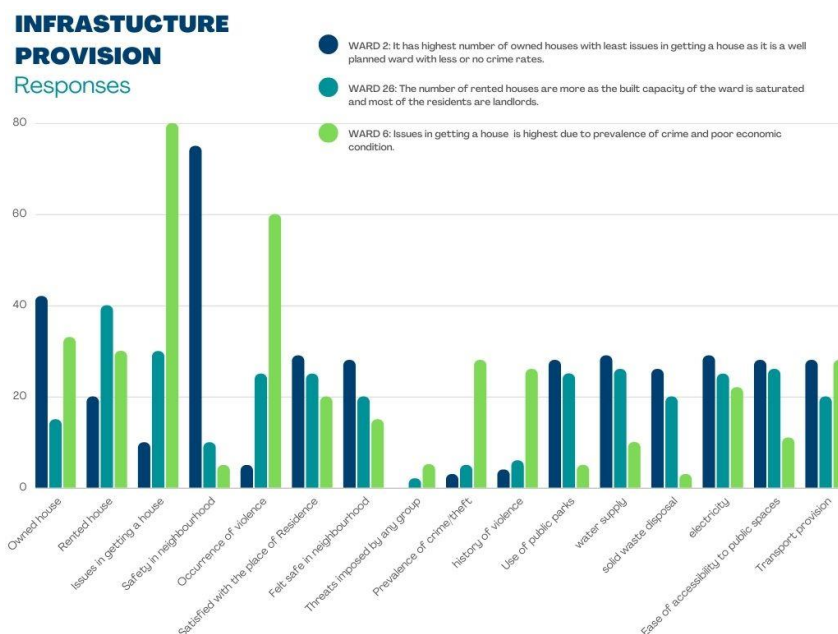


Fig. 4. Primary Survey outcomes, Author 2024

It is observed that zone 2 has the highest number of owned houses with the least issues in getting a house as it is well planned with fewer or no crimes in the vicinity. The number of rented houses in Zone 26 is more as the built-up area in the zone is almost saturated with more dwellers as landlords. In Zone 6, the issues of getting a house are highest due to poor economic conditions and thefts in the locality. Residents of wards 2 and 26 use parks more often as compared to wards. All wards have a good electricity supply. Ward 2 and Ward 6 are well connected with transport provision compared to Ward 26. Solid waste disposal was a concern forward six as the



residents were involved in collecting and segregating waste. Wards 2 and 26 had a good water supply in contrast to Ward 6. Theft was highest in Ward 6, followed by Ward 26 and Ward 2. There are no parks in Ward Six, nor do they lie in a buffer of 500m, making it difficult for the residents to access them. Ward 26 lies in the 500m buffer of the surrounding parks, which is well connected for usability. Ward 2 has a centrally located park, making it easy for the residents to commute. No threats have been imposed by any group in all the wards.

Residents of Zones 2 and 26 use parks more often than residents of Zone 6. All zones have a good electricity supply. Zones 2 and zone 6 are well connected with transport provision compared to zone 26. Solid waste disposal was a concern for Zone 6 as the residents were involved in collecting and segregating waste. Zones 2 and 26 had a good water supply in contrast to Zone 6. Theft was highest in zone 6, followed by zone 26 and zone 2. There are no parks in Zone 6, nor do they lie in a buffer of 500m, making it difficult for the residents to access them. Zone 26 lies in the 500m buffer of the surrounding parks, which is well connected for usability. Zone 2 has a centrally located park, making it easy for the residents to commute. No threats have been imposed by any group in all the zones and the residence remains a matter of choice to the inhabitants.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Though segregated cities had their origin during apartheid in Africa, their reflection can still be seen in the present scenario. The above cases and conclusions would help in better analysing the spaces to be studied in the identified study area. Place-making and area-based initiatives include urban regeneration, creating a sense of belongingness and focusing on promoting cultural activities in the public realms. Creating social mix policies would help in mixing housing types, such that priority is given to people belonging to myriad communities. Housing similar to Helsinki could be adopted in Government housing provision in certain contexts in the study area as well. Appointing think tanks would involve a group of people working exclusively to address such issues. Moreover, the adoption of participatory Governance, such as providing platforms where citizens can propose ideas or vote for the chosen proposal for an area or recommendations for any scheme or policy, would aid in the process. Adopting crime prevention through environmental design would help reduce crime through urban and environmental design, which could also be an alternative to the integration of people belonging to myriad religious groups in the city.

Residential building typology, boundary wall, the transition spaces between the immediate public and private, and the use to which the space is put to, play a vital role in enhancing socialisation or reducing acute segregation. Adopting measures that integrate or rather create a gradual transition boundary between the myriad ethnic community settlement patterns would be a step towards forming inclusive cities. Thus, not merely connectivity, proximity or even community composition but also Streetscape planning and design, place-making, equitable provision of services and amenities and adopting strategies that create culturally appropriate spaces would keep people riveted in the diverse city. This study would assist in identifying parameters that promote segregation or cause inclusivity in a city and as a planner how could we contribute towards it.

The methods and procedures to be adopted in the analysis of the study can be aided by the tools and techniques used in the paper. This would help attain a good spatial analysis required to carry out a relevant study agenda. Relating the services with the specified parameters in the Ghettos formed and the derivation of the Segregation or inclusion in the parts of the city will give a clear picture of the on-ground situation. Moreover, in addition to the Index of Segregation, the Urban Equity Index could be used to better assess city segregation. This would aid in foreseeing its prospects that need to be dealt with. Moreover, an intense survey and people's opinions on the social geography of the place would assist in concluding the final proposal and suggestions. A bottom-up approach can be used in the study methodology and opinion building. This would leave fewer lacunas in the authenticity of the study undertaken and render it as an exercise to be undertaken in other cities to come up with more intriguing outcomes and insightful conclusions.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, for allowing us to execute our research.

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## The Centrality of Soft Skills in Higher Education: Theory, Methodology and Practice

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**Abstract:** The Global Agenda 2030 has set out a common pathway that delineates the type of vocational training that higher education institutions (HEIs) should provide to respond to the challenges it sets. Rankings and other metrics are concerned with examining the quality of higher education in terms of research standards or international accreditation. However, leave aside the quality of education offered in HEIs from the perspective of teaching and developing soft skills in line with labor market needs. This paper aims to analyze how soft skills are developed and researched in higher education based on two types of analysis. In the first, a content review of research articles published between 2010 and 2022 that examined the formation of soft skills in students was conducted. The second used text mining techniques and modeling based on bipartite networks. The results showed that the competencies most addressed in the studies were intrapersonal competencies, such as critical thinking and adaptability; interpersonal competencies, such as team leadership; and transversal competencies, such as oral and written communication. In addition, it was found that the preferred pedagogical methods for training them were courses to teach the competencies, the use of open educational resources (OER), guidance materials for learning the necessary competencies, and teaching models. Finally, role-play activities and self-report questionnaires were often used to explore and analyze soft skills.

**Keywords:** Competency-based education, Higher Education, Educational Innovation, Network analysis, Labor market

**Citation:** García-Chitiva, MdP. (2023). The Centrality of Soft Skills in Higher Education: Theory, Methodology and Practice. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2006-2022), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Global commitments to mitigate the world's problems involve training professionals with robust disciplinary training, who also have competencies that allow them to make effective and strategic use of that knowledge to solve problems, which is one of the challenges of the current era (Brauer, 2021). Achieving these goals implies developing an education designed for the future (World Economic Forum, 2023), which not only contemplates main courses focused on disciplinary and transversal training but also incorporates the development of soft skills (Tang, 2019), better known as soft skills, at the same level of importance. According to Dell'Alquila et al. (2017), soft skills have an integrative character, allowing individuals to interact with others daily. For example,

in interaction with others, when they work collaboratively, lead work teams, or in their personal tasks by self-regulating or persistently developing their commitments.

The study on soft skills or essential competencies, as defined by the OECD (2019), has been approached from diverse understandings and perspectives, such as generic competencies, transferable competencies, or key competencies. Hence, Bisquerra & Pérez (2007) consider the competencies concept as one polysemic concept. Within this diversity, some approaches recognize soft skills as the intersection between cognitive, emotional, and social competencies with emotional intelligence. (Boyatzis, 2008).

For Scheerens et al., (2020), soft skills can also be recognized as social and emotional competencies. This approach coincides with seminal work such as that of Goleman (2010), who argues that socio-emotional skills come from a combination of intra- and interpersonal competencies that allow people to adapt and effectively interact with others. Under this understanding, soft skills must be part of the educational agendas at all levels of training. This inclusion is fundamental because one gaps that arise between the professional training acquired at university and the entry into the labor market is related to the lack of soft skills in graduates to perform optimally in the labor market (Sharvari & Kulkarni , 2019).

Previous studies have examined the importance of training in socio-emotional competencies, or soft skills, as addressed in this study. For example, Zins et al., (2004) developed a teaching model based on systematic and structured orientations in educational processes to train socio-emotional or soft skills. The principles of this model, called Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), focus on shaping the student's emotional development from intrapersonal to interpersonal aspects.

In a subsequent study, through a review of the educational model of higher learning institutes in Malaysia, Shakir (2009) examined the characteristics that comprise a model favorable to the development of human capital in higher education students in Malaysia. In this analysis, Shakir found that these key aspects are part of soft skills that comprise capabilities in different domains, including: 1) competence to communicate, 2) competence in critical thinking and problem-solving, 3) competence to work in, 4) lifelong learning, 5) information management, 6) business and ethical competencies, and 7) leadership competencies, moral and professional. The results showed that one of the main challenges faced by higher education institutions in Malaysia is the lack of resources to train teachers in soft skills so that, in turn, they can be mentors and guides in developing these competencies in their students.

On the other hand, Häfner et al. (2013) designed a four-phase practical course focused on learning virtual reality by simulating industrial projects aimed at university students from different undergraduate and graduate careers. In the first phase, students were introduced to virtual reality using lab lectures and demonstrations. In the second, laboratory exercises were carried out using task-specific software. In the third, they conducted the practical work of developing a project in small groups. In the fourth and final phase, they socialized the project results. The findings of the measurement of students' perceptions about students' performance in the execution

of the task revealed the favorability of employing this teaching sequence with the support of virtual reality.

Subsequently, Mokwa-Tarnowska et al. (2018) designed online teaching modules in which they used 2.0 tools such as Moodle wiki, Thinglink, mural, Quip, and Easel.ly to improve students' soft skills such as critical thinking, collaborative and reflective thinking. The study was carried out with civil engineering students during three stages. These stages were developed in three different academic periods, in which the students had to plan a project and arrange the information on a poster (stage 1), describe through the Moodle wiki the equipment created by the teams, and advertise them (stage 2), and explain in formal technical terms their product, using some of the defined tools. The results showed that using technological tools that enable collaborative work favors the development of this competence.

In another study, Abdullah et al. (2012) analyzed the gap between the soft skills training acquired by graduates of an electronic engineering program and the competencies required by the labor sector for these professionals based on the perception expressed by participants in a questionnaire about the subject. Representatives of employers such as company directors, human resources managers of the industry in that area, production managers, and test managers participated in the study. The results revealed that all participants perceive a mismatch between the competencies acquired by graduates in electronic engineering and the soft skills required by the labor market. Finally, these authors concluded that the higher education system should take drastic measures to close the gap between higher education and employment.

In a more recent study, Joie-La Marle et al. (2023) analyzed the effects of a soft skills metacognition training program on self-efficacy and adaptive performance among company employees through a training course on interpersonal skills metacognition training. The results revealed that knowing the soft skills that one possesses and those that do not allow us to appropriate strategies to develop the competencies that are lacking and strengthen others, such as self-efficacy and adaptation.

Given the above, it is clear that soft skills are part of the foundations that allow people to develop personally, socially, and professionally. It is also necessary to understand that training in Higher Education requires the development of these competencies. For this reason, it is essential to understand the characteristics of studies that have examined how to develop soft skills in professionals in training. Within this framework, the following research questions were addressed in the present study: What understandings of soft skills have the studies addressed? What soft skills are privileged in teaching and learning in vocational training in Higher Education, and to what typology do they belong? What are the pedagogical conditions conducive to fostering the development of soft skills in higher education? What mechanisms have been used to measure and analyze soft skills development in higher education?

Considering the above, this study aims to examine the *comprehensión* concept of soft skills and identify how they are taught, developed, and evaluated in higher education. In what follows, the conceptualization of competencies is presented, where the inter- and intrapersonal perspective is emphasized as a framework for

developing and understanding this concept. The method and results are then presented. The results section is organized within the framework of the 5 defined categories, derived from the research questions here: 1) understanding of the concept of soft skills, 2) soft skills that are developed, 3) dimension of the competencies that are developed (Intrapersonal/interpersonal), 4) pedagogical methodologies used to teach soft skills and 5) how soft skills are examined and evaluated. Finally, it closes with the discussion and the conclusions section.

### **Conceptualization of soft skills**

Among the training requirements identified as essential competencies for social progress (OECD, 2015) are those recognized as soft skills. These competencies have been approached from different perspectives, explaining traits or aspects inherent to people that are crucial to their social and professional development.

It is clear that definitions of competencies are generally not based on single approaches (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007) since various classifications have been formulated under polysemic understandings. Soft skills are no exception since they are known under different names such as: "participatory competencies, personal competencies, basic competencies, key competencies, generic competencies, transferable competencies, relational competencies, life skills, interpersonal competencies, transversal competencies, basic life competencies, social competencies, emotional competencies, socio-emotional competencies, etc." (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007, p. 65).

From other studies, soft skills are understood as integrative, which contain qualities of individuals to self-manage, make decisions, solve problems, and interact with others, among other inter- and intrapersonal aspects (Dell'Alquila et al., 2017). They are also recognized as the result of the integration and development of underlying competencies, such as cognitive, emotional, and social competencies, in conjunction with emotional intelligence (Boyatzis, 2008).

Among the studies that analyze soft skills from a socio-emotional perspective is the one proposed by Goleman, (1998). This approach raises the need to encourage the development of emotional competencies, such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, self-motivation, and self-awareness, as well as social competencies, such as empathy and leadership. For Goleman, generating literacy of these skills is essential, as this can answer many societal problems (Scheerens & van der Werf, 2020, p.4).

In a later development, Zins et al. (2004) raised the need to include systematic and structured guidelines in educational processes for developing socio-emotional competencies. For this reason, they propose training in soft skills using a people-centered socio-emotional learning model based on the idea that guiding teaching by strengthening student-centered psychological principles allows one an integrative sense of what is taught and learned and to know oneself to know how to manage one's decision-making with personal and collective implications. that is, in which socio-emotional competencies are strengthened from the intra and interpersonal levels.



From a perspective close to socio-emotional competencies, Boyatzis (2008) presented the relevance of soft skills for the performance of people in the different roles they must play in society, particularly in the organizational environment. This author argues that social, cognitive, and emotional competencies, along with the development of emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and self-regulation, among other individual aspects, are components of soft skills and that developing them positively impacts people's performance. Although this perspective is inclined to value soft skills in the work environment, it is clear that developing them during vocational training contributes to that purpose from the world of work.

Finally, Cinque (2016) and Vera & Tejada (2020) reported that soft skills enable individuals to perform adequately in individual and collective tasks and to help access the labor market. These competencies empower them for life since they involve ethical behaviors, effective communication, critical thinking, and the ability to work with others in collaborative environments.

#### *Pedagogical and Assessment Approaches to Soft Skills: A Network-Based Approach*

Networks are organized systems with nodes connecting with links (Luke, 2015). A network is an organized system because it allows the organization of entities or objects in a set and the relationship between them. Such a relationship is established between pairs of nodes and can describe different types of relationships (Pinheiro, 2022). There are various types of networks. For example, one unipartite network is one in which nodes connect within the same network. For example, if we examine the type of soft skills that are analyzed in each of the 36 research articles examined in a review, 36 unipartite networks could be generated with their nodes (Soft skills) connecting based on the relationship criterion that has been set. This criterion could be the pedagogical approaches used in these works to develop and evaluate soft skills. Another type of network is bipartite networks. These networks illustrate the links between nodes of different sets that are part of two sets (Luke, 2015; Pinheiro, 2022). In the case of this article, they are used to illustrate the relationship between competencies and the dimensions of competence, the most relevant competencies with the pedagogical approach used to develop them, and the ways to examine or measure them in the 36 articles analyzed. Centrality measures allow you to identify how important a node is in the network based on its centrality metrics: degree centrality, closeness centrality, betweenness centrality, and eigenvector centrality. In this study, only the eigenvector centrality measure that measures the transitive influence of nodes is taken. This measure lets us know how many significant nodes (i.e., competencies) are connected and how much they vary between them (Christian et al., 2015).

## **Method and materials**

The network analysis methodology used Degree centrality (DC) metrics to identify the most relevant competencies, according to their centrality, in the 36 studies examined. Degree centrality represents the number

of connections a node has to other nodes. This network metric is quite helpful in understanding how popular or connected a node is to others. (Pinheiro, 2022).

Data were obtained with the *query* that included the terms "soft skills," "higher education," and "teaching and learning," which appeared in the title, abstract, and keywords of the documents in the SCOPUS database. From this search, 48 documents were obtained, including articles, editorials, reviews, and book chapters. Only articles on research results (23) and articles on conference proceedings (13) were included to answer the defined research questions. The other types of documents were discarded. In total, the sample consisted of 36 documents.

### Data analysis

For the literature review analyses, the metadata of the 36 selected documents were organized in a double-entry matrix on the format. Xls. The rows corresponded to each of the documents, and the columns to the aspects observed in each one, such as authors and year of publication, title, scope in which the study was carried out, methodological aspects of the study (type of study, sample, instruments used, main results), competencies that are analyzed and type of document. Subsequently, a second review of the documents already organized in the matrix was carried out, analyzing them according to their content in the categories presented in Table 1. These categories were defined based on the research questions addressed in the study.

What mechanisms have been used to measure and analyze the development of soft skills in higher education?

Categories	Categories description	Research questions
The concept of soft skills addressed in the study	The concept of soft skills was addressed in the studies analyzed.	What understandings of soft skills have the studies addressed?
Soft skills addressed in the different pedagogical approaches developed in the studies	Most relevant soft skills and competencies are approached from different pedagogical approaches.	What soft skills are privileged in teaching and learning in vocational training in Higher Education, and to what typology do they belong? What are the pedagogical conditions conducive to fostering the development of soft skills in higher education?
How soft skills are tested and evaluated	Characteristics of the ways approached in the studies to assess and examine soft skills.	What mechanisms have been used to measure and analyze soft skills development in higher education?

For the network analysis, a matrix was structured in .csv format in which the 36 documents were arranged in rows. Two columns contain the types of studies carried out based on the objectives outlined in each work and the soft skills examined in each. Subsequently, the data was processed in R Core Team (2023) to generate the

edges list. The edges list was necessary to create the two networks and the Eigenvector centrality measurements. The first edge list had the variables Competencies (*e.g.*, Etic, Moral, Teamwork, Entrepreneur, Technological Knowledge, Digital) and category of competencies (*i.e.*, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Transversal, Specific). The second edge list had the type of pedagogical proposal and/or approaches for developing competencies (*e.g.*, Teaching material, Models, Methods, Resources, and Perceptions ) and Competencies (*e.g.*, Teamwork, Critical thinking, Problem-solving, Communication). Finally, the edge lists trachea had the forms or modalities in which competencies (*e.g.*, survey, interview, evaluation with rubrics, questionnaire, Perform of evaluation) and competencies (*e.g.*, Teamwork, Critical thinking, Problem-solving, Communication).

## Results

This section shares the results of the categories mentioned in the method.

### **The concept of soft competence that is addressed in the studies analyzed**

Concerning the definitions presented in the documents about the concept of soft skills, it was found that only 12 of the 36 documents analyzed presented an explicit definition of soft skills. These definitions emphasize that these types of competencies do not have a particular disciplinary affiliation (Daley & Baruah, 2021). They also referred to the fact that soft skills result from the interaction between knowledge, attitudes, and abilities that favor professional performance (Sbardella et al., 2019). Therefore, their development favors the performance of people in different spheres of personal/individual and social life (Esteves et al., 2018; Idrus et al., 2012). Additionally, they mentioned that soft skills have to do with people's qualities (Pazil & Razak, 2019), intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects (Bastos et al., 2020; C. Carvalho & Almeida, 2022; Gonzalez et al., 2013), as well as problem-solving skills (Peres & Azevedo, 2010), leadership and teamwork (Khalid et al., 2014), which have a significant impact on entry into the world of work and optimal performance in it (Hadiyanto et al., 2021). Therefore, soft skills need to be learned and developed, as they are not innate (Tan et al., 2021).

This set of definitions underpins the polysemic nature of the concept of competence that Bisquerra & Pérez (2007) use from a general perspective, particularly in soft skills.

This is reflected in the definitions of four of the studies analyzed, in which soft skills are linked to associated concepts such as ability in general (Osman et al., 2012), interpersonal ability (Awang-Hashim et al., 2022) or interpersonal competence (Noah & Aziz, 2020). Only one of the works involves other types of statements, including habits, abilities, and relationships (Ragusa et al., 2022).

The remaining 24 documents did not address the concept of soft competition directly for several aspects of their conceptual approach; they focused on:

- Examine the relevance of the development of critical thinking and how to enhance it through the use of technological mediations based on collaborative structure (Carvalho et al., 2019).
- Analyze the competitiveness and quality measurement tools of countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, among others, based on the Global Competitiveness Index report of 2015-2016 (Hamzah et al., 2018).
- Reflect on the relevance of the development of soft skills for the personal growth of individuals and interaction in their environment (Horváth, 2020).
- Identify the implications of the didactics used in STEM education to enhance students' competencies for the 21st century (Lavi et al., 2021).
- Analyze teaching-learning strategies mediated by gamification and didactic strategies mediated by technologies, such as the Escape Room, to enhance soft skills such as critical thinking and collaborative work (Mudure-Iacob, 2021).
- Propose a teaching proposal based on the flipped classroom method to enhance intrapersonal competencies such as self-regulation and interpersonal competencies such as teamwork (Bui et al., 2022; Cai, 2022).
- To design a teaching-learning proposal incorporating didactic strategies and tools to strengthen the pedagogical competencies of students being trained as teachers. This proposal favored the development of intrapersonal competencies (Razak et al., 2022; Trust et al., 2022).
- Establish the benefits of the implementation of the B-learning modality to enhance soft skills that favor entrepreneurship and innovation in university students (Pisoni, 2019).
- Implement a teaching strategy to enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and leadership competencies (Idrus, 2017).
- Generate a model for teaching leadership and teamwork competencies and a gamification-based module for the development of soft skills for teamwork (Rich et al., 2019).
- Develop a system for automatically assessing teamwork soft skills based on criteria identified in observed sessions and teachers' perceptions ((Montero et al., 2014).
- Develop an inventory of competencies that need to be included in the curriculum, identified from surveys and information collected from professors, students, and graduates (Idrus, 2015).
- Strategies for the development of soft skills incorporating Problem-Based Learning (PBL) (Felgueiras et al., 2020), Gamification-Based Learning (GBL) (Amara & Saberi, 2018) and Collaborative Project-Based Learning (PBL) (Osipov et al., 2023).

*Most relevant soft skills and competencies approached from different pedagogical approaches*

*Types of competencies analyzed in the studies reviewed*

The identification of the competencies most analyzed in the reviewed studies, as well as their typologies, showed that the studies developed intrapersonal competencies such as Problem-Solving (DC=17), Critical Thinking (DC=16), Ethical (DC=6), Moral (DC=5), Creativity Thinking (DC=5), Lifelong-learning (DC=5) and Innovative Thinking (4). Interpersonal competencies include teamwork (DC=15), leadership (DC=7), and

collaboration (DC=5). In the transversal competencies, the most relevant for their DC was Communication (DC=17) (i.e., oral and writing), and the Specific or disciplinary competencies were Entrepreneurship (DC=5) (See Figure 1).

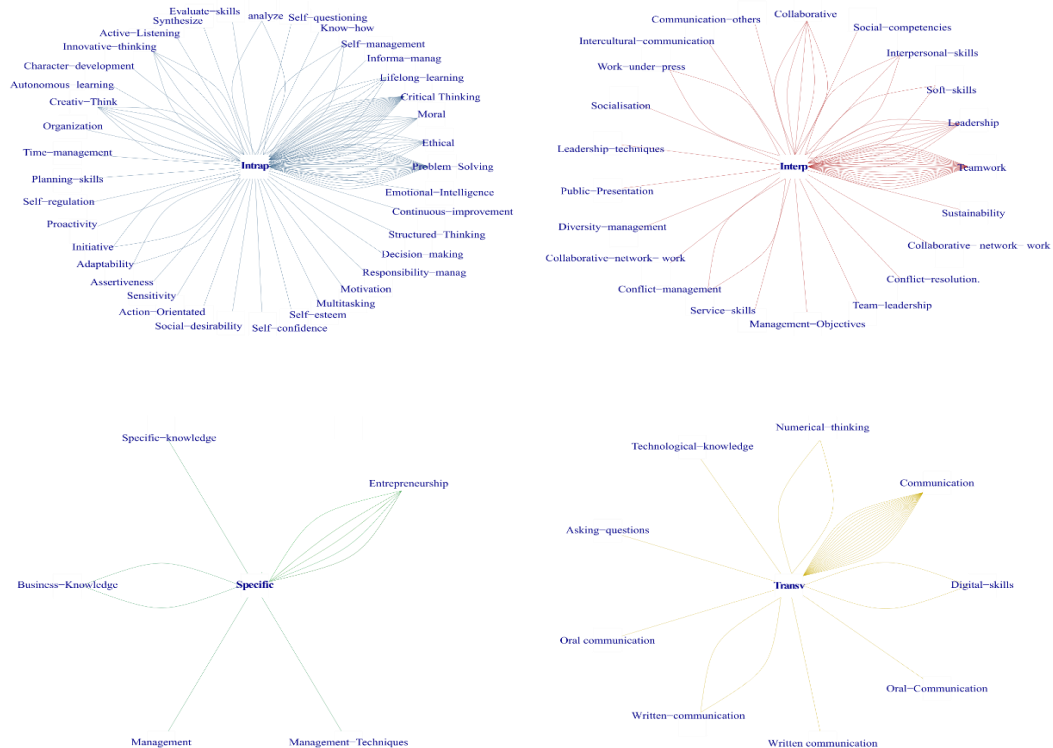
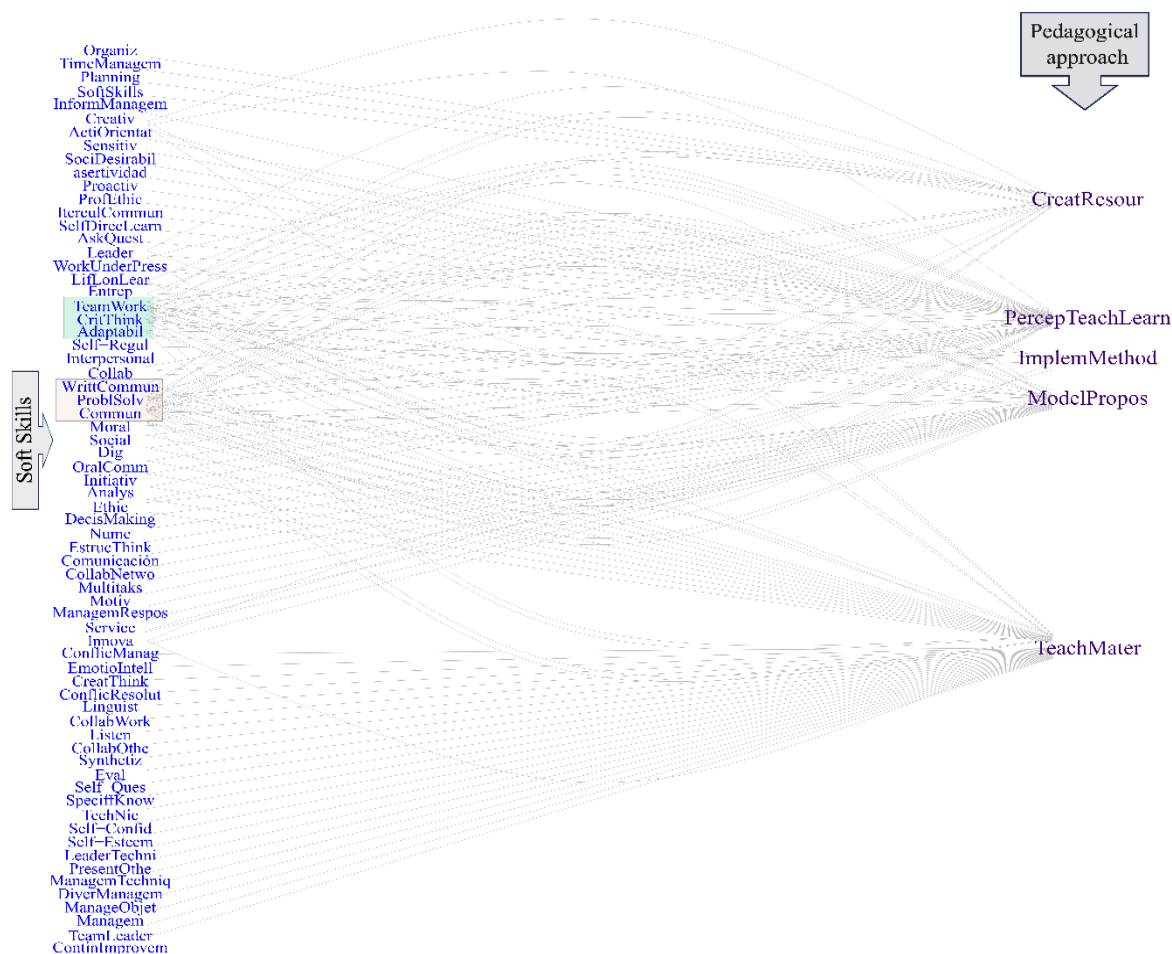


Figure 1. Ego-centric networks of competence typologies are addressed in the reviewed studies.

*Soft skills addressed in different pedagogical approaches*

The 36 studies examined addressed five types of pedagogical approaches for the development of soft skills: Creation of educational resources (CreatResour), Perceptions and alternatives for the teaching and learning of soft skills (PercepteachLearn), Implementation of methods for the development of soft skills (ImplemMethod), Proposals for educational models for the development of soft skills (ModelPropos) and Teaching materials for the development of soft skills (TeachMater). The most frequent pedagogical approach was PercepteachLearn, which accounted for 30.5% of the studies. These works examined previous work and experiences that allowed them to determine the best educational practices for developing soft skills. They also explored teachers' and students' perceptions of the soft skills that must be created. The next approach was TeacherMater (27.5% of the studies), where they developed teaching materials that allow the development of competencies (e.g., guides for the development of oral communication and development of study things). The next pedagogical approach was ModelPropos (19% of the studies), in which they proposed models to assess competencies for developing

engineering competencies, teaching soft skills, and their evaluation. The remaining two approaches, CreatResour (11%) and ImplemMethod (12%) created gamified resources for learning, open resources for collaborative learning, and technological developments for competency assessment (CreatResour). The latter, ImplemMethod, implemented methodologies such as B-Learning, collaborative learning, and project-based learning to measure their impact on developing soft skills.



The most analyzed competencies in the different pedagogical approaches were problem-solving (DC=17),

Figure 2. Pedagogical approach to analyzing soft skills.

Communication/Oral and Written with DC (DC=17), Critical Thinking (DC=16), and D Teamwork (DC=15). On the other hand, other competencies, such as less, are also addressed in some types of approaches. This shows the variety of disciplinary studies, e.g., for the development of business (DC=1), linguistic (DC=1), synthesis (DC=1), and self-structuring (DC=1) competencies.

*Assessment of competencies*



Figure 3 presents the assessment methods used by the studies reviewed to assess competencies. The most frequently used evaluation methods in the studies were questionnaires (30.7%), surveys (27.7%) and performance evaluations (25%), rubrics (11.1%), and interviews (5.5%) were the least used. In questionnaires, surveys, and interviews, teachers and students were generally asked about perceived competencies and those they consider desirable for professional performance. In the performance evaluations and the soft skills evaluation rubrics, indicators were incorporated to determine the level of competence development (e.g., levels of effective communication, levels of self-management, etc.).

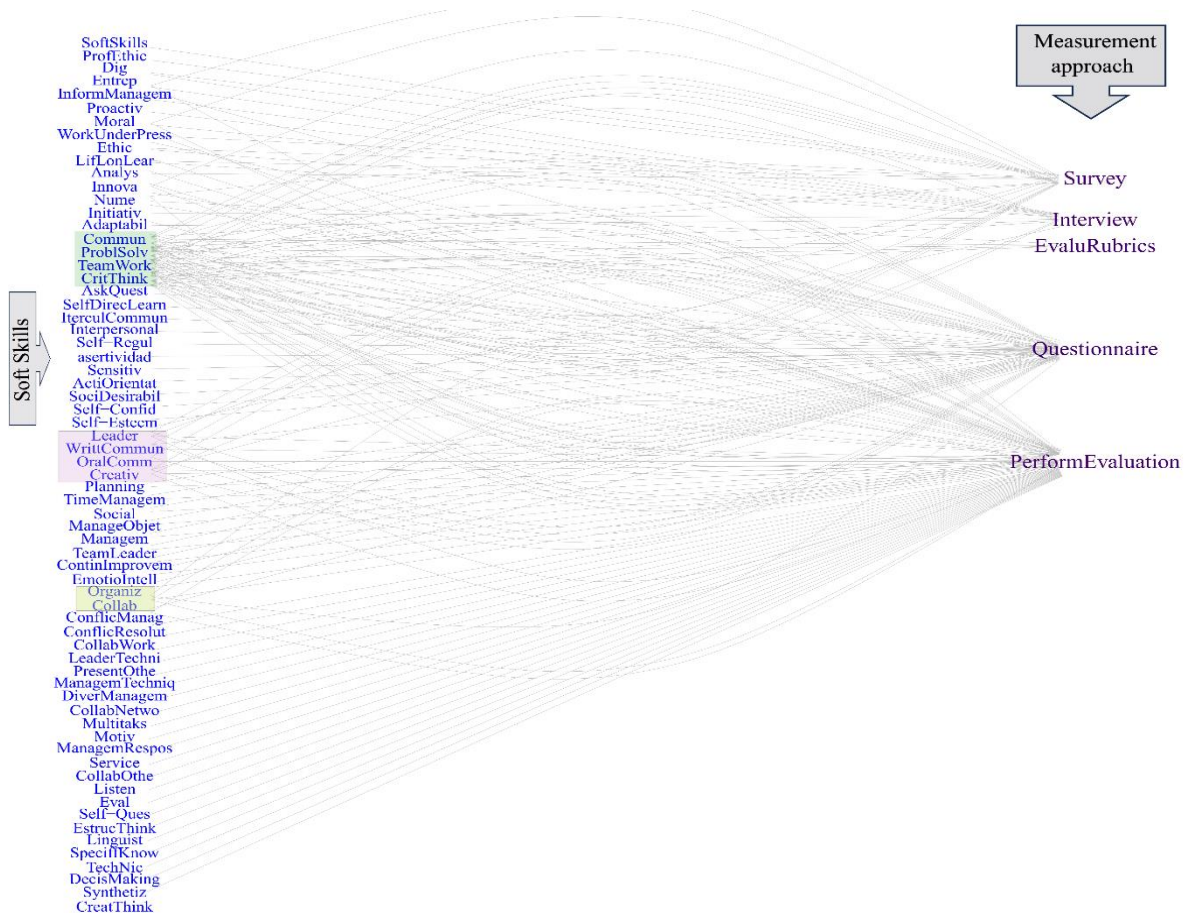


Figure 2. Measurement approach to analyzing soft skills.

This result shows that the most relevant competencies are due to their levels of DC, such as problem-solving (DC=16), critical thinking (DC=15), communication (DC=14), and teamwork (DC=14). This indicates that the analysis of soft skills is carried out from an integrative approach, in which intrapersonal soft skills, such as problem-solving, are linked with interpersonal competencies, such as teamwork and transversal competencies such as communication, with others such as e.g., self-regulation, time management, adaptability (intrapersonal competencies), leadership, diversity management, conflict management, public presentation (interpersonal skills), DNA, oral communication, digital skills (transversal skills), entrepreneurship, management, SEPCIFICS



knowledge (specific skills).

## Discussion

This study aimed to examine the concept of soft skills and identify how they are taught, developed, and evaluated in higher education. Two types of analysis were addressed, which allowed us to determine that there are many definitions of soft skills given the diversity and application of soft skills in the different disciplinary areas. However, in most cases, they identify soft skills as one of the characteristics that enable people to perform effectively in work, academic, and personal environments. In other words, from an understanding close to that proposed by Scheerens and van der Werf (2020), soft skills are part of a socio-emotional dimension, which can be the answer to the solution of societal problems.

Under the second analysis, it was possible to identify a core of soft skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork, which, in addition to being addressed in most jobs, are examined in parallel or conjunction with others. This reflects the growing interest of the different disciplinary areas in developing soft skills in response to the calls for studies that identify the gap between the training of soft skills in higher education and those required in the labor market (Didier, 2024), or the need to expand the framework for the development of soft skills, as proposed by (Garcia-Chitiva & Correa, 2023).

Finally, a richness in the variety of pedagogical and assessment approaches for developing and revising competencies was identified. In these approaches, the traditional analysis of perceptions predominated. It is a fertile field for future work to expand approaches that create resources that allow them to be evaluated in addition to teaching soft skills.

## Conclusion

The studies' analyses revealed the importance of soft skills in students' personal and professional growth. These competencies, which encompass intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transversal skills, play a vital role in achieving success in various areas, particularly in the professional field.

The diversity and variety of pedagogical techniques and strategies for fostering and assessing soft skills range from developing educational materials to applying educational frameworks and using technological tools. This variety shows soft skills' complex and multifaceted nature, implying that a singular approach may not be comprehensive enough to encompass all aspects of these skills.

## Recommendations

Other research can also delve into the methods employed to train soft skills by knowledge areas in technical,

bachelor's, and postgraduate programs.

In this study, only articles from one database (Scopus) were analyzed due to researchers' ease of access to this information source. Future studies can use Web of Science, Redalyc, Scielo, and Lens databases.

## Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the financial support of Writing Lab, Institute for the Future of Education, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico, in the production of this work.

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## Exploring the Factors of Internet Gaming Disorder among Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) Players in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) is one of the Internet gaming genres that has not been adequately examined. The present study aims to examine the roles of three gaming motivations (i.e., achievement, social, and immersion) and depression on Internet gaming disorder (IGD) among MOBA players in the Malaysian context. The mediating role of depression in the associations between the three gaming motivations and IGD was also examined. In the present study, 1,175 MOBA players were recruited through MOBA online groups on social media. The sample was predominantly males which accounted for 75.20% ( $n = 808$ ) and their age range was between 18 and 35 years old ( $M_{\text{age}} = 22.19$  years,  $SD = 3.30$ ). The results showed that three gaming motivations and depression as positive predictors of IGD. Depression was a significant mediator for the associations between three gaming motivations and IGD. A large proportion of IGD variances were explained by these key predictors. The findings provide a preliminary understanding of the underlying predictors of IGD in this inadequately examined context. Future studies should expand the examination to obtain more research evidence to benefit the development of prevention, intervention, and treatment.

**Keywords:** MOBA players, Gaming motivations, Depression, Youth, Internet gaming disorder

**Citation:** T'ng, S., T., Ho, K., H., Leong, W., S., Siah, P., C. & Abdul Jalil, N., I. (2024). Exploring the factors of Internet gaming disorder among multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) players in Malaysia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2023-2037), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.



## Introduction

User-centred approach specifically focused on players' motivations and feelings during game development has been constantly applied in designing Internet games nowadays. The adoption of this approach is to enhance players' immersion in gaming (Ng et al., 2012). In recent years, Internet gaming has become one of the most popular worldwide leisure activities, however, there is a growing concern that excessive and prolonged involvement in this activity may lead to several adverse consequences, such as poor academic performance, social relationships, family cohesion and physical health (Kuss, 2013). In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition and fifth edition text-revised (DSM-5, DSM-5-TR), Internet gaming disorder (IGD) has been documented in Section III Emerging Measures and Models. In general, IGD refers to persistent or recurrent gaming behaviour which causes one's clinical impairment or psychological distress. American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) warrants more studies to be conducted to provide stronger empirical support for the nine diagnostic criteria of IGD. Gaming disorder (GD) has also been highlighted in the Eleventh World Health Organization's classification (IGD 11, WHO, 2019) which is classified as one of the addictive disorders. APA (2013) and WHO (2019) both agreed that gaming disorder should be diagnosed clinically if gaming activity deteriorates one's life functioning. Therefore, it is imperative to support the growing effort in establishing a clearer conceptualization of IGD which serves as a significant reference for researchers and clinicians.

To date, most of the empirical studies extensively examined Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) and reported the addictive nature of this genre (e.g., Billieux et al., 2013; Hussain et al., 2015). However, Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) has been rapidly thriving in the gaming market and became the most popular genre worldwide after the launching of *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *League of Legends* (LoL), surpassing the popularity of MMORPG. Comparing these two genres (i.e., MMORPG and MOBA), they share similarities and differences. Both genres require continuous advancement and frequent social interaction, however, MMORPG games are typically designed with a never-ending world but MOBA games stop evolving after withdrawal from the game. Popular MOBA games provide daily updates of world rankings, portraying their competitive nature as compared to MMORPG (Nuyens et al., 2016).

This online gaming phenomenon is prominent in Malaysia, where it has been found in a major part of our lives nowadays. A global market research provider of games and Esports analytics – Newzoo (2023) reported that the latest data on video game consumption reveals about 3.38 billion players worldwide and growing by +6.3% year-on-year. Asia-Pacific region accounts for more than half of the players worldwide, contributing 84.1 billion out of the total of 184 billion. Forde (2019) also reported that the gaming industry in Southeast Asia (including Malaysia) has been recognized as “the world's fastest-growing (mobile) games region/market”. According to the Malaysia Youth Council (2019), individuals aged between 18 and 35 are categorised as youth. The suggested age range was introduced by referring the international standards (i.e., United Nations, Commonwealth). It is important to highlight that program implementations should focus mainly on youth to

strengthen the development of the nation. Sussman and Arnett (2014) emphasized that individuals in this stage are also more vulnerable to developing addictive behaviours, signifying greater scholarly attention should be given to this group of population. To the best knowledge, few studies have examined the determinants of IGD among MOBA players, and the present study is also pioneering the examination of motivations of gaming, depression, and IGD in the Malaysian context.

### **Gaming Motivations and IGD**

It is suggested that IGD is highly associated with misdirected motivations with greater focus channelled to virtual reality than the physical world (Dong & Potenza, 2014). A model of motivations in the gaming context has been proposed by Yee (2006) which aims to understand the collective patterns of gaming motivations while assessing the individual differences among players. From the findings, three core motivations were discovered: achievement, socialisation, and immersion. Achievement motivation is defined as an urge to obtain greater power, have fast progression, collect more in-game wealth, and enjoy the competition. Next, players who are motivated by social needs enjoy forming long-term meaningful relationships, seeking social support, and collaborating in a team. As for immersed players, they use gaming as a platform to avoid or escape from real-life problems. They also place greater emphasis on the quality of experience in gaming by exploring hidden objects and/or customising an online character. As such, different players are driven by motivations even if they play the same game, implying that online gaming may lead to different meanings and outcomes for different players. Moudiab and Spada (2019) suggested that the examination of motivations is crucial as it provides a framework to differentiate among players meanwhile establishing a clearer picture of the usage patterns and behaviours. Williams et al. (2008) also reported that these three motivational factors accounted for 60% of the overall variance in online gaming, emphasizing their influential roles in the etiology of IGD.

Beard and Wickham (2016) collected data from a sample of MMORPG players and it was found that advancement motivation (which is conceptually equivalent to achievement motivation) significantly contributes to problematic gaming behaviour. Xu et al. (2012) examined 623 Chinese adolescents and found that players' desire to obtain greater mastery and advancement did not predict problematic Internet use. These empirical findings have restricted a clearer understanding of achievement motivation in the development of IGD among MOBA players in Malaysia, implying more studies have to be conducted. In another perspective, inconsistent findings were also reported by past studies regarding the roles of social motivation and problematic online gaming. For example, Xu et al. (2012) and Zhong and Yao (2013) revealed that social motivation reinforced players to have more intensive gameplay which may substantially increase their likelihood of experiencing IGD. In contrast, Kneer and Rieger (2015) described that social interaction did not predict problematic gaming behaviour possibly due to socialisation contributing to better psychological well-being which serves as a protective factor to refrain players from experiencing IGD. The mixed findings have presented an unclear role of social motivation in the etiology of IGD, particularly across different cultural contexts.

Additionally, Ballabio et al. (2017) reported that escapism (one of the core elements of immersion motivation) has a positive association with IGD. It allows players to temporarily escape themselves from any frustrations of the physical world meanwhile providing a platform to experience game enjoyment (Snodgrass et al., 2013). A literature gap has to be addressed as it is assumed that different game genres attract players with different motivations. MMORPG and MOBA genres both involve the use of online characters, however, MMORPG games emphasize more on creation and customisation of online characters and they can be played solo, whereas MOBA games require intensive team collaboration to compete with a rival team. Therefore, the inadequate scholarly focus on the MOBA genre has provided a strong impetus for the present study to be conducted.

### *Depression and IGD*

Individuals with more severe psychopathology are more vulnerable to have addiction due to deterioration of psychosocial functioning and weaker intention to dissociate themselves from emotional difficulties (Wu et al., 2016). A recent study by Liu et al. (2018) reported a positive connection between depression and IGD. Specifically, depressed individuals are at higher risk of experiencing IGD than their counterparts. Kardefelt-Winther (2014) explained that cyberspace provides a platform for players to compensate for their dissatisfaction with the physical world through excessive involvement in online gaming. The anonymity in the virtual world allows depressed individuals to share their personal life difficulties as having an undisclosed identity allows them to feel safe and less threatening. Therefore, online gaming produces immediate positive psychological effects which can substantially reduce their depressive moods or emotional disturbances, leading them to overly rely on the use of the Internet (Caplan & Turner, 2007). Nevertheless, temporary compensation may further deteriorate several life aspects such as neglecting daily responsibilities and jeopardizing interpersonal relationships (Stavropoulos et al., 2016). In return, the existing symptomology of depression is likely to be reinforced and intensified to a greater extent (Ko et al., 2012).

### *The Present Study*

The overall aim of the present study was to investigate the predictive effects of three gaming motivations (i.e., achievement, social, and immersion) and depression on IGD among MOBA youth players in the Malaysian context. The present study was therefore guided by two general research objectives. Firstly, the present study aims to investigate the direct effects of three gaming motivations and depression on IGD. Secondly, the mediating role of depression in the associations between the three gaming motivations and IGD was examined.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

A total of 1,175 MOBA players were recruited in the present study. Qualtrics online survey link was posted in 28 randomly selected Malaysia MOBA online groups on social media platforms. The online groups were typically named according to popular MOBA games such as *League of Legends*, *Mobile Legends*, and *Defense*

*of the Ancients 2* (DOTA 2). Ethical approval was obtained from the research team's university. Permission was obtained from the group's administrator before the recruitment process. The participants were required to provide an electronic copy of the consent. Their right to withdraw from the study and the confidentiality of the provided data were clearly stated. The present study did not focus on online players in general (including players from different age groups or different game genres), therefore, four inclusion criteria have to be met: (1) being MOBA players, (2) aged between 18 and 30 years old, (3) at least one-year experience in playing any MOBA game(s), and (4) being a non-professional player. Although the above inclusion criteria were specified in an online post and online survey, 100 sets of responses (8.51%) were removed due to disqualified of age (below 18 or above 35 years old). As for the participants' demographical profile, most of the participants were males ( $n = 808$ , 75.20%) with mean age = 22.19 years old ( $SD = 3.30$ ). More than half of the participants were single ( $n = 784$ , 74.70%) and students ( $n = 687$ , 65.50%). Most of the participants spent an average of 2 to 4 hours in online gaming per day ( $n = 641$ , 61.10%). The largest group of gaming experience (in years) was 2 to 4 years ( $n = 330$ , 31.5%), followed by 5 to 7 years ( $n = 245$ , 23.4%).

#### *Measures*

##### *Internet Gaming Disorder Scale – Short Form (IGDS9-SF)*

This scale was created by Pontes and Griffiths (2015) to measure the symptoms of IGD over the past 12-month period. This scale is not intended for diagnostic purposes and it is a unidimensional scale. It consists of nine items that are matched with the nine diagnostic criteria of DSM-5. It is administered by a five-point Likert scale (1 = "never", 5 = "very often"). The higher the score, the greater the severity of the symptoms of IGD. In the present study, this scale was found highly reliable with Cronbach's alpha = .81.

##### *Online Motivation Gaming Scale*

This scale was developed by Yee (2007) with 39 items in total. It is comprised of three subscales: achievement (14 items), socialisation (11 items), and immersion (14 items). It is administered by a five-point-construct-specific scale, for example, 1 (*not important at all*) and 5 (*extremely important*); 1 (*never*) and 5 (*always*). The higher the score, the greater one's motivation in online gaming. It is expected that players are not motivated by a single motivation, they may be motivated by multiple motivations, and the highest score would be considered as the dominant motivation. The scale reflects good reliability with  $\alpha = .87$  for achievement,  $\alpha = .81$  for socialisation,  $\alpha = .85$  for immersion, and the overall scale with  $\alpha = .93$  in the present study.

##### *Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale*

This scale was developed by Montgomery and Asberg (1979). This is a unidimensional scale and it consists of nine items to measure nine depressive symptoms. It is assessed by a four-point Likert scale with 0 = "no depressive symptoms" and 3 = "worst depressive symptoms". This scale is not used for diagnosis purposes. The

higher the score, the more severe the depressive symptoms are. Good reliability has been found on this scale with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$  in the present study.

#### *Data Analyses*

In the present study, IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 was used for preliminary analysis specifically examining univariate and multivariate normalities of the collected data. As for inferential analysis, SmartPLS version 4.0.9.2 by Ringle et al. (2015) has been applied. This statistical software adopts partial least squares–structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) which is statistically appropriate for exploratory studies or studies which are at an initial theoretical stage. PLS models are constituted by two sets of linear equations, which are known as measurement model and structural model. Model fit indices are not applicable in the PLS model, however, they are mandatory for confirmatory studies which are analysed by covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) (David Garson, 2016). Therefore, the model fit indices are not applied in presenting the results of both measurement and structural models. A measurement model was used to examine its psychometric properties, such as validity and reliability. Upon the examination of the measurement model, a structural model was built to examine the direct effects and indirect effects between the key variables.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Preliminary analyses were applied to examine univariate and multivariate outliers. There were no univariate outliers given the standardized composite scores for all items were within  $\pm 3.29$  standard deviations across each case, signifying that 99.9% of the cases were normally distributed (Field., 2013). Mahalanobis distance and the critical value of cases based on chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) distribution were used to detect multivariate outlier(s). The results showed there were 26 cases of multivariate outliers. Therefore, 1,049 sets of responses were utilised for the subsequent statistical analyses.

#### *The Measurement Model*

The present study has first analysed the psychometric properties of the measurement model which consists of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliabilities. In Table 1, the average variance extracted (AVE) of the latent constructs ranged from .357 to .440 after deleting six items (two items from each gaming motivation construct respectively) with below .50 factor loadings and/or non-significant  $p$ -value. The present study is considered an exploratory study, leading to the AVE of the constructs being slightly below the .50 cut-off point. Nevertheless, most of the constructs were found to have .40 and above.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that convergent validity of a construct is acceptable with AVE below .50 with the conditions that it is an exploratory study or less theoretically sound model and composite reliability has to be more than .60. In the present study, the composite reliabilities are excellent with each construct between

.855 and .903 (refer Table 1). As for discriminant validity, Henseler et al. (2015) suggested applying the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). The present study adopted the most stringent cut-off value (HTMT<sub>.85</sub>) for examining discriminant validity. In Table 2, each latent construct exhibits excellent discriminant validity with all values below the .85 cut-off point.

Table 1. Composite Reliabilities and Average Variance Extracted

Latent Construct	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
AM	.903	.440
SM	.855	.397
IM	.868	.357
DEP	.866	.419
IGD	.860	.407

Note: AM = achievement motivation; SM = social motivation, IM = immersion motivation; DEP = depression; IGD = Internet gaming disorder

Table 2. Discriminant Validity with Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Of Correlations (HTMT)

	AM	SM	IM	DEP	IGD
AM	-	-	-	-	-
SM	.809	-	-	-	-
IM	.774	.722	-	-	-
DEP	.111	.193	.190	-	-
IGD	.402	.278	.559	.409	-

Note: AM = achievement motivation; SM = social motivation, IM = immersion motivation; DEP = depression; IGD = Internet gaming disorder

### *The Structural Model*

Figure 1 displays that the strongest predictor of IGD is immersion motivation ( $\beta=.353$ ), followed by depression ( $\beta=.262$ ), achievement motivation ( $\beta=.153$ ), and social motivation ( $\beta=.085$ ) at  $p$ -value  $< .01$ . Each predictor reflects the positive predictive effect on IGD. As for the mediating effects, depression mediates the associations between (1) achievement motivation and IGD, (2) immersion motivation and IGD, and (3) social motivation and IGD at  $p$ -value  $< .01$ .

Achievement motivation has a negative predictive effect on depression. However, social motivation and immersion motivation show a positive predictive effect on depression. The adjusted  $R^2$  of IGD accounts for 32.8% of variances explained by all the predictors. According to Cohen (1988),  $f^2$  effect size's formula ( $R^2/(1-R^2)$ ), values greater than .02 as small, .15 as moderate, and .35 as large. Therefore, Cohen's  $f^2$  in the present study is .488, signifying moderate-to-large effect size.



**Discussion**

The present study developed a research model to examine the predictive effects of achievement motivation, social motivation, immersion motivation, and depression on IGD among MOBA players in the Malaysian context. The statistical analyses comprised direct effects and indirect effects of the selected key variables. Achievement motivation was found as a significant positive predictor of IGD in the present study and this finding has also been supported by past studies (e.g., Carlisle, 2017; Hussain et al., 2015; Khan & Muqtadir, 2016; King et al., 2017; Zhong & Yao, 2013) consistently. Players who are motivated by achievement needs have a strong urge to obtain greater mastery in the virtual gaming world, they are required to develop better knowledge of the game structure and figure out more powerful strategies in pursuing their set goals. They are also expected to invest more resources (e.g., time, money, and effort) through intensive gameplay which subsequently triggers the symptomology of IGD easily (Kuss et al., 2012). Additionally, it can be further explained that players with strong achievement needs are likely to feel uneasy or dissatisfied by leaving the targeted goals unattained (Kaptsis et al., 2016).

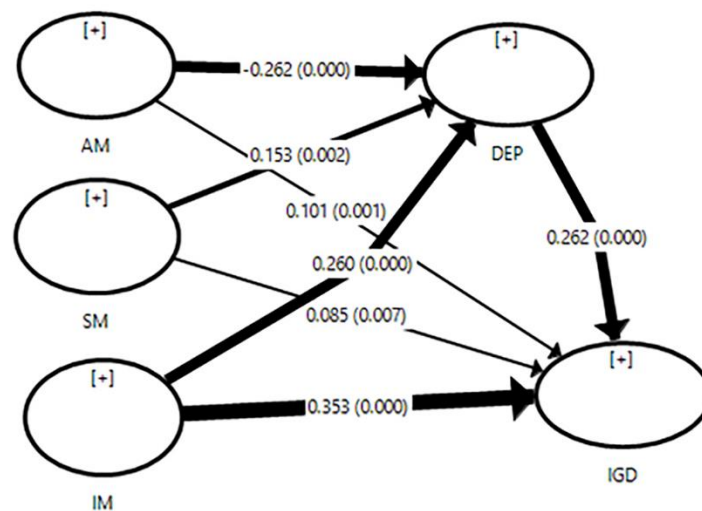


Figure 1. Structural Model of Three Gaming Motivations, Depression, and Internet Gaming Disorder among MOBA Players

Note: The thicker the bolded path, the more significant the path coefficient is. The figure in the bracket next to the path coefficient reflects the *p*-value. AM = achievement motivation; SM = social motivation, IM = immersion motivation; DEP = depression; IGD = Internet gaming disorder

In the context of MOBA games, individual performance and overall group performance are highly connected. The peer pressure in a group drives MOBA players to devote more resources to produce desired milestones meanwhile it increases their high need for achievement over some time. It is also postulated that achievement in the virtual gaming world is more appealing and attainable as compared to the physical world. There is no



denying that players who have encountered more failures or unsuccessful attempts in various life aspects may seek online games to compensate for their need for achievement.

Furthermore, empirical studies (e.g., Beard & Wickham, 2016; Blinka & Mikuška, 2014; Khan & Muqtadir, 2016; Zhong & Yao, 2013) revealed that social players were more vulnerable to developing IGD than their counterparts. The explanation of this finding could be that collective play (the nature of MOBA) substantially reinforces players to be more socially active. They are expected to play for a longer duration than what they have initially planned (Blinka & Mikuška, 2014). Therefore, the likelihood of experiencing IGD is expected to intensify if social players perceive online gaming as a pleasant platform to develop a new form of human relationships. A study by Rehbein et al. (2016) also described that social motivation was typically higher among MOBA players given the nature of this game genre involves numerous social interactions. The finding has also been supported by Cole and Griffiths (2007), suggesting that in-game social interaction is one of the core elements that boost players' enjoyment which benefits their long-lasting friendships. The in-game social interactions substantially strengthen the symptomology of IGD and it also appears to be prevalent among non-problematic players. It is important to highlight that intensive socialisation and group collaboration are the prerequisites for players to progress in a game (Barnett & Coulson, 2010). Therefore, the role of socialisation in the MOBA genre should be emphasised.

Subsequently, immersion motivation was found to be a significant predictor of IGD in the present study. This finding has also been supported by past studies (e.g., Cross, 2016; Laconi et al., 2017; Šporčić & Glavak-Tkalić, 2018) consistently. As immersed players place greater emphasis on the quality of experience in gameplay, they are more easily attracted by the appealing features of the online gaming world. They choose to withdraw themselves from stressful real-life problems to drain their frustration or dissatisfaction in the virtual world. They enjoy using online gaming to relax, kill monsters, discover hidden objects, and customise online characters (Yee, 2006). The excessive involvement in online gaming has produced positive outcomes which leads to greater immersion in the virtual gaming world. The greater immersion contributes to undistinguishable boundaries between the online and offline worlds even arriving at a state of "losing self" (Yee, 2007). The positive outcomes do give immersed players a temporary escape, however, it may even trigger more adverse effects (i.e., IGD's symptoms).

In another perspective, depression was found as a significant predictor of IGD. Most of the depressed young people choose not to seek professional assistance but they prefer to adopt adaptive or maladaptive self-help methods (Castaldelli-Maia et al., 2012). Addiction is always perceived as an attempt to regulate unpleasant emotions through external methods. In other words, addiction is conceptualised as a maladaptive strategy in mood regulation. (Griffiths, 2005; Stavropoulos et al., 2015). Ha et al. (2006) reported that depressed individuals are likely to use cyberspace to get rid of negative emotions and they perceive stronger emotional support from cyberspace. Additionally, Liu et al. (2018) suggested that depression emerges from a sense of inadequacy about human relationships. Emotional distress can be alleviated through excessive gameplay.

However, a vicious cycle can be activated easily given that problematic online gaming amplifies the deterioration of other life aspects.

The mediating effect of depression on the associations between gaming motivations and IGD has been explored in the present study. Depression was found as a significant mediator for the above associations. Overlooking the mediating effect of depression may lead to a misleading conclusion which may reduce the usefulness of intervention. Having a significant mediating effect implies that depression functions as a potential mechanism by which gaming motivations produce changes in IGD. For instance, achievement motivation was found to have a negative predictive effect on depression. The possible explanation could be that accumulated achievements cultivate a positive sense of self (e.g., feeling superiority) which substantially refrains players from experiencing depressive symptoms. In other words, players with higher achievement needs are found to lower the severity of depressive symptoms, subsequently, the risk of developing IGD will also be lowered. Depression was also found to positively mediate the relationship between social motivation and IGD. Social players perceive social interaction in the virtual gaming world as appealing (Griffiths et al., 2004). They are prone to maintain good quality social relationships by showing more compliance, however, conflicts can be triggered easily in balancing the social demands between the in-group and out-group (e.g., family members and/or peers who are not in their gaming team), leading to the occurrence of depressive symptoms which initiates the development of IGD more intensely.

The present study also discovered that players who are motivated by immersion needs in online gaming are likely to experience depression. This possibly explains that having a greater level of immersion in online gaming leads to more deterioration in several life aspects such as neglecting societal obligations or hampering social relationships. The uncontrollable and worsening life aspects trigger the emergence of depressive symptoms (including a sense of helplessness). Consequently, these intolerable depressive symptoms motivate players to seek a pleasurable way to counterbalance their negative moods. Therefore, the motivation to escape from real life resembles a “push” effect in which online gaming promotes better short-term psychological well-being (Chang et al., 2018). The examination of the mediating effect is vital as it unveils a clear understanding of the interaction between gaming motivations and IGD.

### **Implications**

The results of the present study are essential to provide useful insights for scholars to have a wider understanding of IGD. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to tailor an intervention that aims to attain full abstinence from online gaming among at-risk players. Mental health practitioners are urged to create an intervention to assist players to re-discover or re-formulate new purpose of life by setting up more attainable short-term as well as long-term targets. The present study discovered immersion motivation as the strongest predictor of IGD. The great immersion in online gaming may reflect the maladaptive coping skills of youth in dealing with negative emotions that are derived from stressful life events. Cultivating a strong and adaptive coping skill among youth is crucial to promote psychological well-being. Specifically, cognitive-behavioral therapy would be useful for

understanding the gaming motivation and the specific desired outcomes that are expected by the client (high-risk players) in a psychotherapy setting. It is also essential to guide a client to seek alternative activities to compensate for their negative emotions or attain the desired outcomes which are rewarded by online gaming. In general, intensive collaboration between the client and psychotherapist would help reduce a client's craving and tolerance effect of online gaming.

### **Limitation and Recommendations**

Although the present study is the first to examine the predictive effects of gaming motivations and depression on IGD among MOBA players in Malaysia, its interpretation and conclusions are still restricted by limitations. For instance, AVE of the latent constructs is below the .05 cut-off value, the convergent validity would be considered "provisional". From another perspective, it is believed that gaming motivations are not limited to these three gaming motivations suggested by Yee (2006, 2007). However, the present study has chosen these three motivations given that they are highly related to the competitive nature of online gaming and they are widely applied by past researchers. The present study adopted a self-report measure in which participants may not report the actual gaming behaviour possibly due to high social desirability. As participants of the present study were MOBA players, the findings may not apply to other game genres. Future studies are recommended to incorporate a qualitative approach, experimental approach, or longitudinal observation in measuring the roles of gaming motivations and depression on IGD. It is also recommended to include various age groups (i.e., adolescents) to make a clearer comparison of the prevalence of IGD. Future researchers may also consider examining personality traits that are predicted to influence gaming motivations and depression. The results of the present study would be considered preliminary and in need of replication, particularly involving more diverse and cross-cultural groups.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of the present study highlighted the significant roles of gaming motivations and depression on IGD which are essential to understand problematic gaming behaviour. It is believed that playing online games for a recreational purpose is acceptable, however, if the daily functions of an individual are impeded, this may draw the attention of family and mental health professionals. Next, the conceptualization of IGD should be continuously developed as online games evolve rapidly and penetrate globally. The present study would also suggest players to seek healthier alternatives to compensate for their excessive involvement in online gaming. The selection of activities should also include social support from relevant parties. Clinicians are advised to explore the faulty thinking of high-risk players which leads to the formation of problematic online gaming. The present study provides preliminary findings that may articulate new ideas and stimulate new thinking about the phenomenon of online gaming. Future studies in the field of problematic online gaming or disordered gaming, in general, should gather more empirical evidence for evaluating the need to make this disorder with an official diagnosis.

## Acknowledgments

The research was supported by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2022/SS09/UTAR/02/3).

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## Myocardial Inotropic Function While Receiving Antiarrhythmic Ic Class Medications: Is It Worth Worrying About?

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**Abstract:** Atrial fibrillation (AF) is one of the most common arrhythmias among adults in economically developed countries of the world. This research *aim* was to study changes of contractile function of the myocardium in patients with AF during restoration of sinus rhythm (SR). *Methods:* In a one-center prospective study patients with AF received propafenone or aethacizinium for 6 months after conversion to SR by planned or acute electrical cardioversion (ECV). Symptoms and safety were evaluated. *Results:* Of the 62 patients enrolled in the study, 57 completed it per protocol. 25 patients (44%) were admitted for ECV by emergency service, 32 (56%) were referred by a cardiologist or general practitioner. All 57 patients were followed up for 6-month period; 49 (86%) maintained SR group. The rest – 8 patients (14%) experienced  $\geq 1$  AF paroxysm (AF group) within the follow-up time. Between AF group and SR group echocardiographic data, early diastolic atrial myocardial velocity, and strain - no significant changes were found. No safety parameters changed significantly. Recurrence rate of AF in aethacizinium group compared to propafenone group (55,6% vs 72,5%) ( $p=0,05$ ). Aethacizinium, propafenone may be safe in patients with persistent form of AF and have no negative impact on inotropic function of myocardium.

**Keywords:** atrial fibrillation, propafenone, aethacizinum, inotropic function

**Citation:** Sokolova, E., Kokina, B., Rudzītis, A., Kalējs, O. & Lejnieks, A. (2024). Myocardial inotropic function while receiving antiarrhythmic Ic class medications: is it worth worrying about? In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2038-2046), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is one of the most common arrhythmias among adults in economically developed countries of the world (Morillo et al., 2017). AF leads to a deterioration in the quality of life, increases morbidity and mortality, decreases life expectancy (Sankaranarayanan et al., 2015). According to available data (MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep, 1999), mortality among patients with AF is twice as high as in the general population.

The main mechanisms of development of AF which should be considered when choosing therapy. Various etiological factors (diabetes, heart failure, obesity, coronary artery disease, hypertension, aging, genetic predisposition, chronic kidney disease) cause a complex of pathophysiological changes in the atria, including the formation of fibrosis in response to chamber distension, fatty infiltration, inflammation, vascular remodeling, ischemia, ion channel dysfunction and disturbances in the transport of Ca<sup>2+</sup> ions (Krishnan et al., 2022). In addition, AF can independently accelerate and maintain many of the listed pathophysiological mechanisms, which largely explains the progressive nature of the arrhythmia.

Many associated factors (structural pathology of the heart, hypertension, diabetes), as well as, mainly, AF itself, appear to contribute to the slow but continuous progression of structural remodeling of atrial tissue. A distinctive feature of the process is the activation of fibroblasts, increased formation of connective tissue and the progression of fibrosis. In addition, in patients with AF and comorbid conditions that predispose to its development, fatty infiltration of atrial tissue cells, inflammatory infiltration, hypertrophy of cardiomyocytes, necrosis and amyloidosis may be detected. Structural remodeling also leads to electrical dissociation of cardiomyocytes and local conduction disturbances, which favors the establishment and maintenance of arrhythmia.

The cause of the phenomenon of electrical remodeling of the atria, apparently, is an increase in the content of intracellular calcium, leading to a reduction in calcium current, the duration of the action potential of cardiomyocytes and a shortening of atrial refractoriness. All this creates a substrate for the preservation of arrhythmia, contributes to the stability of AF and reduces the possibility of its spontaneous termination, as well as reducing the effectiveness of pharmacological and electrical cardioversion (Kokina et al., 2021).

In recent years due to the increasing prevalence of AF, as well as the high incidence of thromboembolic complications, the problem of the optimization of strategy for the treatment of AF has become especially relevant [Steinwender et al., 2015]. Atrial fibrillation is accompanied by progressive contractile dysfunction of atria due to the development of electrical remodeling processes with a shortening of the effective refractory period of the myocardium and atria. These, as well as other electrophysiological processes, such as an increase in the trigger activity or automatism of atrial myocytes, a decrease in the speed of impulse conduction through the atria (conduction dispersion), heterogeneity, atrial refractoriness, hypersensitivity to catecholamines and acetylcholine contribute to the maintenance of existing or the development of new AF attacks - "atrial fibrillation causes atrial fibrillation" (Daoud et al., 1999). As a result, with an increase in the duration of AF, the effectiveness of pharmacological and electrical cardioversion decreases and the likelihood of recurrence increases. Lack of synchronicity of atrial contractions, excessively high frequency, and randomness of ventricular contractions in AF leads to dilatation of the left ventricular cavity and progression of the cardiac insufficiency (Offut C., 2004), which is explained by the possible development of cardiomyopathy due to cardiac arrhythmias (Brugada et al., 1993; Crijns et al., 2000), however, the mechanisms of this process are still poorly understood.

Among IC class antiarrhythmic drugs with proven effectiveness that can be assigned part orally to restore proper heart rhythm, a special place is occupied by propafenone (Epstein et al., 1991).

The pharmacodynamics of each of the antiarrhythmics of subclass IC has its own characteristics, which should be considered before starting therapy. Aethacizinium due to its mild sympathomimetic effect, it can increase heart rate and increase dromotrope effect of the atrioventricular node (Gritsenko et al., 1986).

At the same time, the changes of myocardial inotropic of the left and right ventricles in patients with AF during restoration of sinus rhythm has not been practically studied (Sokolova E. et al. 2021).

## **Methods and materials**

### **Study design and patients**

This prospective study included 62 patients undergoing ECV for persistent form of AF in the Latvian Centre of Cardiology, Pauls Stradins Clinical University Hospital from September 2019 to June 2020. The study was approved by the local Committee of Ethics at the Riga Stradins University (study protocol No.6-2/6/15) and Paul Stradins Clinical University Hospital and performed according to good clinical practice.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: atrial fibrillation paroxysm (not longer than 48 hours), patient have not received any antiarrhythmic drugs before (except amiodarone and beta blockers). At the time of the study, all patients received anticoagulants. Patients were excluded from the study if they met any of the following exclusion criteria: acute coronary syndrome or extensive surgery, or major trauma during last month, history of

ischemic heart disease or decreased left ventricular (LV) function (ejection fraction <50%), New York Heart Association Class III to IV, acute inflammatory disease, rheumatic or congenital heart disease, heart rhythm disorders (sinus node dysfunction, second degree atrioventricular blockage, prolonged QT syndrome, WPW syndrome, Brugada syndrome), chronic obstructive lung disease, severe kidney and hepatic pathology, anemia, obesity (third stage), oncological disorder or any disease associated with poor prognosis, thyroid gland disease, diabetes, uncontrolled hypertension, pregnancy, known intolerance of antiarrhythmic drugs or previous use of class I antiarrhythmic drugs, excessive consumption of alcohol, known or suspected poor compliance.

All patients received beta blockers (bisoprolol 5 mg daily), amiodarone (200 mg daily), propafenone 300 mg daily or aethacizinium 100 mg daily for 6 months from the day of admission to the hospital.

#### *Data collection*

After a baseline visit, two following visits were planned: at 3 months ( $\pm 7$ days) and at 6 months ( $\pm 7$ days). At the first visit as well as on the last follow-up patients were asked to report a level of everyday physical activities as low (<3 metabolic equivalents, METs), moderate (3-6 METs) and intensive (>6 METs) measured in hours/week. The following investigations were performed during first visit and after 6 months during last follow-up: rest ECG, exercise electrocardiography test (veloergometry) assessing load in watts (W), baseline and maximal heart rate in beats per minute (bpm), total ST segment depression sum in millimeters (mm), time until 1 mm ST segment depression in seconds (s), heart rate/ST transthoracic echocardiography, full blood count, plasma and biochemical parameters (BNP, troponin I [TnI], thyroid stimulating hormone [TSH], free triiodothyronine [FT3], free thyroxine [FT4], alanine amino transferase [AlAT], aspartate amino transferase [AsAT], conjugated bilirubin, unconjugated bilirubin, glucose, glomerular filtration rate [GFR] calculated according to Cockcroft-Gault formula, potassium, sodium, chloride, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein [hs-CRP]. All the echocardiographic studies were performed <2 hours before ECV. During echocardiographic examination we analyzed: interventricular septum [IVS] in the end-diastole, LV end diastole, posterior wall [PW] end-diastole, LV ejection fraction, LV mass index, left atrium [LA] size, LA maximal volume, atrial myocardial velocity, strain. The following investigations were performed at 3 months follow-up: Holter monitoring, previously described blood sample tests.

#### *Statistical analysis*

Statistical analysis was performed with IBM SPSS (version 23.0). For quantitative data mean value and standard deviation were calculated. Categorical data was described by amount and percentage. For comparison of two groups were used several tests, t test for independent samples, Mann-Whitney U test, chi-square test and Fisher exact tests were used as appropriate. Repeated measures ANOVA were used to test significance of changes in quantitative variables during study period. Quantitative data with non-normal distributions was tested with non-parametric Friedman's test for repeated measures. Statistical significance was defined as  $p < 0,05$ .

## Results

### Baseline characteristics

Of the 62 patients (21 men and 36 women) enrolled in the study, 57 completed it per protocol. 25 patients (44%) were admitted for ECV by emergency service, while 32 (56%) were referred by a cardiologist or general practitioner. All 57 patients were followed up for 6-month period; 49 (86%) maintained sinus rhythm (SR group). The rest – 8 patients (14%) experienced  $\geq 1$  AF paroxysm (AF group) within the follow-up time.

Three patients withdrew informed consent during the study. Two patients were unable to attend 6 months follow-up due to moving abroad (Figure 1).

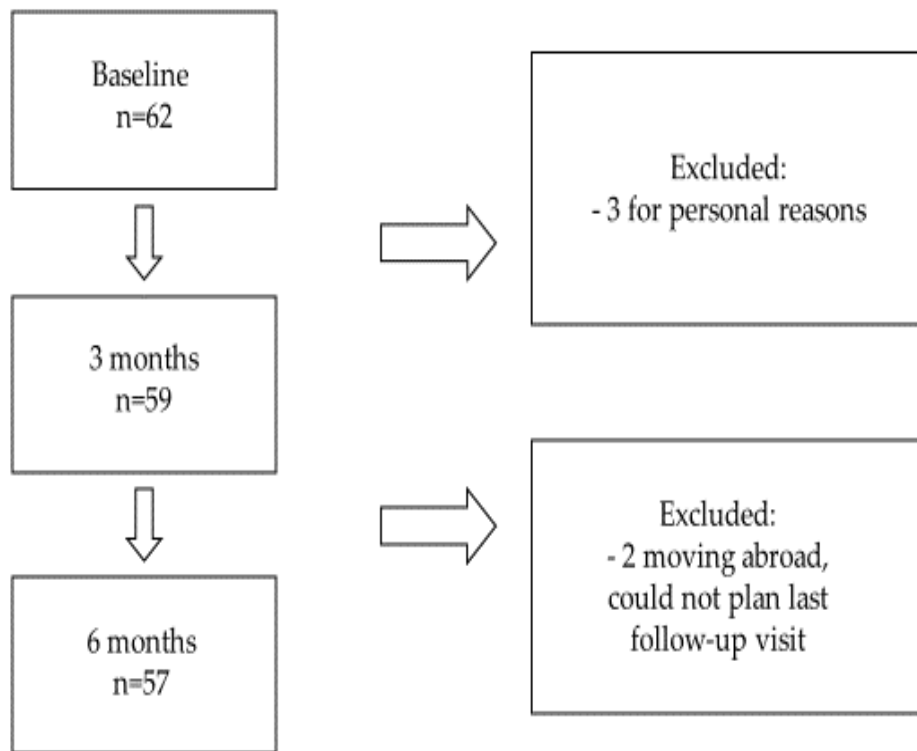


Figure 1. Study flow scheme.

General characteristics of the study patients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the study patients.

Characteristics	Per protocol group (n=57)	Excluded (n=5)
Female gender, n (%)	36 (63,2%)	3 (60,0%)
Age, years (mean $\pm$ SD)	62,56 $\pm$ 6,77	63,60 $\pm$ 6,07
Body mass index, kg/m <sup>2</sup> (mean $\pm$ SD)	26,57 $\pm$ 2,97	25,86 $\pm$ 1,46

Smoking, n (%)	25 (43,86%)	2 (40%)
Hypertension, n (%)	27 (47,4%)	2 (40,0%)
Systolic blood pressure (SBP), mmHg (mean $\pm$ SD)	134 $\pm$ 14	135 $\pm$ 19
Diastolic blood pressure (DBP), mmHg (mean $\pm$ SD)	87 $\pm$ 10	82 $\pm$ 13
Physical activities, h per week (mean, SD)		
Mild	25,21 $\pm$ 8,55	29,12 $\pm$ 10,00
Moderate	5,18 $\pm$ 4,43	6,45 $\pm$ 4,29
Intensive	3,55 $\pm$ 3,21	2,20 $\pm$ 1,55

### Safety

No safety parameters changed significantly in per protocol group. The summary of the relevant data is reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of biochemical tests.

Characteristics	Per protocol group (n=57)	Excluded (n=5)
BNP, pg/ml	159,21 $\pm$ 12,56	221, 51 $\pm$ 11,11
TSH, mU/mL	1,58 $\pm$ 1,24	2,25 $\pm$ 1,56
AlAT, U/L	26,81 $\pm$ 11,67	31,24 $\pm$ 7,87
AsAT, U/L	31,25 $\pm$ 13,00	24,33 $\pm$ 5,56
Creatinine, $\mu$ U/mL	72,20 $\pm$ 16,92	92,31 $\pm$ 24,63
GFR, mL/min	88,31 $\pm$ 20,62	97,65 $\pm$ 43,12
Potassium, mmol/L	4,55 $\pm$ 0,69	4,71 $\pm$ 0,44
Glucose, mmol/L	5,12 $\pm$ 0,74	5,45 $\pm$ 1,06
Hs-CRP, mg/L (medium, IQR)	1,17 (0,97-2,47)	1,07 (-)

None of the patients experienced major adverse events for 6 months. No statistically significant changes were observed in blood tests and ECG or Holter parameters.

### Efficacy and clinical outcomes

All patients underwent echocardiographic examination (n=57) (Table 3). Between AF and SR group echocardiographic data no significant changes were found (Table 3). Early diastolic atrial myocardial velocity and strain showed no significant difference between groups. In our research, duration of AF was not predictive value of maintenance of SR at follow-up after 6 months from ECV. Recurrence rate of AF in aethacizinium

group showed close to statistically significant superiority compared to propafenone (55,6% vs 72,5%)(p=0,05).

Table 3. Echocardiographic characteristics of SR and AF group patients at the inclusion and after 6 months after successful cardioversion.

	SR patients (n=49)	AF patients (n=8)	p value
IVS end-diastole, cm	1,0 ± 0,2	1,2 ± 0,1	0,85
LV end-diastole, cm	4,8 ± 0,5	5,0 ± 0,4	0,91
PW end-diastole, cm	1,1 ± 0,1	1,0 ± 0,1	0,90
LV ejection fraction, %	55 ± 5	54 ± 4	0,81
LA, cm	4,2 ± 0,4	4,4 ± 0,6	0,52
LA volume, mL/m <sup>2</sup>	39 ± 15	37 ± 17	0,45

## Discussion

Atrial fibrillation remains the main cardiac arrhythmia which is frequent cause of hospitalization and changes the course of arterial hypertension and coronary heart disease (Sankaranarayanan et al., 2015). The occurrence of AF paroxysms significantly reduces the quality of life of patients (Fuster et al., 2001). Most patients with recurrent AF described the effect of arrhythmia on daily life as “devastating” due to the suddenness and unpredictability of the onset of an attack, but their sensations did not correlate with either the frequency of attacks or their duration (Jenkins et al., 2005). The progression of heart failure in patients with recurrent AF is primary due to changes in intracardiac hemodynamics at the time of the arrhythmia episode. After the restoration of sinus rhythm, the parameters of the diastolic function of the myocardium remain reduced, which leads to the emergence of early stages of the development of chronic heart failure (Takagaki et al., 2002).

In a study by Nagahama Y. et al. (2001) showed that an increase in heart rate in patients with AF significantly reduces the left ventricular ejection fraction. With irregular artificial stimulation of the heart in an experiment on dogs, Naito M. et al. (1983) for the first time proved a significant decrease in cardiac output. Thus, the high frequency and irregularity of ventricular contractions, lack of synchronicity of atrial contraction during AF paroxysm led to a decrease in the inotropic function of the heart.

Previously was described negative impact of propafenone on left ventricular ejection fraction. Still, we have no data about efficacy on rhythm maintenance and safety of widely used aethacizinium on myocardial function (Barbier et al., 1994). This was first our attempt to study myocardial response to Ic class drugs using echocardiography, continuous Holter monitoring. Echocardiographic measurements during early diastole after ECV did not show significant changes in both patient groups. It can be explained by cardiac cycle – during the diastole of ventricles atria are emptying passively (Strēlnieks A. et al., 2014; Kokina et al., 2021). As a result, left ventricle has a strong influence on function of atria during early diastole. Patients with higher atrial strain have better opportunity to maintain sinus rhythm.



## Conclusion

Antiarrhythmic medications of Ic class may be safe in patients with persistent form of atrial fibrillation and have no negative impact on inotropic function of myocardium. The most used drug in Latvian population from Ic class is aethacizinium. The observed efficacy provides the rationale for a larger, double-blind controlled study with different antiarrhythmic medications in different daily dosage.

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## Women's Participation in Mexican Nearshoring: Challenges and Recommendations

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**Abstract:** Today Mexico is an important nearshoring location. Nearshoring refers to the relocation and regionalization of supply chains. It impacts varied aspects of the Mexican socio-economic reality and represents an opportunity as well as a challenge. For educational institutions, upskilling and reskilling students on needed knowledge and skills is an urgent matter. Inside this scenario, STEM innovative knowledge and developing comprehensive soft skills become essential. What's more, providing a promising future and equal opportunities to succeed regardless graduates' gender is an imperative. In Mexico, more than half of professionals who graduate from higher education institutions are women. Nevertheless, the number of employed women is low compared to the number of men. A mismatch between the labor market demand and the offer of women talent is evident. Therefore, our research's objective was two-fold. First, we examined the current participation of women in leading nearshoring sectors, comparing these results to educational indicators. Then, we formulated potential explanations and recommendations to found disparities. Proposed solutions included the provision of pertinent career information and training; changes on labor schemes, inclusion policies and work conditions that pay attention to women's particular needs; updates on legal and fiscal frameworks and the promotion of new nearshoring sectors.

**Keywords:** Mexico, nearshoring, reskilling, upskilling, women

**Citation:** Hernandez-Pozas, O., & Garcia-Chitiva, M.D.P. (2024). Women's Participation in Mexican Nearshoring: Challenges and Recommendations. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2047-2056), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

According to McKinsey & Company (2024), today Mexico is an important nearshoring location. Nearshoring refers to the relocation and regionalization of supply chains. Mexico can become a larger player in United States (US) imports due to competitive advantages such as strategic closeness, abundant free trade agreements, a

robust manufacturing sector, a low-cost work force, as well as experienced cross-border logistics and industrial networks (Huerta & Pous, 2022).

Recently, companies from 30 countries announced their relocation of supply chains to Mexico, half of this foreign direct investment (FDI) is going to the manufacturing sector and most of these ventures come from American and Chinese companies (McKinsey & Company, 2024). According to Daniel Zaga (2023), chief executive from Deloitte, more than 100 projects in Mexico relate to nearshoring, with an estimated FDI of more than 30,000 millions of US Dollars, being the states of the North of Mexico (i.e. Nuevo Leon and Coahuila) the most profited ones.

As expected, these relocations have an impact on various aspects of the Mexican socio-economic reality. That's why nearshoring represents indeed an opportunity, but also a challenge for all actors in the economy: citizens; the government at federal, state and city levels; the private sector including industrial clusters; the NGO's, and of course the universities and other education institutions. Nearshoring is promising but it is not a panacea, uncertain issues include the following: enough supportive public policies, sufficient infrastructure capacity (i.e. energy & water supplies, roads and customs), debatable confidence on the regulatory frameworks and doubtful guarantees on the security of operations.

Indisputably, if Mexico wants to thrive, nearshoring makes the searching, training and keeping of competent professionals a priority and an urgent matter, including working women. Previous studies on nearshoring needs recommend strong training on STEM and soft skills (Consejo Nuevo León & Escuela de Gobierno y Transformación Pública del Tecnológico de Monterrey, 2023).

In this scenario, we aimed to examine the current participation of women in the Mexican labor market. Particularly, in those sectors linked to the dynamics of nearshoring, such as manufacturing and energy. We compared these results to educational indicators. Then, we formulated potential explanations and recommendations to found disparities. We also inquired in the possibilities women could have on upcoming nearshoring opportunities in new sectors. Our paper ends providing recommendations to capitalize momentum.

## **Method**

This study used a quantitative approach, with a comparative descriptive design. It analyzes Mexican indicators of employability and education, and compares data by gender, by industry, and by occupation.

## **Data Collection**

The Mexican indicators of employability and education correspond to the last three years of 2021 to 2023. These were collected from the official web page of Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography

(INEGI). The sample corresponds to data from three official databases: General Employability data, Educational data, and Occupational data (job positions). The occupation data corresponds to employed people living in Mexico's 32 states (see Table 1).

Table 1. Samples from INEGI data bases.

INEGI Database	Total employed people	Women	Men
General employability data	23,093,224	9,003,965	14,089,259
Educational data	24,136,454	12,649,940	11,471,514
Occupational data (job positions)	4,775,435	2,803,678	1,971,757

The data were downloaded in Excel (i.e. .xlsx) format, then preprocessed, and cleaned. Data out of the scope of this investigation were deleted. Totals were obtained and then a comparison by gender, industry, and occupation was made. When necessary to better understand the figures, other sources of data were consulted too. These included The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES in Spanish), and reports from Consejo Nuevo Leon and the school of Government from Tecnológico de Monterrey.

**Results**

When examining the INEGI’s total employed population in Mexico, adding the last three years (from 2021 to 2023), we found that there were more employed women (52%) than there were employed men (48%) who completed their Higher Education (see Figure 1).

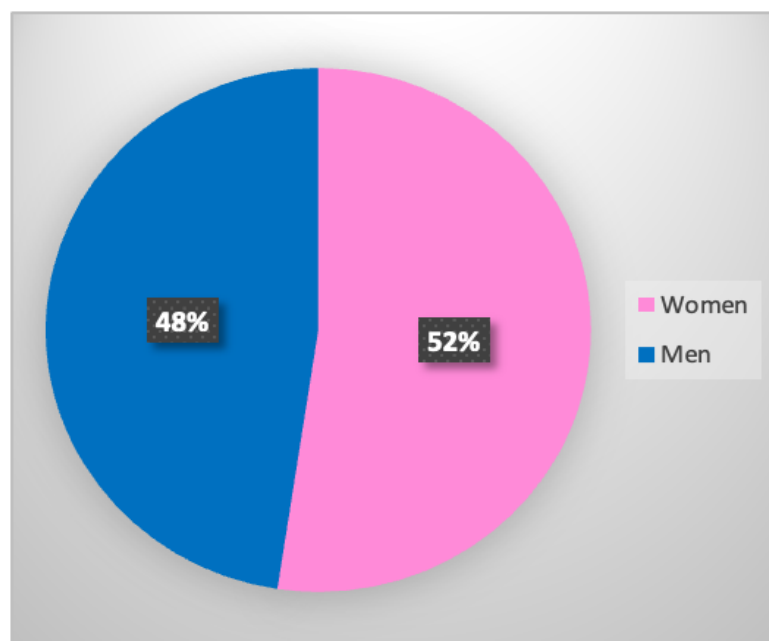


Figure 1. Mexican employed population who completed Higher Education 2021-2023.

During these three-year period, the number of employed women who graduated from Higher Education increased every year, in contrast to men who have not riched figures of 2021(see Figure 2).

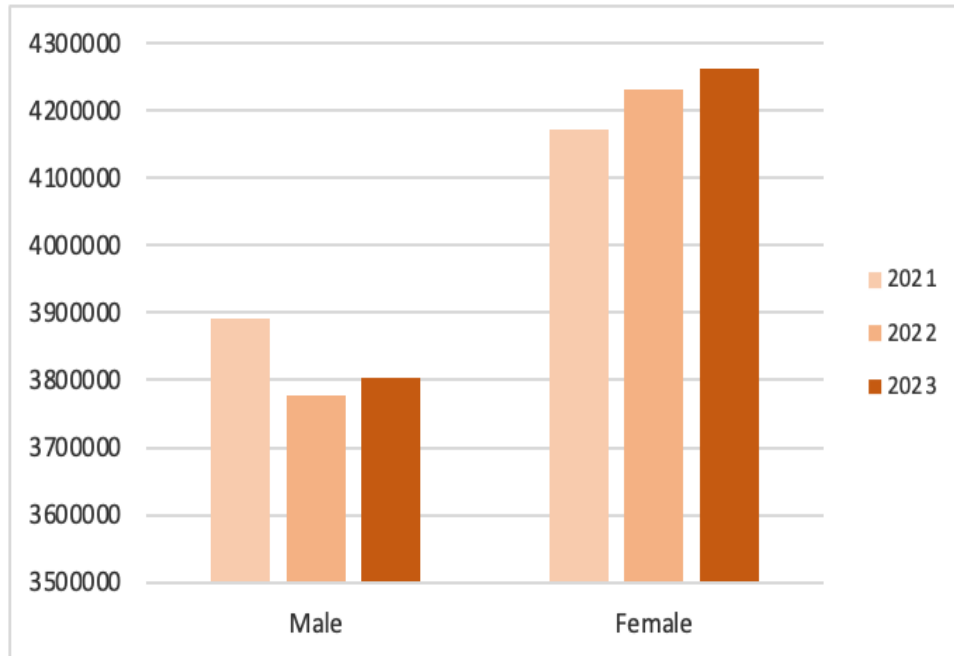


Figure 2. Yearly Mexican employed population who completed Higher Education.

Despite these positive women’s achievements on education, men (61%) continue to outnumber women (39%) during the same period of time in regards to occupation levels (see Figure 3).

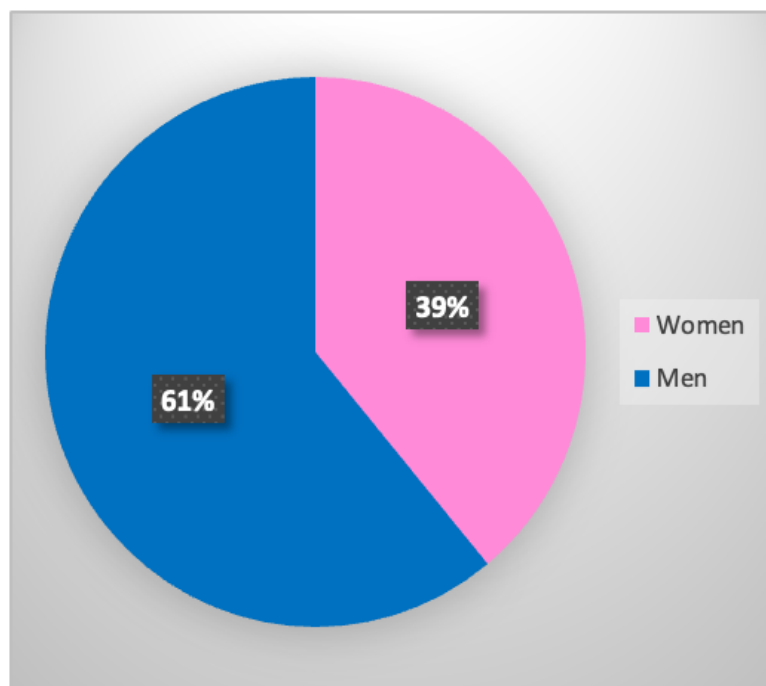


Figure 3. Occupation levels by gender 2021-2023.

Table 2. Employed Mexican people by industry.

Total Employed Mexican People (2023) 59,403,947		
Employed Mexican People, Compared by gender		
Women	24,241,480 (40.80%)	
Men	35,162,467(59.19%)	
Employed Mexican People, Compared by industry and gender		
	Women	Men
Extractive and electricity industry	68,671(16%)	348,212(83%)
Manufacturing Industry	3,911,062(40%)	5,870,762(60%)
Other (Agriculture, Construction, Commerce, Restaurants and accommodation services, Transportation, communications, mail and warehousing, Financial and corporate professional services, Social services Miscellaneous services, Government and international organizations and Unspecified)	20,261,747(41%)	28,943,493(59%)

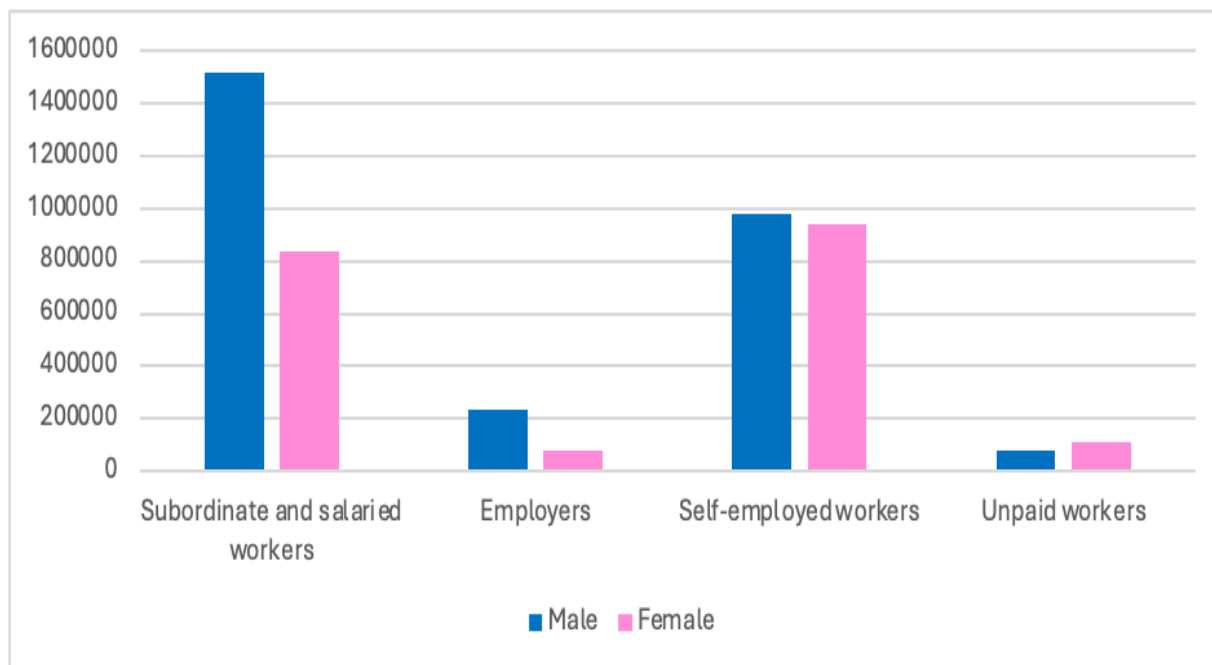


Figure 4. Distribution of positions in occupations by gender

Moreover, when we examined in depth those leading nearshoring sectors, such as the electricity and manufacturing industries, disparity between employed women and men increases. While women represent



only 16% of employed personnel in the extractive and electricity industry and 40.8% in manufacturing industry, men represent 83% in the extractive and electricity and 60% in the manufacturing one. Then, when we examined other sectors, where most Mexicans are employed, the relative disparities by gender stay 41% to 59% (see Table 2).

The distributions by occupational positions show important differences between women and men. Regarding subordinate and salaried workers, men occupy a more significant proportion, with a total of 1,518,322, compared to women, who reach a total of 837,31. Women represent considerable less than men in the category of employers too. Nevertheless, it isn't the case of self-employed workers where the difference is not that big. Regarding unpaid workers, although not for much difference, women outnumber men (see Figure 4).

Regarding education indicators, this time from ANUIES (2024), we found that during the period of 2022-2023, most Mexican women chose to study Education, Social sciences and Law, while most men preferred Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction as well as Technology. No much difference in preferences were found by gender in fields such as Services, Math and Statistics (see Figure 5).

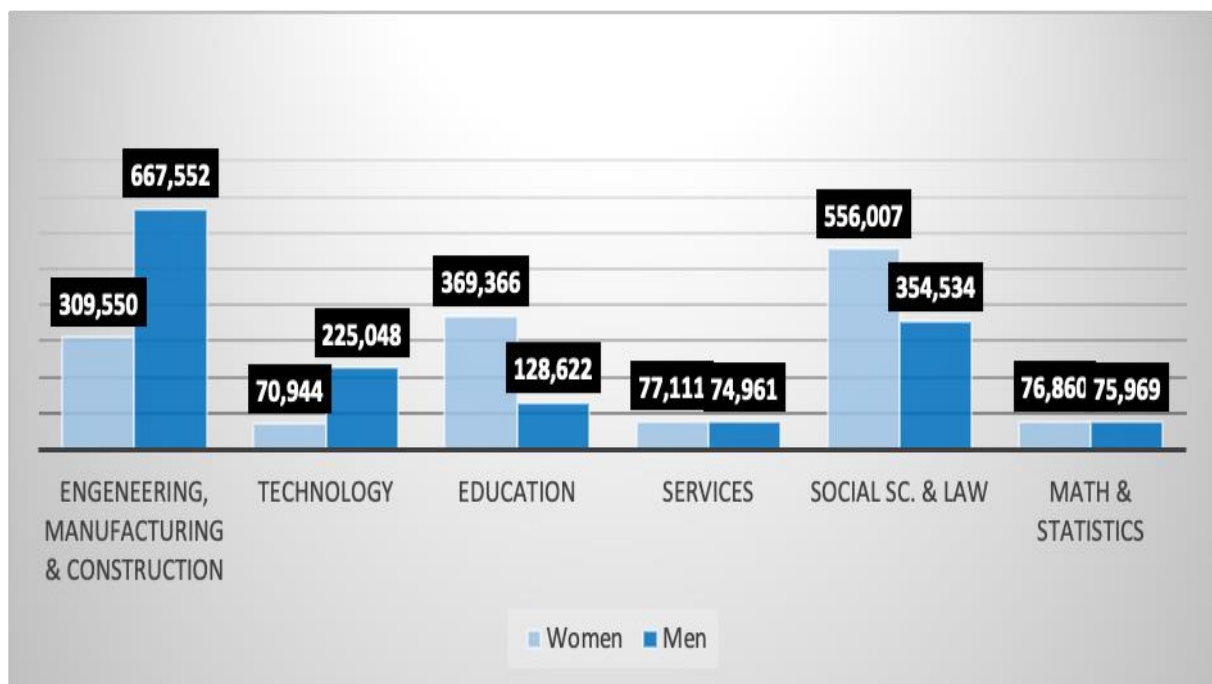


Figure 5. Chosen education fields by Mexican students.

**Discussion**

The objective of this study was to examine the current participation of women in leading nearshoring sectors in Mexico, comparing these results with educational indicators. The findings revealed four points of necessary analysis: 1) low women's employability compared to men and associated factors, 2) the need for innovative

solutions, and 3) possible solutions and points for reflection.

*Low women's employability compared to men and associated factors.*

Results show that many educated women in Mexico do not work after they graduate. Their investment in education, by ways of putting in time, money and effort, is not appropriately paying off to them when compared to indicators of employability. On top of that, it is worrisome that the labor market, suffering of a shortage of talent, is not entirely making the most of such women's achievements either. Women's capacities seem to be wasted by the labor market. Why so?

Our results reporting lower women's employment rates are aligned with those reported by ECLAC (ECLAC & ILO, 2022). Could it be that educated women are not attracted to available job postings for reasons such as low salaries, bad and unsafety work conditions, tight schedules, or lack of growth opportunities? Could it be that the labor market is not interested in hiring some of these educated women because they lack of needed knowledge & skills, or because employers avoid to adjust to specific women's needs? Could it be a combination of both reasons? To what extend? What else is causing this disparity? Cultural factors, such as traditional gender roles most likely impact results. In Mexico, as in many other countries, most women have to take care of their children, the elder and the house chores. Thus, effective remedies, such as good legal frameworks and policies are needed.

*Need for innovative solutions*

Current and upcoming shortage of labor, unfair gender gaps in employability, and nearshoring opportunities justify the pursue of innovative solutions. Educated women, who are not currently working, can add value to the market place if these were supported and knew better about labor market trends and future opportunities. However, it isn't clear to what extend women would choose differently when selecting their field of higher education studies and line of work after knowing this. Thus, research should continue to test and follow up on proposed solutions.

One aspect that we identified as a part of the solution is that universities and vocational centers fully understand the real context of the Mexican labor market. Joint and well-articulated efforts of the labor market sector and education institutions must be in place to achive this objete. The main factor of unemployment in varied jobs in the manufacturing sector is due to the lack of trained personnel (Hernandez, 2024). This is an important indicator to analyze the routes that should be activated between the education and industrial sectors.

*Possible solutions and points for reflection*

Reducing inequality and gender gaps in employment opportunities in Mexico and in Latin America requires systemic, scalable, and chain actions. Systemic actions are needed because joint and intertwined efforts should

come from the government, businesses, and the education sectors. Scalable actions start at a young age, when girls are in elementary and secondary school. At this point, girls can be influenced by female models sharing their successful experiences in STEM careers, in such a way that such stories positively impact girl's career choices and expectations. (González-Pérez et al., 2020). Finally, chain actions, because when the industry shares its needs of upskilling and reskilling, as well as required job profiles; solutions and appropriate decisions can be made by other actors in the economy. By the same token, when higher education institutions identify educational gaps and contrast found solutions on global challenges (e.g., inequality) using comparative studies (UNESCO, 2021); strategies implemented in Mexico can be enriched.

## Conclusions

Mitigating gender inequalities and ensuring women's fair access to the labor market requires the articulation of policies, effective legal frameworks, and better coordination between higher education and industry to establish the needs of the current labor sector. Comparing the context of this phenomenon in Latin America can enrich the strategies that have been addressed so far on this subject in Mexico.

The visible employability gap between educated men and women in Mexico and Latin America highlights the need to generate innovative and systematic solutions to reduce gender employment inequality. For this reason, joint work between higher education, technical-vocational training centers, and industry is crucial to understanding and meeting the labor market's current and future demands. Comparative research on this phenomenon at the Latin American level is essential to identify common points and learn from best practices.

## Recommendations

Based on found results, our recommendations include the following:

**Informative & educational programs for women.** The focus should be on communicating and training on STEM career paths and needed competencies, as well as on available job postings. We recommend training programs that focus on upskilling and reskilling competencies to cover nearshoring opportunities. It is key to assess competencies that can be transferable to more promising, better paid, and needed career paths.

**Flexible labor schemes.** Alternatives such as home office options and adjustable working hours may work as win-win solutions. The labor market wins because this has more available talent and women win because they have access to better jobs.

**Inclusion of labor policies to empower women.** Adaptation of facilities & urbanization solutions, considering women's needs too. Assess the availability of restrooms, safety transportation, child care, mobility alternatives, and closeness to work. Adjustments should keep in mind that the needs of men and women are different.

Fiscal incentives & adapted legal frameworks. It is key not only to create and approve but also enforce them. Since self-employment of women is a promising solution where women have shown interest, fostering innovation and training on entrepreneurship become essential. Identification and promotion of novel needed occupations where women can rapidly and naturally progress, for example, in sectors such as information technologies and health.

Create and support an observatory of the future of women's work and foster comparative studies in the Latin American region.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the financial support of Writing Lab, Institute for the Future of Education, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico, in producing this work.

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## Enhancing Academic-to-Professional Transitions: A Transformative Approach

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to create actionable insights that bridge the gap between academic achievements and internship performance, recognizing the significance of aligning theoretical knowledge with practical experiences. Acknowledging the observed weak correlation between academic and internship performance within HEIs, this study proposes actionable insights as a solution to narrow this gap, facilitating a more seamless transition from academic success to professional readiness. The methodological approach involves a comprehensive literature review, the creation of a research tool encompassing actionable insights, and its distribution to experts for validation. A thematic approach is then employed to analyze the qualitative data collected, ensuring a robust and verified foundation for the derived insights. Findings from the study indicate a positive impact of the proposed actionable insights on students' internship and job performance, fostering a transformation into well-prepared individuals who excel both academically and professionally.

**Keywords:** Qualitative Analysis, Weak Relationship, Academic Performance, Internship Performance, Actionable Insights.

**Citation:** Shahnawaz, M., H., Yusuf, J.C.N., Abdullah, M., Osman, H. & Sarirah, H. (2024). Enhancing

Academic-to-Professional Transitions: A Transformative Approach. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2057-2066), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The synergistic relationship between academic skillfulness and hands-on experience forms the fundamental foundation of holistic student development in the ever-shifting terrain of higher education [1]. Merging classroom knowledge with the applied expertise gleaned through internships reflects a growing commitment to equipping graduates with not just theoretical competency, but also the agility to navigate the dynamic complexities of their chosen technological domains [2]. This multifaceted approach acknowledges that true professional preparedness transcends mere theoretical understanding, necessitating an immersive learning experience that mirrors the real-world challenges and intricacies encountered in practice [3].

As we delve deeper into the evolving academic landscape, the intertwined nature of academic excellence and practical experience has become an increasingly essential consideration, particularly within the realm of technology [4]. Internships serve as a crucial bridge between classroom learning and the demands of the professional sphere, offering students a tangible platform to translate theoretical knowledge into practical applications within real-world scenarios. However, the intricate dynamics governing the correlation between academic performance and internship success within technological higher education institutes (HEIs) remain a compelling area for investigation [5].

his study embarks on a data-driven exploration to unravel these intricacies, aiming to not only identify the existing performance discrepancies but also to delve into the underlying factors that influence this crucial relationship. Fueled by a compelling curiosity, the study delves into how the academic journey aligns with the specific skill sets demanded by the contemporary technology job market. In this pursuit, the research seeks to unearth actionable insights that not only acknowledge the existing gap but actively contribute to its mitigation.

By employing qualitative and statistical analysis, the research endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that either enhance or hinder the seamless transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application within diverse technological fields. This exploration is underscored by the recognition that the demand for well-rounded tech professionals is on a perpetual ascent, with employers seeking individuals who excel not only in theoretical rigor but also possess the adaptability and practical acumen to thrive in dynamic and diverse professional landscapes.

In essence, as the educational landscape continues to evolve, addressing the disconnection between academic success and professional readiness in technology fields emerges as a critical imperative [6]. This study, therefore, aims to contribute meaningful and evidence-based insights that go beyond mere acknowledgment of



the existing disparities, actively paving the way for a more integrated and harmonious journey from academic accomplishments to the multifaceted demands of the flourishing technological world.

## **Related Literature and Studies**

The education of ethical and professional tech talents faces a crucial hurdle: bridging the gap between abstract academic understanding and practical application. Industry integration becomes paramount, shaping programs that cultivate well-rounded professionals equipped to navigate the complexities of their field.

Mentorship programs, championed by Smith-Ruig (2014), offer an invaluable crucible. Pairing students with industry professionals immerses them in real-world ethical scenarios, honing their decision-making skills within their chosen technological domain. Garousi et al. (2019) propose aligning grading criteria with industry standards, ensuring students are assessed on the skills and behaviors valued in professional settings, preparing them for the realities of the tech workforce.

Franco et al. (2017) propose a harmonious symphony between faculty and industry. By fostering dialogue, curriculum design can be informed by current industry expectations, equipping students with knowledge and skills relevant to the evolving job market. Khosrow-Pour (2018) suggests a more structured approach, advocating for integrating a problem-solving subject specifically tailored for IT professionals. This equips students with the critical skills to tackle complex issues prevalent in the tech industry.

Adaptability emerges as a key theme, championed by Pulakos et al. (2002) and Griffin et al. (2007). Infusing course content with real-world scenarios, guest speaker insights, and alumni success stories can cultivate this crucial attribute in aspiring tech professionals. Darling-Hammond (2010) champions curriculum integration as essential for 21st-century preparation. Encouraging cross-disciplinary coursework broadens students' perspectives, allowing them to explore connections between their technology expertise and other relevant fields, fostering a holistic problem-solving mindset.

Beyond textbooks and lectures, Buckley (2021) underscores the significance of workshops and extracurricular activities. These provide safe spaces for students to practice and refine their ethical and professional skills, gaining valuable hands-on experience in a supportive environment. Martínez León (2019) views capstone projects as a bridge between academic learning and internship experiences. By applying theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, students gain practical insights and hone their professional skills in a meaningful context.

Finally, understanding industry preferences is crucial. Ng et al. (2009) suggest exploring these desires. By understanding the desired academic qualifications and work experience, students can tailor their preparation and align their skills with employer expectations.

This multifaceted approach, informed by the insights gleaned from the literature, lays the groundwork for cultivating ethical and professionally adept technology professionals. By integrating these strategies into the educational landscape, we can empower students to thrive in the dynamic and demanding world of technology.

This revision incorporates your request for paragraph format while maintaining the professional tone and technological focus. Remember, this is just a suggestion, and you can further tailor the content to your specific needs.

## **Methodology**

This study utilizes a rigorous and iterative methodology to develop and validate actionable insights. A meticulously crafted research instrument serves as the cornerstone of this approach. The following sections explore the key components of the methodology, specifically focusing on the research instrument's development, expert engagement, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies.

### **Data Collection**

The research embarked on a journey to gather expert insights. A meticulously crafted instrument, designed to delve into the complexities of academic and internship evaluation, was distributed to a targeted group of experts. These individuals, carefully chosen for their diverse perspectives and extensive experience in higher education and student development, held the key to unlocking valuable knowledge.

The instrument itself was a finely tuned piece of machinery, containing nuanced inquiries meant to explore various facets of evaluation. Think ethics and professionalism under the microscope, practical skills put to the test, problem-solving approaches dissected, and even generic attributes given a thorough examination – all crucial elements in the context of both higher education and professional development.

To ensure a meticulous and comprehensive data collection process, the research team adopted a multi-pronged approach. Each question was meticulously crafted to elicit the richest, most insightful responses possible. Clear instructions accompanied the instrument, guiding the experts and fostering a comfortable environment for thoughtful participation.

But the journey didn't end there. Throughout the process, open communication was encouraged. Any questions or concerns raised by the experts were promptly addressed, creating a collaborative atmosphere that further enriched the data. This meticulous attention to detail, both in crafting the instrument and engaging with the experts, aimed to ensure the robustness and reliability of the gathered insights, ultimately strengthening the foundation of the study.

### *Development of the Research Instrument*

The research instrument was meticulously and iteratively developed, with a refined refinement process yielding eleven essential findings that served as the instrument's foundation. In order to improve its usefulness, the instrument underwent a collaborative refining process in which it was carefully distributed to two seasoned specialists for their invaluable feedback.

The specialists for this critical phase were carefully chosen, assuring a wide and complete perspective that reflected the study's aims. The interaction with these experts was marked by a deliberate and purposeful process, emphasizing the importance of patience and perseverance in negotiating the many intricacies of expert engagement. Clear and straightforward communications were used to allow a fruitful exchange of ideas, and the feedback received helped greatly improve the instrument.

This collaborative approach not only increased the research instrument's validity, but also ensured that it was in line with the sophisticated understanding of field experts. The iterative nature of this refinement process emphasized the importance of precision and thoroughness, resulting in a strong and effective tool for the study's later stages.

### *Expert Engagement*

The engagement with expertise was a deliberate and purposeful approach, engaging two notable experts who provided vital insights into the presented ideas. Expert 1 is a seasoned Technologist Doctor with over 20 years of expertise specialising in visual information systems and computer networking. Meanwhile, Expert 2, an esteemed Associate Professor of Informatics and Analytics, contributed more than two decades of experience in academic and university management, with a particular emphasis on Network Simulation and Performance Modelling.

These experts' distinct viewpoints and extensive backgrounds not only increased the depth of insights, but also contributed diversity to the overall comprehension of the research findings. Their extensive experience in various aspects of technology and academics greatly aided the validity and applicability of the study's suggestions, resulting in a well-rounded and thorough analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

Rigorous qualitative analysis, employing thematic analysis, was utilized to analyze the responses. Thematic analysis, a systematic approach to data analysis, facilitated the extraction of meaningful themes from expert responses. This methodological approach ensured that the proposed actionable insights were not only theoretically sound but also practically feasible and relevant to the immediate needs of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). By incorporating diverse voices and perspectives, the study elevated the robustness and

credibility of its findings.

### *Thematic Analysis Approach*

Thematic analysis involved a systematic process, encompassing familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, refining and mapping of themes, writing a report, and finalizing the analysis. Expert responses were closely examined, and codes and features were extracted to identify specific themes encapsulating their insights. The outcomes were organized in tables to visually illustrate the relationships between themes and responses, enhancing the clarity and transparency of the analytical process.

In adopting this comprehensive research methodology, the study aimed to contribute valid and applicable insights to the field of higher education and student development, ensuring the reliability and relevance of the proposed recommendations.

## **Results And Discussions**

The analysis findings aimed at offering practical insights to bridge the gap between academic and internship performance, have been categorized and explored thematically. The study delved into actionable insights across various domains, including Ethics and Professionalism, Practical Skills, Problem Solving, and Generic Attributes. Here a detailed discussion of the results for each category is presented.

### **Ethics and Professionalism**

*Bridging Theory and Practice* - The theme of "Ethics and Professionalism" underscores the importance of connecting theory with practice. Insights 1 and 4 emphasize mentorship and workshops as vital mechanisms for equipping students with essential skills for professional settings. Fostering mentorship relationships and engaging in hands-on workshops emerged as key strategies to enhance practical understanding and foster ethics and professionalism among students.

*Collaboration and Feedback* - Effective communication between faculty and supervisors ensures alignment and provides valuable feedback for student improvement. Building trust through confidentiality fosters an environment conducive to open and valuable feedback. These insights underscore the critical role of collaboration and feedback in promoting ethical and professional practices within educational settings.

*Continuous Improvement and Assessment* - Continuous improvement in educational practices, advocated by the experts, ensures ongoing enhancement of initiatives. The significance of continuous review and adjustments in areas like grading criteria and workshops based on feedback was emphasized. These insights highlight the pivotal role of continuous improvement and assessment in maintaining ethical and professional standards within

educational frameworks.

### *Practical Skills*

*Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice* - Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap involves applying learned skills through capstone projects and industry collaboration. Capstone projects and industry feedback emerged as effective strategies for narrowing the theory-practice gap, contributing to more confident and skillful graduates.

*Industry Relevance and Employability* - The theme of Industry Relevance and Employability emphasizes the importance of career guidance, workshops, and curriculum alignment with industry trends. Proactive career guidance and industry-aligned curriculum were identified as critical factors in promoting the employability of graduates.

*Skill Development and Personalization* - The theme underscores the significance of customized project options and tailored career guidance. Personalization in education, both through projects and guidance, plays a pivotal role in fostering effective skill development and aligning students with their desired career trajectories.

*Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement* - The positive impact of industry involvement in capstone projects and collaborating with diverse stakeholders in career guidance programs was evident. Collaboration and stakeholder engagement were identified as significant in enriching practical skill development and career guidance initiatives.

### *Problem Solving*

*Enhancing Industry Readiness and Employability* - The theme highlights the crucial role of structured problem-solving skills in improving performance in practical scenarios, enhancing employability. Aligning the curriculum with industry demands through structured problem-solving methodologies ensures graduates acquire directly relevant skills.

*Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap* - Introducing structured problem-solving methodologies as a subject prepares students for real-world IT challenges by connecting theoretical knowledge with practical application. Integrating industry feedback and real-world problem-solving approaches into the curriculum was underscored as crucial for narrowing the theory-practice gap.

*Developing Essential Skills beyond Problem-Solving* - The versatility of structured methodologies serves as a framework for cultivating critical thinking, analysis, and digital literacy skills crucial in diverse IT contexts. Instructors with expertise in these methodologies extend beyond technical skills to provide valuable insights and practical guidance to students.

### *Generic Attributes*

*Industry Awareness and Career Readiness* - Understanding industry preferences and industry involvement through advisory boards, guest speakers, and research enhances students' employability. These insights underscore the significance of industry awareness and engagement in preparing students for successful and informed career trajectories.

*Developing Adaptability as a Key Skill* - Fostering adaptability through diverse course content and real-world exposure equips students to handle various situations and challenges. Regular assessment and personalized feedback on adaptability skills, along with alumni mentorship, provide valuable examples and inspiration for cultivating adaptability as a fundamental skill.

*Cross-Disciplinary Learning and Workplace Preparedness* - Integrating knowledge from various disciplines and collaborating with faculty and experts from different backgrounds equip students with diverse perspectives and robust problem-solving skills. These insights advocate for a comprehensive approach to education, promoting cross-disciplinary learning as a means to enhance workplace preparedness.

## **Conclusion**

This research offers important insights for bridging the gap between academic theory and professional practice. By weaving together theory and practice through mentorship, hands-on projects, and industry engagement, educators can equip students with the ethical compass, practical skills, and problem-solving prowess needed to thrive in their chosen fields.

Personalization emerges as a central theme throughout the study. Customized projects, career guidance tailored to individual pathways, and diverse learning opportunities empower students to become active architects of their own success. Cross-disciplinary learning and engagement with different stakeholders further enrich this journey, fostering adaptability, critical thinking, and the ability to navigate complex challenges with confidence.

Ultimately, these findings pave the way for a transformation in the educational landscape. By embracing collaborative, personalized, and industry-connected learning, institutions can cultivate graduates who are not just knowledge-bearers, but skilled, adaptable, and ethically grounded individuals ready to make a mark on the world. This shift has the potential to redefine the very meaning of success, ensuring that academic journeys truly prepare students for the dynamic tapestry of their future careers.

## **Acknowledgement**

The grant (STR21040) received from UniKL in support of this work is duly acknowledged. Their generous

support is greatly appreciated.

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# A Modification of Random Bit Stuffing Insertion Algorithm with Modified RSA (RBMRSA) Algorithm in Data Security Applied in Email Text Encryption


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**Abstract:** Developments in data transmission made it possible to communicate information around the world in real-time. As information is communicated instantaneously, implementing data security technology like asymmetric cryptography secures transmissions and ensures confidentiality, integrity, and authentication of the message. However, a trade-off existed between the total execution time and the security of the cryptographic algorithm: a higher security level meant a slower execution time, and a faster execution time meant a lower security. In this research, a modified RSA algorithm called random bit-stuffing insertion algorithm with modified RSA (RBMRSA) algorithm was enhanced to improve execution time and strengthen security. RBMRSA strengthened classical RSA algorithm with random bit insertion and increasing the number of primes in generating keys. This study enhanced RBMRSA by increasing the number of primes used, increasing key length to 2048-bit key length, and utilizing Extended Euclidean Algorithm (EEA) and Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT) to enhance computational complexity and optimize execution time. Assessment of the algorithm included Big O Analysis and Avalanche Effect as metrics and results were analyzed and compared with 1024-bit key length RBMRSA. Results showed that modified RBMRSA with CRT and EEA optimized the encryption and decryption computational complexity and further improved the security performance.

**Keywords:** Asymmetric cryptography, Modified RSA algorithm, Extended Euclidean algorithm, Chinese remainder theorem

**Citation:** Cruz, Y. M. S., Navarro, R. V. M., Salazar, A. C. C., Regala, R. C., Guialil, J. S., & Hill, G. R. (2024). A Modification of Random Bit Stuffing Insertion Algorithm with Modified RSA (RBMRSA) Algorithm in Data Security Applied in Email Text Encryption. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2067-2092), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Exchange of data has evidently progressed throughout the years, evolving from analog to digital means. Individuals and organizations around the world can access, send, and receive information from people across borders which emphasizes the essentiality of data-in-motion. This kind of data encompasses various network types may it be data transfers from internet-capable device, web-facing service, cloud services, private or public networks, and shared applications and integrations (Gillis & Fitzgibbons, 2021). Yet, data transmitted are vulnerable to various threats such as unauthorized access, information disclosure and modification, manipulation, or corruption that may lead to information and network security disruption (Shea, 2022). As technology continues to progress, data security shall also be continuously fortified by various organizations and professionals, aiming to maintain confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data (Pratt, 2022).

Presently, there exist numerous data security technologies aiming to safeguard information. One of these is data encryption, considered to be one of the building blocks of cybersecurity, which is a concept under the science of cryptography that transforms data's semantic content through cryptographic algorithms such as symmetric cryptography, asymmetric cryptography, and hash functions (NIST, 2019). Based on various research, asymmetric cryptography is more secure than that of symmetric cryptography especially when dealing with transit data (Zhang, 2021).

One of the most widely used asymmetric algorithms in encryption and digital signature standards is the RSA algorithm due to its prime factorization complexity of large numbers (Al-Kaabi & Belhaouri, 2019; Lin & Li, 2021). RSA generates a pair of keys, a public key to encrypt and a private key to decrypt data, based on two prime numbers. Yet, standard RSA algorithm is susceptible to common cryptosystem attacks such as modulus factorization, basic elementary attacks, and weak public/private exponent attacks (Mumtaz & Ping, 2019; Hermawan et al., 2021).

There exist various attempts to address the vulnerabilities of RSA such as substitution of a new functionality as modulus for encryption and decryption processes (Sarjiyus & Garba, 2021), increasing the number of prime numbers, utilizing Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT) to improve decryption time (Kumar & Ali, 2019), using

four prime numbers to improve multiplicative complexity (Kumar & Shafi, 2020), adding Random Bit-Insertion Algorithm to provide additional layer of security on the standard RSA implemented in a 1024-key length (Mojisola et al., 2022), to name a few.

One of the current studies in RSA, the RBMRSA, proved that the algorithm had shown to resist common modulus attacks, timing attacks, and known-plaintext attacks. RBMRSA also showed higher order of complexity and higher encryption and decryption time due to the added security of randomly inserting bits within the data, which is one of its drawbacks in return of improving its security strength (Mojisola et al., 2022).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to modify and further improve the developed Random Bit-Insertion Algorithm with Modified RSA (RBMRSA) by Mojisola et al. (2023) to meet current security requirements, enhance its computational complexity, and improve its overall execution time. The algorithm could then be used to improve the present email text encryption schemes.

Furthermore, this study encompasses the following specific objectives:

Implement the RBMRSA algorithm in a 2048-key length, which meets the minimum-security requirements to ensure security against factorization attacks.

Incorporate the use of four randomly generated prime numbers from the current three random prime numbers used in RBMRSA algorithm to further strengthen its overall multiplicative complexity.

Enhance the current computational complexity with regards to key generation in the encryption process, and the decryption process time of RBMSA algorithm using Extended Euclidean Algorithm (EEA) and Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT).

### *Scope and Limitations*

This study specifically focused on the modification and enhancement of the current RBMRSA by Mojisola et al. (2023), a variant of the original RSA algorithm, in terms of computational complexity, execution time, and security level. Modification encompassed the utilization of four randomly generated prime numbers to enhance computation complexity and security level, and additionally, the implementation of its keys in a 2048-bit key length. Enhancement involved the usage of EEA to improve its private and public key solving time, and CRT to improve its decryption execution time.

Implementation of the modified RBMRSA algorithm is only limited to plain text and does not encompass other file types such as image files. This research used the technique of randomly generating four prime numbers to generate 2048-bit private and public keys. Additionally, this study strictly involved the current RBMRSA algorithm and the mentioned mathematical theorems for enhancement purposes. The security and performance

evaluation metrics adopted in this study are the same metrics utilized in evaluating the existing RBMRSA algorithm.

### *Review of Related Literature and Studies*

#### *RSA Algorithm*

RSA algorithm is an asymmetric cryptographic algorithm developed by Ron Rivest, Adi Shamir, and Leonard Adleman that provided secured transmission of information over insecure networks. The classical RSA algorithm used two large prime numbers in creating the keys for encrypting and decrypting the message, wherein the public key was used by the sender to encrypt the message and the private key was used by the receiver to decrypt the message (Rivest, Shamir, & Adleman, 1978).

#### *Enhancements and Modifications of RSA Algorithm*

Throughout the years, several modifications and addition to the traditional RSA algorithm have been studied to further strengthen the security and optimize the algorithm. Several studies had proposed modifying the algorithm to implement four primes to improve the security of the algorithm (Panda & Chattopadhyay, 2017; Al-Kaabi & Belhaouri, 2019; Ranjan & Gupta, 2020; Hermawan et al., 2021). Upon evaluating the security of the algorithm, the results had shown that the usage of multi-prime improved the security of the algorithm due to increased complexity in factoring the keys, resulting in greater time required for brute-force attack (Al-Kaabi & Belhaouri, 2019). Authors Khairina and Harahap (2019) and Khairina et al. (2019) used cubic congruential generator and quadratic congruential generator, respectively, to generate the prime numbers to be used in getting the values of private and public keys. The algorithms were then evaluated and were shown to resist cryptanalyst attacks and brute-force attacks.

Further enhancements also included the use of triple keys to increase the security and complexity of the algorithm, as well as implementing alpha-numeric scrambled randomization technique to the message. Al Barazanchi et al. (2019), in addition to triple keys, also used a new formula to calculate the value of  $d$ . The results had shown that while RSA-2K (two keys) had shown faster execution time, RSA-3K (three keys) had higher security upon evaluation. Osamor and Edosomwan (2021) replaced each character in the message (plaintext) with a corresponding letter in the alpha-numeric scrambling sequence and then padded with cryptographic message syntax. The algorithm was found to provide an extra level of security and resistance to several cryptographic attacks.

#### *Application of RSA Algorithm in the Modern World*

In addition to the enhancements of the algorithm, the RSA algorithm was also applied to a variety of applications. Several studies had applied modified RSA algorithms in ensuring secured transmissions as well as encrypting images and audio. Ambika et al. (2020) had applied their modified RSA algorithm in an instant cloud

messaging and broadcasting platform they had developed. This resulted in the application exhibiting backward and forward-based secrecy, meaning that hackers cannot access, edit, or tamper with both earlier and later messages. In the study by Bobba and Surapaneni (2020), the researchers applied the modified RSA algorithm in online card payments, specifically in encrypting the encrypted card information to be sent over the public network of the bank. This additional layer of security reduced the intensity of distributed guessing attack and data breach. Furthermore, Durafe and Patidar (2022) had applied modified RSA algorithm to safely transmit confidential, medical images such as X-rays, CT reports, and MRI reports while withstanding statistical tool-based steganalysis attacks. The algorithm had shown to competently resist possible security threats of AI intelligence-based steganalysis tools.

Moreover, authors Gong et al. (2019) and Abouelkheir and El-Sherbiny (2022) applied their modified RSA algorithms to encrypt images and audio, respectively. In Gong et al.'s study (2019), the algorithm combined optical image compression and encryption techniques like RSA, which resulted in good compression performance, high degree of randomness, and resistance to cryptanalysis attacks. Abouelkheir and El-Sherbiny (2022) used multiple prime numbers and used dynamic keys for data encryption, enhancing the complexity time and security of RSA for audio encryption.

#### *RBMRSA*

In the study by Mojisola et al. (2022), the researchers modified the classical RSA algorithm by using three prime numbers, implementing random bit stuffing insertion, and testing the modified algorithm against common RSA cryptosystem attacks. Moreover, the researchers limited the key length size to 1024-bits to retain the length of time required to process the classical RSA algorithm. Upon encrypting the plaintext (ciphertext) with the public key, the ciphertext was then converted to binary string and its binary counterpart underwent bit stuffing based on three patterns (101, 01, and 1) and sent over the unsecure network. The receiver then destuffed the bit-stuffed message and decrypted the message with the private key.

The researchers then evaluated the results of the comparison of the algorithm with the classical RSA, which revealed that RBMRSA had shown higher computational complexity due to usage of three prime numbers and the triple random bit stuffing insertion, had exhibited greater avalanche effect which meant that it has higher security level, had demonstrated resistance against common modulus attacks, timing attacks, and known plaintext attacks that easily penetrate the original RSA algorithm, and had revealed to require more time in brute-force attack compared to its parent algorithm.

Due to the algorithm having higher computational complexity, computing the algorithm was more CPU intensive compared to classical RSA. Hence, the proponents recommended improving the speed of the execution time of the algorithm. Additionally, based on the standards set by NIST (2020), the keys to be used in RSA algorithm should have at least 2048-bit key length, whereas RBMRSA algorithm used only 1024-bit key length.

### *Extended Euclidean Algorithm*

The Euclidean algorithm (EA) is commonly known as the oldest proper algorithm to compute the greatest common divisor (GCD) of two numbers, whereas the Extended Euclidean algorithm (EEA) computes the GCD of the two numbers more efficiently than EA, particularly in large numbers. Authors Diko and Ibraimi (2023), Dheekksha et al. (2021), Nguyen (2023), and Chandravathi and Lakshmi (2019) all had implemented EEA in their respective modified RSA algorithms. Diko and Ibraimi (2023) implemented EEA to help process large numbers of data in a short time and mentioned that while Euclidean algorithm is feasible for computing large numbers, EA alone takes longer time to compute in comparison to EEA. Similarly, the study by Dheekksha et al. (2021) also concluded that RSA with EEA had shown better encryption and decryption time upon comparison with RSA alone. Moreover, the study by Nguyen (2023) also used EEA to overcome the limited minimum length of bits the standard RSA and was used to generate the private key that will be used for the decryption process. In the study conducted by Chandravathi and Lakshmi (2019), the proponents originally used EA to generate the private keys but found the security to be lacking and instead used EEA to generate the private key. Upon evaluation, the researchers concluded that not only did EEA improve the security of the private key but also optimized the decryption time of the algorithm.

### *Chinese Remainder Theorem*

Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT) is a prominent theorem in mathematics that is widely used in the fields of cryptography and digital signal processing. This theorem states that there is a way to uniquely solve every pair of congruences having relatively prime moduli. Several studies have implemented CRT with RSA algorithm to improve or optimize the decryption time of the message sent. Hermawan et al. (2021) used multiple prime numbers in generating the keys and utilized CRT to shorten the decryption process, and the evaluation of the algorithm had shown that having multiple primes increases key generation speed as well as the decryption process. Moreover, in the study conducted by Kamardan et al. (2018), both EEA and CRT were utilized by the proponents and results showed that the algorithm had faster decryption process and greater security compared to the classical RSA.

In the study by Wardoyo et al. (2018), the researchers modified the RSA algorithm with CRT (RSA-CRT) by breaking the decryption time process into smaller modular exponentiations. This resulted in optimization of the security and successfully improving the decryption-verification process. Then, Somsuk and Thakong (2020) conducted a comparison study with the modified RSA algorithm by Wardoyo et al. (2018) and found that RSA-CRT was still secured and still up to par with their own proposed modified RSA algorithm. It was recommended that the RSA-CRT algorithm be used for smaller sub exponents while their proposed algorithm be used for larger sub exponents. Furthermore, Abdeldaym et al. (2019) proposed a modified RSA algorithm with two public keys and used CRT to decrypt the ciphertext to improve the decryption speed and security of the message. Upon evaluation, using CRT was shown to improve the algorithm by optimizing the speed of the decryption and strengthening the security of the message.



## Method

### RBMRSA Algorithm

The current Random Bit-Insertion Algorithm with Modified RSA Algorithm (RBMRSA) is a branch of the traditional RSA algorithm which aimed to strengthen the security of the traditional algorithm through converting a plaintext into a more complex ciphertext using additional randomly inserted bits of data. Keys are implemented in a 1024-bit key length and the algorithm utilized the use of three randomly generated prime numbers (Mojisola et al., 2022).

The algorithm's process is divided into three main phases, which are as follows and are illustrated (see Figure 1):

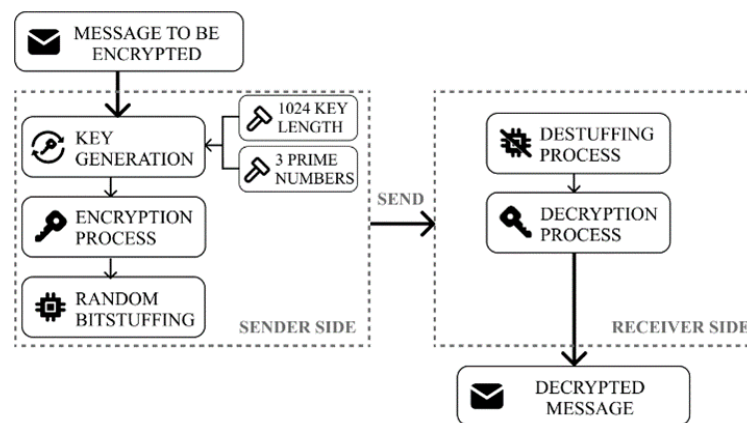


Figure 1. RBMRSA Algorithm Process Flow

#### Key Generation and Encryption Process

Generate three random prime numbers  $p, q, r$  and test for primality.

Calculate  $N = p * q * r$ .

Calculate Euler's totient function  $\phi(N) = (p - 1)(q - 1)(r - 1)$ .

Choose  $e$  such that  $1 < e < \phi(N)$ , where  $g.c.d(e, \phi(N)) = 1$ .

Calculate for  $d$  such that  $d \equiv e^{-1} \pmod{\phi(N)}$ .

Return  $N, d, e$ .

Private key is  $(d, N)$  and public key is  $(e, N)$ .

Encrypt data using  $E(M) = \text{Ciphertext } (CT) = M^e \pmod{N}$

#### Bit Stuffing Process

Convert the ciphertext to binary format  $\text{Ciphertext } (CT) \rightarrow \text{Binary } E(M) \rightarrow BCT$ .

Randomly bit stuff into the scanned patterns of 101, 01, and 1.  $BinaryE(M) + RB \rightarrow RB(EM)$ .

#### *De-Stuffing and Decryption Process*

Remove the randomly inserted bits using the reverse method of insertion, resulting to the de-stuffed  $BinaryE(M)$ .

Convert the binary encrypted message to its cipher text,  $BinaryE(M) \rightarrow CT$ .

Decrypt the message using  $M = (CT)^d \text{ mod}(N)$ .

#### *Proposed Modified RBMRSA Algorithm*

This section systematically introduces the proposed modification and enhancement of the current RBMRSA algorithm. The algorithm is explained in five phases which consists of pre-processing phase, modified key generation phase, encryption phase, bit-stuffing phase, de-stuffing phase, and modified decryption phase. The first phase encompasses the utilization of four randomly generated prime numbers ( $p, q, r, \text{ and } s$ ) instead of three prime numbers to further strengthen its multiplicative complexity. Next under the modified key generation phase, the proposed utilization of Extended Euclidean Algorithm (EEA) for improving the solving time of private key  $d$  and Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT) to solve the needed additional values to improve the algorithm's decryption computation time. There are no notable modifications under the encryption phase, bit-stuffing phase, and de-stuffing phase. The last phase encompasses the modified decryption process using CRT, wherein the ciphertext message is divided into four smaller blocks and then later recombined to find the deciphered message (M) or plaintext. Further discussion is made as follows and illustrated (see Figure 2).

#### *Pre-Processing Phase: Random Four Prime Generation*

Selection of prime number is vital for this RSA based algorithm since the security of this algorithm relies on the prime factorization of the large prime numbers. The modified algorithm implements its keys in a 2048-bit key length for both private and public keys. Hence, 512 bits are expected to be generated for each random prime number.

#### *Modified Key Generation Phase*

In this modified algorithm, the application of EEA takes place in the computation for secret key  $d$  value. The modified key generation is as follows:

Compute for  $N$  using  $N = p * q * r * s$

Calculate totient value as  $\phi(N) = (p - 1)(q - 1)(r - 1)(s - 1)$ .

Choose a natural number  $e$  such that  $1 < e < \phi(N)$ .

If  $\gcd(e, \phi(N)) = 1$ , then compute for the value of  $d$ , using EEA, such that  $d \equiv e^{-1} \pmod{\phi(N)}$ .

EEA utilizes the equation  $[\phi(N)]x + ey = \gcd(\phi(N), e)$ . Where the values of  $\phi(N)$  and  $e$  is computed from the above steps. The values of  $x$  and  $y$  are computed as follows:

A table can be constructed with the values of  $a, b, \phi(N), e$ , like as shown below:

Table 1. Extended Euclidean Algorithm (EEA) Table

ROW	a	b	$\phi(N)$	e
1	1	0	$\phi(N)$	-
2	0	1	e	$e_1$
3	$a_3$	$b_3$	$d_1$	$e_2$
$\vdots$	$\vdots$	$\vdots$	$\vdots$	$\vdots$
i	$a_i$	$b_i$	$d_{i-2}$	$e_{i-1}$
$\vdots$	$\vdots$	$\vdots$	$\vdots$	$\vdots$
k	$a_k \rightarrow x$	$b_k \rightarrow y$	1	$e_{k-1}$

The values of  $a_3, a_4, a_5, \dots, a_k$  is computed by using the equation:  $a_n = a_{[(n-1)-1]} - a_{(n-1)} [k_{(n-1)}]$ .

The values of  $b_3, b_4, b_5, \dots, b_k$  is computed by using the equation:  $b_n = b_{[(n-1)-1]} - b_{(n-1)} [k_{(n-1)}]$ .

Table is continuously computed until the value of  $\phi(N) = 1$ .

Once,  $\phi(N)$  becomes 1, values of  $x$  and  $y$  can be obtained.

Substitute the values of  $x$  and  $y$  in the given equation of EEA. The resulting value is the private or secret key,  $d$ .

Conditions must be met when selecting the value of  $d$ :

If  $d > \phi(N)$ , then  $d = d \pmod{\phi(N)}$

If  $d < 0$ , then  $d = d + \phi(N)$

Public and Private Keys are obtained. Public Key =  $(e, N)$ , Private Key =  $(d, N)$ .

Calculate the additional values of  $dp, dq, dr, ds, pInv, qInv, rInv, sInv$  to be used for the application of CRT.

$$dp = d \pmod{p-1}$$

$$dq = d \pmod{q-1}$$

$$dr = d \pmod{r-1}$$

$$ds = d \pmod{s-1}$$

$$pInv = \text{modInv}\left(\frac{N}{p}, p\right)$$

$$qInv = \text{modInv}\left(\frac{N}{q}, q\right)$$

$$rInv = modInv\left(\frac{N}{r}, r\right)$$

$$sInv = modInv\left(\frac{N}{s}, s\right)$$

#### Encryption Phase

Convert plaintext to corresponding ASCII value.

Calculate  $C$  as *Ciphertext*( $M$ ) using the original,  $E(M) = \text{Ciphertext}(CT) = M^e \text{ mod } N$ .

Covert the *Ciphertext*( $M$ ) into its Binary equivalent.

#### Bit-Stuffing Phase

Generate a random binary string ( $RB$ ) at random length.

Find the string pattern  $X = 101$ . If found, add  $RB$ . Else, continue traversing.

Find the string pattern  $Y = 01$ . If found, add  $RB$ . Else, continue traversing.

Find the string pattern  $Z = 1$ . If found, add  $RB$ . Else, continue traversing.

#### De-Stuffing Phase

Find the string pattern  $Z = 1$ . If found, remove  $RB$ . Else, continue traversing.

Find the string pattern  $Y = 01$ . If found, remove  $RB$ . Else, continue traversing.

Find the string pattern  $X = 101$ . If found, remove  $RB$ . Else, continue traversing.

#### Modified Decryption Phase

In this modified algorithm, the decryption process is modified using the Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT).

Convert binary text to get *Ciphertext*( $M$ ).

Using the computed additional values from key generation phase. Decipher the *Ciphertext*( $M$ ) using CRT which divides the message to four parts and recombined to get the  $M$  (message) in its ASCII equivalent code.

$$m1 = (C^{dp} \text{ mod } p) \cdot qrs \cdot pInv$$

$$m2 = (C^{dq} \text{ mod } q) \cdot prs \cdot qInv$$

$$m3 = (C^{dr} \text{ mod } r) \cdot pqs \cdot rInv$$

$$m4 = (C^{ds} \text{ mod } s) \cdot pqr \cdot sInv$$

$$M = (m_1 + m_2 + m_3 + m_4) \text{ mod } N$$

Convert back the ASCII code to plain text to get the final  $M$  (message).

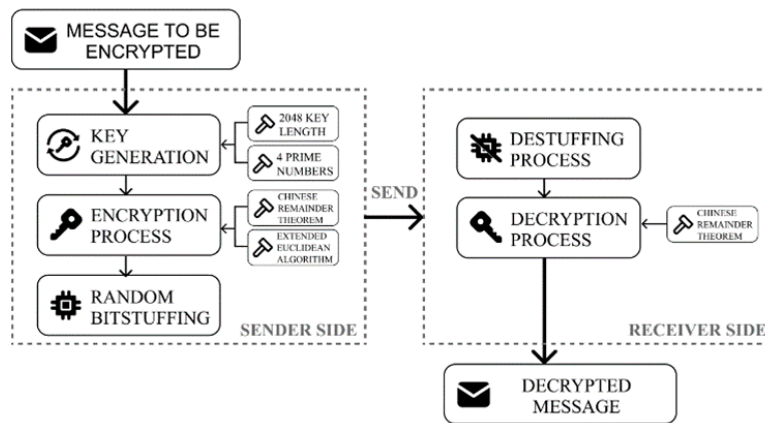


Figure 2. Modified RBMRSA Algorithm Process Flow

## Results

### Security Analysis

The analyzation and evaluation of improvements in the security level of the algorithm is called a security analysis. The original RBMRSA algorithm by Mojisola et al. (2022) were evaluated against two cryptanalyst attacks that the classical RSA is not secured against: Common Modulus Attack (CMA) and Known Plaintext Attack (KPA).

A common modulus attack (CMA) decrypts an encrypted plaintext with two different public keys of the same modulus, such that the greatest common denominator of the two public keys is congruent to one. The process of common modulus attack in RSA algorithm is as follows:

Let  $N = pq$ ,  $(e_1, N)$ ,  $(e_2, N)$  are the public keys such that  $\gcd(e_1, e_2) \equiv 1$ .

Suppose that message  $M$  is encrypted with keys  $e_1, e_2$ , resulting to  $(CT)_1 = Me_1 \bmod N$  and  $(CT)_2 = Me_2 \bmod N$ .

Proof:

$f e_1$  and  $e_2$  are known.

Obtain two  $\mathbb{Z}^+ f, g \ni f \cdot e_1 + g \cdot e_2 \equiv 1$ .

Calculate  $(EM)_1^f \cdot (EM)_2^g \equiv M^{(f \cdot e_1)} \cdot M^{(g \cdot e_2)} \equiv M^{(f e_1 + g e_2)}$ .

Recall that  $f \cdot e_1 + g \cdot e_2 \equiv 1$ , then  $M^{(f e_1 + g e_2)} \equiv M^1 \equiv M$ .

In the evaluation of classical RSA, the message can be easily captured and decrypted by attackers. This proof explains that should the attacker get the value for both keys  $e_1, e_2$  and access  $(EM)_1, (EM)_2$ , the attacker will be able to decrypt the encrypted plaintext  $M$  for all intended receivers of the message.

In the same manner, Mojisola et al. evaluated the original RBMRSA algorithm with common modulus attack and found it to be resistant against it. Mojisola et al. formulated a theorem which states that the message  $BCT_1$  accessed by the attacker is not the real message  $CT_1$  due to the bit-stuffing process that occurred before the message was sent over the network.

Let  $BCT_1 = EM_1 + R$  and  $BCT_2 = EM_2 + R$ .

Proof:

$e_1$  and  $e_2$  are known.

Obtain two  $\mathbb{Z}^+ f, g \ni f \cdot e_1 + g \cdot e_2 \equiv 1$ .

Recall that  $f \cdot e_1 + g \cdot e_2 \equiv 1$ .

Calculate:  $(BE)_1^f (BE)_2^g \equiv E_1 \cdot R^f (E_1 + R)^g \equiv (mod + R)^f (mod + R)^g$

The results also showed that the attacker will get message  $BM$ , which is neither  $BCT_1$  and  $BCT_2$  nor the actual message. With this, it is then concluded that RBMRSA algorithm is secured against CMA. The modified RBMRSA algorithm, having inherited the bit-stuffing process from the original algorithm, is also secured against CMA.

Lastly, a known plaintext attack (KPA) exploits a known plaintext and a newly captured message to crack the encryption system and decrypt a newly captured message. KPA can retrieve the message by creating a prebuilt set  $W$  containing a pair of plaintext and encrypted message. The process of known plaintext attack in RSA algorithm is as follows:

Let  $P_1, P_2, P_3, \dots, P_n$  are the plaintext,  $EM_1, EM_2, EM_3, \dots, EM_n$  are the encrypted message.

Suppose that  $P_n \in P$  and  $EM_n \in EM$ .

Proof:

$W = ((P_1, (EM_1)), ((P_2, (EM_2))), ((P_3, (EM_3))), \dots ((P_n, (EM_n))))$

In the evaluation of classical RSA, encrypting several plaintexts using similar keys produces similar ciphertexts and with the prebuilt set, the attackers can use the information to generate a new plaintext  $P_{n+1}$  and provide the equivalent  $EM_{n+1}$ .

In the same manner, Mojisola et al. evaluated the original RBM RSA algorithm with known plaintext attack and found it to be resistant against it.

Let  $P_1, P_2, P_3, \dots, P_n$  be the plaintext,  $EM_1 + R_1, EM_2 + R_2, EM_3 + R_3, \dots, EM_n + R_n$  be the corresponding ciphertext  $BCT$ .

Proof:

$W = ((P_1, (EM_1)), ((P_2, (EM_2))), ((P_3, (EM_3))), \dots ((P_n, (EM_n))))$

$R_1 \neq R_2 \neq R_3 \dots \neq R_n$

Upon evaluation, the authors stated that the process of bit-stuffing the encrypted message allows each bit-stuffed ciphertexts to be different from each other, such that the attacker cannot build a set of plaintexts with the given known data. As such, it is then concluded that the RBM RSA algorithm is secured against CMA. The modified RBM RSA algorithm, having inherited the bit-stuffing process from the original algorithm, is also secured against KPA.

### Execution Time

The performance of any data encryption and decryption technique is determined by the execution time, this measures how slow and fast a said algorithm is (Mojisola et al., 2022). The modified RBM RSA aims to speed up the solving time of the private key  $d$  and the computational time of the decryption phase of the receiver's end by incorporating the Extended Euclidean Algorithm (EEA) and Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT).

The results of the encryption and decryption time of the modified RBM RSA are shown in Table 2 and the results of the RBM RSA are shown in Table 3. Table 2, which contains the result of the modified RBM RSA, has shown that the encryption and decryption time is comparatively longer than the encryption and decryption time for the RBM RSA. This indicates that the encryption and decryption for the modified RBM RSA has an improved complex algorithm and security against attackers.

Table 2. Encryption and Decryption Time of 2048-bit Modified RBM RSA

Message Size (byte)	Encryption time (ms)	Decryption time (ms)
5	13.10	19.96
10	23.83	37.78
25	52.06	89.70
40	84.49	139.65
60	123.88	205.53
80	163.98	274.07
100	196.61	340.24

Table 3. Encryption and Decryption Time of 1024-bit RBM RSA

Message Size (byte)	Encryption time (ms)	Decryption time (ms)
5	6.24	17.82
10	9.00	36.71
25	22.90	88.71
40	35.02	143.80
60	54.20	204.00
80	71.26	279.73
100	89.26	363.21

The modified RBM RSA and RBM RSA encryption and decryption time results are illustrated in Figure 4 and Figure 5. From the graphical illustration found in Figure 6, it shows the visual comparison of the encryption time of RBM RSA and the modified RBM RSA adjacent to the message size in byte. Figure 7 shows the graphical comparison of the decryption of the modified RBM RSA and RBM RSA adjacent to the message size in byte. The decryption time graph shown in Figure 7 shows that by the 100-bit message, the modified



RBMRSA is significantly faster than RBMRSA even with the bit difference of the key generation.

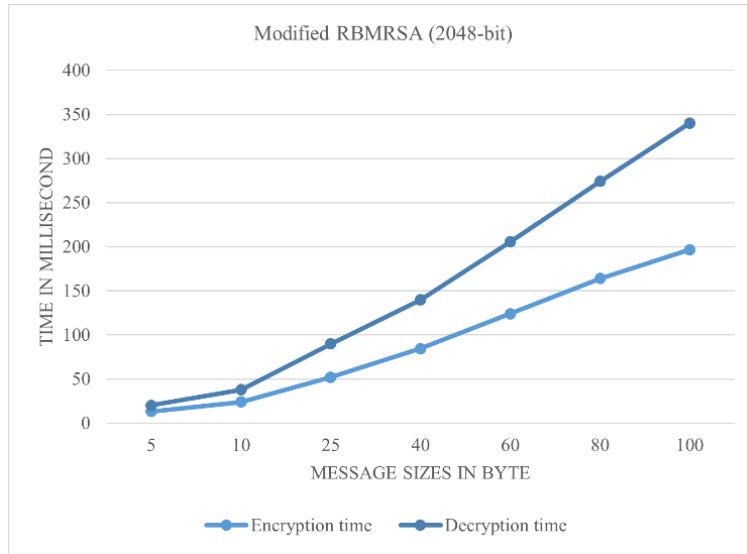


Figure 3. Encryption and Decryption Time of the Modified RBMRSA

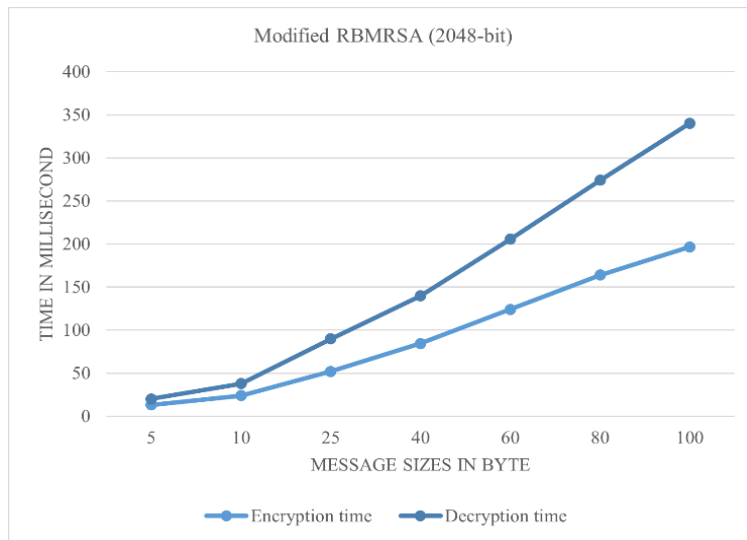


Figure 4. Encryption and Decryption Time of Modified RBMRSA

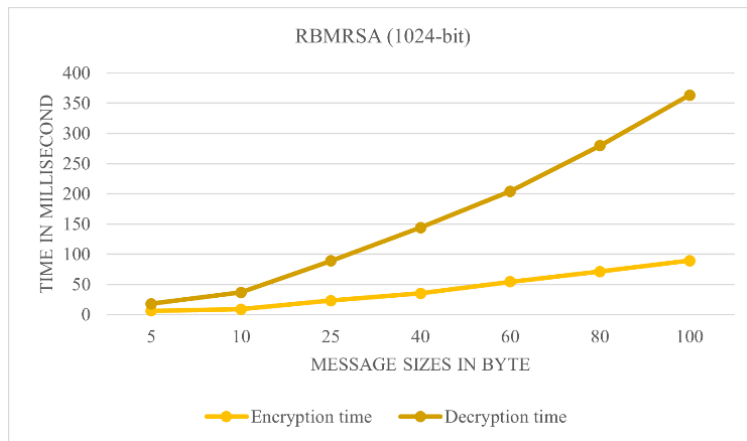


Figure 5. Encryption and Decryption Time of 2048-bit RBMRSA

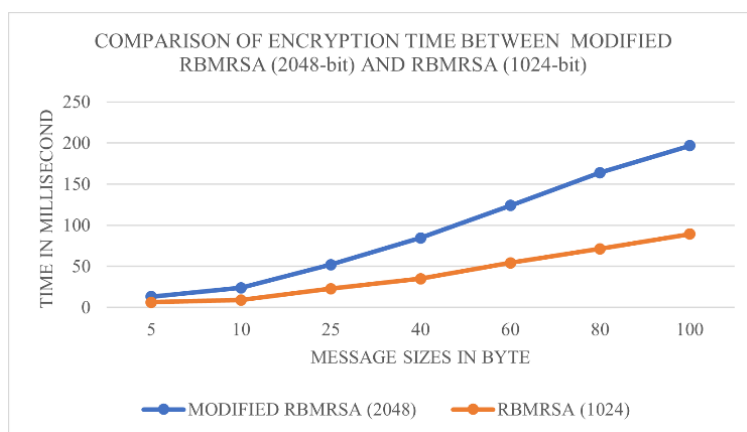


Figure 6. Encryption Time Comparison between Modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA

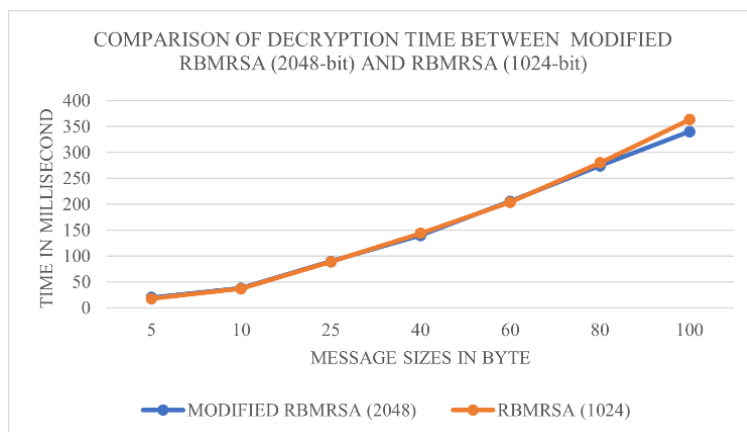


Figure 7. Decryption Time Comparison between Modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA

*Avalanche Effect*

The avalanche effect is a result of a small change in a plaintext message that produces a significantly different ciphertext (Mojisola et al., 2022). The security of the modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA uses the Avalanche Effect to measure the sensitivity of the algorithm by calculating the produced original ciphertext and the single bit difference ciphertext. This result supports the hypothesis that the avalanche effect on the algorithm will make it difficult for an attacker to successfully run statistical analysis on the ciphertext.

$$\%AE = \frac{CbCT}{ToCT} \times 100 \tag{1}$$

The Equation (1) with avalanche effect in plain text (AE), count of changed bits in ciphertext (CbCT), and total bits in ciphertext (ToCT), is the formula to get the percentage result of the avalanche effect of the algorithm. Table 4 shows the avalanche effect percentage of both the modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA using the same data input for both the algorithms.

Table 4. Avalanche Effect of Modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA

Algorithm	Avalanche Effect (%)
Modified RBMRSA (2048-key length)	38.60%
Modified RBMRSA (1024-key length)	38.58%
RBMRSA	38.40%

A graphical visualization of the avalanche effect (%) of the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length and 1024-key length and RBMRSA (see Figure 8).

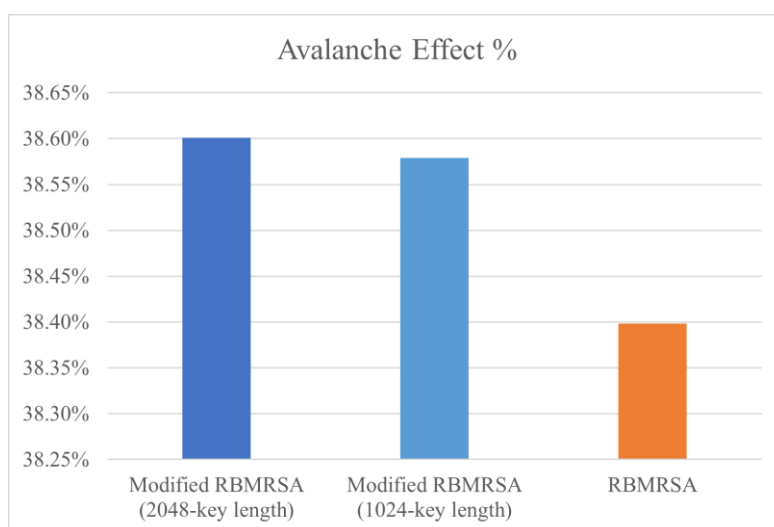


Figure 8. Avalanche Effect (%) of Modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA

### Computational Speed

As suggested by Mojisola et al. (2022), the computational speed of the algorithm has been shown to be dependent on the execution time of its computational complexity. The execution time of the algorithm shown in Table 2 and Table 3 is a comparison between the modified RBMRSA with 2048-key length and RBMRSA with 1024-key length. The key length contributed to the difference of the execution time, particularly on the encryption time. Table 5 provides the execution time of the modified RBMRSA with 1024-key length and with the same message size as Table 2 and Table 3 for the computational speed test between the modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA.

Table 5. Encryption and Decryption Time of 1024-key Modified RBMRSA

Message Size (byte)	Encryption time (ms)	Decryption time (ms)
5	5.89	7.49
10	11.13	14.21
25	21.21	28.30

40	36.22	43.22
60	53.28	62.80
80	68.05	80.25
100	85.56	98.24

The encryption time for Table 5 compared to the encryption time of RBMRSA in Table 3 shows that the gap in execution time between the modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA when on the same key length is significantly small. A graphical presentation of the comparison of encryption time (see Figure 8) and decryption time (see Figure 9) between the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length, RBMRSA, and modified RBMRSA in 1024-key length to visually illustrate the difference of the computational speed.

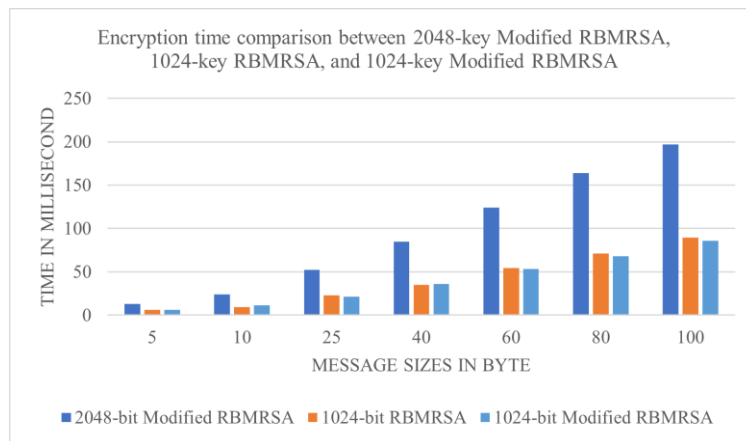


Figure 9. Encryption Time (1024-key and 2048-key Modified vs RBMRSA)

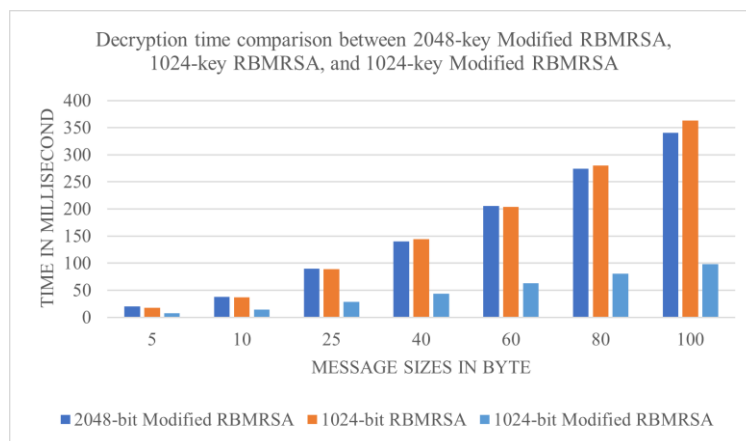


Figure 10. Decryption Time (1024-key and 2048-key Modified vs RBMRSA)

Figure 9 shows the considerable encryption difference of 2048-key Modified RBMRSA with the 1024-key RBMRSA, but the RBMRSA has almost the same execution time as the 1024-key modified RBMRSA. Indicating that the 2048-key length modification of the modified RBMRSA affects the computational speed difference if compared with the 1024-key RBMRSA. If the same key length size is applied for both algorithms,

results showed there exists minimal computational speed difference despite the additional security applied to the modified RBMRSA. The decryption time difference for both key lengths of the modified RBMRSA in Figure 10 showed that the modified algorithm offers significant computational speed advantage over the current RBMRSA.

### *Computational Complexity*

The degree of the computational complexity of the algorithm can be analyzed with the use of Big O notation. The time for the computer to produce an output based on a specific input is a determining factor of the efficiency of the cryptological algorithm. The complexity of the modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA will be calculated using the polynomial equation:

$$Y = F(X) = ax^6 + bx^5 + cx^4 + dx^3 + ex^2 + fx + g$$

The coordinates can be derived from Table 2 for modified RBMRSA and Table 3 for the RBMRSA algorithm, where (x) is the message size as the independent variable and a, b, c, d, e, f, and g as coefficients.

$$y = -4.37 \times 10^{-9}x^6 + 1.27 \times 10^{-6}x^5 - 0.000139x^4 + 0.007112x^3 - 0.007112x^2 + 3.697211x - 1.926982 \quad (2)$$

Equation (2) shows the mathematical structure of the encryption measured in milliseconds (y) as the dependent variable for the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length encryption.

$$Z = -2.20 \times 10^{-10}x^6 + 4 \times 10^{-8}x^5 - 1.97 \times 10^{-6}x^4 + 4.99 \times 10^{-5}x^3 - 0.005885x^2 + 3.646586x + 1.869475 \quad (3)$$

Equation (3) presents the mathematical structure of the modified RBMRSA decryption where (z) is the decryption measured in milliseconds. The mathematical equation for y and Z replaced by the corresponding equivalent for each variable produces computational complexity with the help of Big O analysis. This result showed that the trendline for the Big O encryption is within the degree of 3 and the decryption trendline is within the range of 1. The same mathematical equation will be used to determine the complexity of the RBMRSA with the data from Table 3 and of the modified RBMRSA in 1024-key length with the data from Table 5.

$$y = 3.45 \times 10^{-9}x^6 - 1.01 \times 10^{-6}x^5 + 0.000112x^4 - 0.005929x^3 + 0.152614x^2 + 0.89153x + 7.557534 \quad (4)$$

Equation (4) presents the mathematical structure for RBMRSA encryption with (y) as the dependent variable which is the encryption time measured in milliseconds for RBMRSA algorithm.

$$Z = -8.75 \times 10^{-9}x^6 + 2.44 \times 10^{-6}x^5 - 0.000250x^4 + 0.011815x^3 - 0.263159x^2 + 6.081909x - 6.081909 \quad (5)$$

Equation (5) presents the mathematical structure of the decryption of the RBRMSA algorithm where (z) is the decryption time measured in milliseconds. The results for the RBMRSA Big O analysis show that the trendline for RBMRSA Encryption is within the degree of 4 and the Decryption is within the degree of 3.

$$y = -4.03 \times 10^{-9}x^6 + 1.23 \times 10^{-6}x^5 - 0.0001415x^4 + 0.007629x^3 - 0.1929x^2 + 2.849x - 4.403 \quad (6)$$

Equation (6) shows the mathematical equation of the encryption of the modified RBM RSA in 1024-key length where (x) is the independent variable that contains the message size bit and (y) as the dependent variable encryption time results from table 5.

$$Z = -1.59 \times 10^{-9}x^6 + 5.13 \times 10^{-7}x^5 - 6.39 \times 10^{-5}x^4 + 0.003819x^3 - 0.1126x^2 + 2.474x - 2.499 \quad (7)$$

The mathematical equation of the decryption time of the modified RBM RSA in 1024-key length is shown in equation (7) where the dependent variable (z) is the decryption time results from the 1024-key length of the modified RBM RSA. The results of the polynomial equations from equation (6) and equation (7) suggest that the degree of both encryption and decryption time for the 1024-key length modified RBM RSA is best at degree 3.

#### Attack Step Analysis

Additional security metric involved is attack step analysis, which encompasses the analysis of the steps involved to run a successful attack through specific processor without actually performing the said attack on the algorithm.

$$\text{Attack Step} = 2^l \text{ where } l \text{ is the key length} \quad (8)$$

Equation (8) presents the formula for attack step analysis which is also based on the study conducted by Mojisola et. al (2022).

$$\text{Attack Step} = 2^{(1024)} + N \text{ Steps} = 1.7978 \times 10^{308} \text{ Steps} \quad (9)$$

Equation (9) shows the attack step analysis for the RBM RSA presented by Mojisola et. al (2022), where l is 1024-key length and the additional step which is presented as N shows the presence of the additional bit brought upon by the integrated random bit stuffing algorithm.

$$\text{Attack Step} = 2^{(2048)} + N \text{ Steps} = 3.2317 \times 10^{616} \text{ Steps} \quad (10)$$

Equation (10) presents the attack step analysis of the modified RBM RSA, where l is 2048-key length and the additional step due to the random bit stuffing is presented as N.

$$\text{Attack Step} = 2^{(1024)} + N \text{ Steps} = 1.7978 \times 10^{308} \text{ Steps} \quad (11)$$

Equation (11) presents the attack step analysis of the modified RBM RSA in 1024-key length, where l is the 1024-key length and the additional step due to the random bit stuffing is presented as N.

## Discussion

The computational and time complexity of the modified RBM RSA and RBM RSA was studied using the Big O analysis as metrics. The execution time shown in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 are the data that was used for the Big O analysis to produce the computational and time complexity difference of the modified RBM RSA in 2048-key length, 1024-key length modified RBM RSA, and 1024-key length RBM RSA with message sizes in byte. The avalanche effect in percentage which is shown in Table 4 is the security metric for the sensitivity of the produced ciphertext based on the single change of the plaintext.

The implementation of the 2048-key length, four randomly generated prime numbers, EEA, and CRT on the modified RBM RSA results in a significantly slower encryption time in different message byte compared to the 1024-key length RBM RSA. The 2048-key length is divided into four to produce an equal key length between the four randomly generated prime numbers. This key length generates the public and private keys which produce long strings of RCB, X, Y, and Z of the ciphertext.

The key length bit is relevant to the computational speed of the algorithm as it affects the execution time of the algorithm, and the larger the key length bits results in the larger the bits of data the algorithm must solve as shown in Figures 9 and 10. The implementation of the EEA on the encryption process of the modified RBM RSA helps with shortening the execution time of solving for the private key  $d$  for 2048-key length  $N$  as suggested by the results on Figures 9 and 10. The same goes for the implementation of the CRT on the encryption and decryption process of the modified RBM RSA as seen on the decryption time difference on Figure 10. CRT improves the computational speed of the decryption process by dividing the ciphertext bits into four parts using the generated keys from the encryption process which significantly shows to be much more efficient when entering large bits of data.

The summary of the results for the metrics used for the comparison of the performance of the modified RBM RSA in 2048-key length and 1024-key length and RBM RSA in 1024-key length is shown in Table 6. This metrics comparison uses the same data input key length and formula for both the Modified RBM RSA (in 2048-key length and 1024-key length) and RBM RSA.

Table 6. Summary of Metrics Results Table

Algorithm	Avalanche Effect (%)	Computational Complexity of Encryption	Computational Complexity of Decryption	Attack Step Analysis
Modified RBM RSA (2048-key length)	38.60%	$O(n^3)$	$O(n)$	$2^{(2048)} + N$
Modified RBM RSA	38.58%	$O(n^3)$	$O(n^3)$	$2^{(1024)} + N$



(1024-key length)

RBMRSA	38.40%	$O(n^4)$	$O(n^3)$	$2^{(1024)} + N$
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Table 6 presents the result for the avalanche effect in percentage and the Big O analysis of the modified RBMRSA (in 2048-key length and 1024-key length) and RBMRSA. The avalanche effect (%) for the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length is 0.20% higher than the RBMRSA which signifies that the modified RBMRSA is more enhanced than the RBMRSA when it comes to the slight changes of the plaintext. The enhanced avalanche effect of the modified RBMRSA demonstrates to have 0.20% increase of security against attackers using statistical analysis on the plaintext message compared with the RBMRSA. The modified RBMRSA in 1024-key length shows a 0.18% difference with the RBMRSA in 1024-key length which suggests that the additional prime number increased the security of the modified RBMRSA compared to the RBMRSA. Lastly, the table also shows the attack step analysis comparison of the two algorithms wherein the modified RBMRSA utilizes a greater key length than the current RBMRSA algorithm which leads to added exhaustion time for running a successful attack.

The computational complexity comparison between the modified RBMRSA and RBMRSA derived from Equation (2) and Equation (3) for the encryption and decryption of the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length, Equation (4) and Equation (5) for the RBMRSA, and from Equation (6) and Equation (7) for the encryption and decryption time of the modified RBMRSA in 1024-key length. The study by Danziger (2010) suggests the Big O notation is commonly used to analyze the efficiency of the algorithm by comparing the orders or the degree. Moreover, the study presents the hierarchy of the notation and the degree of the computational complexity of the algorithm in relation to its execution time.

The result of the computational complexity of the encryption for the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length compared to the RBRMSA shown in Table 6 suggests that the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length encryption time is significantly faster than the RBMRSA as the size of the input increases, having a complexity of  $O(n^3)$ . The decryption time of the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length with a computational complexity of  $O(n)$  which suggests a linear relationship with message size in byte and decryption time. For this reason, the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length indicates that the decryption time increases linearly with the message size in byte which suggests being much more optimal and efficient for larger size input in comparison with RBMRSA.

The computational complexity for both encryption of decryption time appears to be more efficient and optimal on the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length when handling larger data. Additionally, as shown in table 6, the computational complexity of the encryption time of the modified RBMRSA in 1024-key length is  $O(n^3)$  which suggests that the implementation of EEA optimized the encryption process which is an improvement from the current RBMRSA with 1024-key length. The computational complexity of the decryption of the modified RBMRSA in 1024-key length is  $O(n^3)$  which compared to the computational complexity of the decryption time

of the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length suggests that the incorporated CRT on the decryption process is much more efficient when implemented on larger key lengths.

## Conclusion

This research study is a variant of the well-known asymmetric cryptography, RSA Algorithm, which is geared to enhance the developed Random Bit Stuffing Insertion Algorithm with Modified RSA (RBMRSA) algorithm by Mojisola et al. (2022). The modified RBMRSA algorithm is implemented in Python programming language and is simulated using a simple developed web application. Aiming to enhance the computational complexity and security performance and adherence of RBMRSA, mathematical processes were incorporated such as Extended Euclidean Algorithm (EEA) and Chinese Remainder Theorem (CRT) to help optimize the algorithm's computational and time complexity, the algorithm is then strengthened through the use four randomly generated prime numbers and is implemented in a 2048-bit key length. The modified algorithm went through performance evaluation to analyze its execution time, computational complexity, security and sensitivity to changes with its plaintext.

Execution time results showed that the modified RBMRSA in 2048-key length has higher encryption execution time, due to the additional prime numbers and higher key length involved. Results also showed that the modified algorithm performed better in terms of its decryption execution time compared to the referenced 1024-bit RBMRSA algorithm. Utilizing the Big O Analysis as metric for its computational complexity, results showed that the modified RBMRSA is lower in degree than the RBMRSA algorithm even though the modified algorithm incorporated additional security and higher key length. This infers that the modified RBMRSA shows optimization in its computational complexity in terms of both encryption and decryption, concluding that there is improvement brought upon by the utilization of EEA and CRT in the algorithm's encryption and decryption processes. In terms of aiming to enhance further the security of the RBMRSA, results generated from the Avalanche Effect showed that the modified RBMRSA contributed an additional 0.20% of security from 38.40% of the current RBMRSA algorithm. Hence, the modified RBMRSA is much more sensitive to a small change made in the plaintext resulting to a changed ciphertext. Additionally, through attack step analysis it can be seen that although each algorithm possesses the same level of steps, the modified RBMRSA encompasses a greater key length which can add up to exhausting the time needed to perform a successful attack on the said cryptographic algorithm. Furthermore, the modified RBMRSA is built upon the security analysis made by Mojisola et. al (2022) to RBMRSA which theoretically proved that the said algorithm is resistant to Common Modulus Attack and Know Plaintext Attack because of the added security layer through the Random Bit Stuffing Algorithm.

This modified RBMRSA algorithm offers a new methodology to answer the lapses of RBMRSA in terms of offering security while optimizing its execution processes. Based on the overall results, the modified RBMRSA algorithm encompasses improved processes that can offer great performance in securing data exchange over vulnerable networks even under the consideration of large message size.

## Recommendations

The capabilities of the modified RBM RSA cryptographic algorithm can be further tested out on other file types like image files or audio files, and in digital signatures. Future works can encompass testing the algorithm on larger data size and use additional security metrics to analyze the effectiveness of the modified algorithm. Further optimization of the algorithm can be studied to enhance the random bit insertion algorithm scheme or its encryption and decryption computational and time complexity.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend their greatest gratitude to their adviser, thesis panels, and coordinators from the University of the City of Manila (*Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila*) for their continuous guidance and insightful critiques towards the completion of this research study. Additionally, the authors would like to thank Mojisola et al. for their initiative towards the creation of RBM RSA algorithm. Lastly, the authors would like to express their love and thanks to their respective families, friends, colleagues, and sponsors for their unwavering support.

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## School Leadership Experiences of Secondary School Principals in a VUCA Environment: Development of a VUCA Leadership Theory

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**Abstract:** The exploration of leadership within the educational domain has been a longstanding pursuit. Research consistently establishes a connection between the effectiveness of schools and the quality of leadership. This qualitative study aimed to delve into the experiences of secondary school principals, particularly in the context of a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. Employing a narrative inquiry approach, principals were interviewed to articulate the core of effective leadership, emphasizing their experiences as leaders navigating the challenges of the VUCA world. Additionally, they were queried about their ongoing learning needs as leaders. In essence, this study sought authentic insights from the perspectives of secondary principals, unraveling the experiences that significantly shaped them, delineating the essential elements characterizing effective leaders in the VUCA world, and elucidating the perceived developmental needs of secondary school principals as they continually evolve in their leadership roles. A VUCA Leadership Theory was created based on the findings of this study.

**Keywords:** leadership experiences, VUCA world, narrative inquiry, effective leadership, VUCA solutions

**Citation:** Damaolao, M. & Navarro, N. (2024). School Leadership Experiences of Secondary School Principals in a VUCA Environment: Development of a VUCA Leadership Theory. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2093-2157), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Principalships in schools encompass a multitude of facets. In the context of the Philippines, the roles include strategic leadership, operational and resource management, emphasis on teaching and learning, personal and professional development, and networking (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020). The significance of leadership in schools, second only to classroom instruction, in shaping students' learning experiences underscores the complexity and importance of the role (Abrego, 2019; Gordon, 2018; Sammons, Day, Gu, and Ko, 2010). Grissom and Loeb (2011) highlight the effectiveness of principals who prioritize instructional leadership alongside organizational management and interpersonal skill development for enhancing



school performance. Effective leadership practices are pivotal in enhancing organizational efficiency, teaching quality, and student outcomes (Polonicic, 2016).

Various inquiries surround the concept of leadership, including its origin, whether it's inherent or acquired, and its transformative role in society. Evidence suggests that leaders inspire and influence others, articulate visions, and uphold ethical standards (Greer, 2011). They foster positive change and encourage the growth of individuals within the organization (Banutu-Gomez, 2004; Polonicic, 2016).

In the rapidly changing landscape of 21st-century education, leaders encounter unprecedented levels of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) (Johansen & Euchner, 2013). Understanding the dynamics of VUCA is crucial for leaders to navigate through evolving challenges effectively (Deaton, 2018). Globalization and technological advancements further amplify VUCA dynamics, requiring leaders to adapt to innovation and interconnectedness (Horney & O'Shea, 2015).

This study aims to provide secondary school principals with a deeper comprehension of their leadership context and the efficacy of their leadership styles in promoting continual improvement. Additionally, it seeks to contribute to the understanding of VUCA dynamics in educational leadership, aiding leaders in adapting to current realities.

The following specific research questions will be addressed in this study:

What are the leadership experiences of Cebu City North District secondary school principals?

What experiences are important to secondary school principals in terms of operating in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous school environment?

What does effective leadership in the VUCA world mean to the Cebu City North District secondary school principals?

What needs do secondary school principals have to further develop as effective leaders in the VUCA world?

## Literature Review

Leadership development for school principals remains a multifaceted subject requiring continuous academic inquiry beyond existing studies. Previous research has extensively examined various leadership theories, effective leadership qualities, and the impact of leadership on student achievement. However, there is a need for further investigation into this complex area.

The landscape of leadership theories is vast, with numerous theoretical trends identified in recent research. Dinh et al. (2014) identified 66 different leadership theories in this millennium alone, signaling the richness and diversity within this field. Leadership is increasingly perceived as a collaborative endeavor, emphasizing

teamwork and shared responsibility rather than a traditional top-down approach. Despite the breadth of research, a unified theory of leadership remains elusive (Polincic, 2016; Dinh et al., 2014).

The relationship between leadership theory and the role of school principals is pivotal. Principals exhibit distinct behaviors and interactions in their duties, shaping their leadership styles. As educational environments evolve, principals must adapt their leadership styles to meet emerging challenges effectively.

### **Leadership Theories**

Transformational leadership theory stands out as a prominent framework in educational leadership research. This theory emphasizes leaders' ability to inspire and elevate followers' aspirations, motivations, and maturity levels (Abu-Hussain, 2014). Initially introduced by Downton (1973) and further developed by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), transformational leadership focuses on fostering idealized influence, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (McCleskey, 2014). Research suggests that transformational leaders motivate their subordinates to surpass performance norms through charismatic influence (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leadership fosters a symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers (Abu-Hussain, 2014). Leaders who embody transformational qualities cultivate organizational visions, promote reflection, nurture leadership potential, and foster a culture of collaboration and innovation (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

Visionary leadership complements transformational leadership by emphasizing leaders' ability to articulate compelling visions that imbue organizational work with meaning and purpose (Nanus, 1992; Sashkin, 1992). Visionary leaders inspire action by effectively communicating their vision, fostering cohesion, commitment, and trust within the organization (Zhu et al., 2005). Effective visionary leadership enhances organizational performance and promotes positive outcomes for constituents (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005).

Instructional leadership, characterized by expertise and influence, plays a crucial role in improving teaching and learning outcomes (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Scholars predominantly utilize the conceptualization put forth by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) to explore the dynamics of effective instructional leadership.

Empowered leadership, whether at the individual or group level, has garnered increasing attention for its motivational benefits (Houghton, Neck, and Manz, 2003; Pearce and Sims, 2002). Empowerment enhances autonomy, self-efficacy, and shared leadership practices, contributing to improved performance and outcomes (Liden, Wayne, and Sparrowe, 2000; Ensley, Hmieleski, and Pearce, 2006).

Finally, followership theory, though less studied compared to leadership theory, plays a crucial role in understanding leadership dynamics. Followership theory explores how followers influence leadership processes

and outcomes, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

### *Defining VUCA: A Historical Overview*

The inception of the term VUCA dates back to the 1990s, originating from the U.S. Army War College amidst a transition from conventional warfare to what was termed NextGen warfare. This new form of warfare was characterized by unprecedented levels of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Tint, McWaters, & Raymond, 2015; Fry, 2016; Elkington, Pearse, Moss, Van, & Martin, 2017; Cousins, 2018). Unlike the preceding era marked by identifiable adversaries and conventional strategies, NextGen warfare introduced novel challenges such as asymmetrical tactics employed by agile and elusive opponents, evident in conflicts like 9/11 and the Syrian conflict (Fry, 2016). This shift prompted a reevaluation of military strategies and necessitated the development of adaptive approaches to address the evolving landscape.

In the educational context, VUCA principles find resonance in the challenges faced by school principals amidst dynamic and unpredictable environments. For instance, the sudden implementation of new policies or budget cuts can thrust school leaders into volatile and uncertain situations, demanding swift adaptation and strategic decision-making (Palacios, 2018; Tudorache & Ispas, 2018). Similarly, initiatives like technology integration in schools introduce complexities that require nuanced leadership to navigate effectively (Bartscht, 2015). Moreover, the ambiguity inherent in ambiguous directives or novel frameworks underscores the need for interpretative leadership capable of guiding stakeholders through unclear terrain (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014).

In addressing these challenges, leaders across various domains have sought innovative strategies informed by VUCA principles. The AGILE model proposed by Horney and O'Shea (2002) offers a structured framework for assessing leaders' ability to anticipate and respond to VUCA threats, emphasizing competencies such as change anticipation and agile decision-making (Horney & O'Shea, 2015). Additionally, Johansen (2009) advocates for a holistic approach encapsulated in the VUCA acronym, where each element is met with a corresponding strategy: vision for volatility, understanding for uncertainty, clarity for complexity, and agility for ambiguity. This comprehensive framework provides leaders with a practical toolkit to confront the multifaceted challenges of VUCA environments, guiding them towards adaptive and effective leadership. In essence, the evolution of VUCA from its military origins to its application in diverse sectors underscores its enduring relevance in navigating contemporary complexities. As leaders grapple with the uncertainties of an ever-changing landscape, embracing VUCA principles offers a strategic imperative for fostering resilience, innovation, and success in an unpredictable world.

### *Understanding Effective School Leadership*

Scholars have delved into the essential traits and competencies that define effective school leaders, aiming to distinguish between mere recognition of their impact on school success and identifying the specific qualities and skills that drive positive outcomes (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Research indicates that effective instructional

leadership is paramount, encompassing not only administrative tasks but also a focus on improving teaching quality and addressing instructional needs (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Principals are thus encouraged to dedicate significant attention to initiatives aimed at enhancing instruction, including needs assessment, resource allocation, and personnel management (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

The perception of an ideal school leader varies among stakeholders, influenced by individual beliefs, experiences, and priorities (Costellow, 2011). While superintendents may prioritize instructional leadership, parents may emphasize safety and quality instruction, teachers may seek support and morale-boosting, and students may prioritize social-emotional needs (Costellow, 2011). However, a shared culture of open communication, emphasis on essential aspects, discipline, and visibility emerged as universally valued qualities among teachers and principals (Costellow, 2011).

High school principals play a critical role as instructional leaders, with responsibilities extending to hiring effective teachers and ensuring appropriate class assignments (Clabo, 2010). Teachers emphasize the importance of principals providing resources and professional development opportunities to enhance instructional quality and academic achievement (Clabo, 2010). Similarly, research on instructional leadership underscores its significant impact on school performance, with practices such as improving teaching methodologies, setting academic goals, and empowering stakeholders contributing to academic success (Sammons et al., 2010).

A comprehensive review of effective school leadership identifies key practices that positively influence student learning and organizational success (Leithwood et al., 2006). Notably, effective leaders prioritize visioning, appreciation of subordinates, organizational restructuring, and management of the teaching-learning process (Leithwood et al., 2006). They involve staff in decision-making processes to achieve a shared vision and direction, fostering motivation and commitment among teachers to enhance student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2006). Distributed leadership, characterized by diverse leadership teams and capacity-building, emerges as a powerful strategy for organizational improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Furthermore, effective principals excel in various domains, including vision development, creating conducive learning environments, professional development, instructional improvement, people management, and data-driven decision-making (Wallace Foundation, 2012). Standards for Professional Practice for school principals contribute to reflective practice, professional development, recruitment, and evaluation, thereby enhancing leadership effectiveness and promoting school improvement (Dinham, 2011).

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative methodology, specifically narrative inquiry, to comprehensively explore the

experiences of secondary school principals. The focus is on understanding their definition of effective leadership from their unique perspectives and unraveling the more elusive characteristics of their leadership and personal development as learning agents in the VUCA world. The choice of the narrative inquiry approach is driven by the desire to delve into the experiences of school principals and their ongoing development as leaders within the dynamic VUCA environment. Data was collected from eight (8) secondary school principals within the Cebu City North District through individual semi-structured interviews. These principals have at least five (5) years of experience leading their respective schools. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to delve deeply into the topic and grasp the information completely. In conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to avoid missing issues which could be critical to the completion of the study.

### *Sample and Sampling Design*

The sampling was done according to Creswell’s criterion sampling approach, which involves identifying secondary school principals who have experienced the phenomenon (Polincic, 2016; Creswell, 2018). In this study, the North District secondary school principals of Cebu City were considered. A detailed email explaining the study, confidentiality, informed consent, and interview details were sent to eight (8) qualifying participants after they have been identified.

### *Context and Participants*

This study takes place in the North District of Cebu City, where the researcher endeavored to explore the leadership experiences and perspectives of secondary school principals within that district. The inclusion criteria for the study involve selecting principals with a minimum of five years of experience. Table 1 contains the summary of the participants.

Table 1. Research Participants and Years of Experience as Secondary School Principal

No.	Participant’s Pseudonym	Years of Experience as a Secondary School Principal
1	Mary	11
2	Richard	5
3	Angela	21
4	Frank	5
5	Esther	20
6	Beatrice	10
7	Sheila	5
8	Nate	10
Total Number of Participants:		8

### *Research Instrument*

In this study, the research methodology employed revolves around a semi-structured interview protocol, which is designed to elicit insights into the experiences of secondary school principals in the VUCA world. Semi-structured interviews, known for their openness and flexibility, present a set of questions that provide a loose framework. While maintaining the ability to compare responses systematically, the semi-structured format also allows for a degree of adaptability. This flexibility is particularly advantageous as it permits a nuanced exploration of the experiences, revealing patterns that might be overlooked in a more rigid structure. Striking a balance between structure and openness, this approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the nuances within the narratives of different respondents.

### *Data Gathering Procedure*

Three major steps were involved in the collection and analysis of data: planning, data collection, and data analysis.

#### *The Planning Process*

Research planning included creating questions for semi-structured interviews, refining the questions, and communicating the questions to the principals prior to the interviews. In addition, I coordinated with the principals to schedule interviews at a time and location that would allow for deeper conversations and information sharing. The final step was to ensure that all the necessary materials for conducting the interviews were in place, such as recorder, notes, etc.

#### *The Data Collection Process*

Several days were spent meeting with the principals to conduct the interviews. Interviews were expected to take place in the principals' schools at a time convenient to their schedules. Telephone and email communication helped to establish a good working relationship and provided valuable information throughout the research process.

#### *Data Analysis*

The interviews were transcribed, organized, and coded at the first level after they were conducted. As part of the analysis, I read and reread each interview transcript to refresh my memory, and then began coding the data using Quirkos. The transcribed responses were added to the Quirkos platform and codes were initially assigned to text or examples of ideas in transcriptions in the first phase of coding.

In phase one, Rubin and Rubin (2005) explain that the transcripts are prepared; concepts, themes, and events are

identified, refined and elaborated; and then the interviews are coded to retrieve what the interviewees had to say regarding the identified concepts, themes, and events are identified.

During the second phase, I examined the codes in greater depth and looked for themes related to the coded text and examples. Specific parts of the transcription were highlighted and coded in Quirkos, concepts were compared across the coding, themes were identified that grouped codes into more meaningful groups, a picture of the data was formulated, and a description of it was provided. This is the inductive data analysis part. According to Creswell (2005), “inductive data analysis establishes patterns or themes.” A pattern began to emerge because of the lists of notes and codes.

### *Validation Strategies*

The rigorous validation of the study was integral to ensuring the reliability and credibility of the research findings. The researcher employed a multifaceted approach, drawing on diverse methods to establish the study's robustness. Peer review and member checking, as endorsed by Creswell (2018), were pivotal components of this validation process. Peer review involved subjecting the research methodology, data analysis, and findings to scrutiny by experts in the field. This external evaluation served to identify potential biases, refine the research design, and enhance the overall methodological integrity.

Member checking, another crucial aspect of the validation strategy, involved seeking feedback directly from the participants involved in the study. This participatory verification process aimed to ascertain the accuracy and authenticity of the research findings from the perspective of those intimately acquainted with the research context. Providing participants with rough drafts containing detailed descriptions ensured their active engagement in the validation process. Their insights, reflections, and corrections contributed significantly to refining the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data.

In addition to these participant-centric approaches, the researcher implemented corroboration techniques by consulting a variety of research sources. This broader literature review and engagement with existing scholarship served as a form of triangulation, enriching the study by situating it within a broader academic discourse. The inclusion of diverse perspectives and insights from the literature not only reinforced the credibility of the study but also provided a nuanced context for interpreting the findings.

Furthermore, recognizing the complexity of qualitative research, the research process underwent critical evaluation by a qualitative research expert. This external critique by a seasoned professional in qualitative methodologies served as an invaluable checkpoint. The expert's insights into methodological choices, data analysis procedures, and interpretation of findings offered a constructive lens to identify potential biases, refine research strategies, and enhance the overall quality of the study.



## Results

Each participant shares their thoughts on the essential characteristics of effective leaders, elucidating the pivotal role effective leadership plays in enhancing school effectiveness. They articulate their vision for an effective school environment, deliberating on whether leadership is perceived as an art or a craft. Moreover, the principals candidly recount experiences that have significantly shaped their growth in their roles, offering a firsthand account of the challenges and triumphs they've encountered. Their narratives also extend to the VUCA landscape, exploring how they navigate and overcome the unique challenges posed by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Ethical and professional standards come under scrutiny as they discuss the impact of these principles on their daily practices. To ensure accuracy and depth, these insights were gleaned from both initial face-to-face interviews and subsequent follow-up interviews, providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of each principal's journey, reflections, and aspirations for personal and professional growth.

### The Preconceived Codes

In the realm of qualitative research, specifically in the context of narrative inquiry, the researcher embarks on a journey laden with the intricacies of interpretation and meaning making. As the study unfolds, it is inevitable that the researcher enters the process with preconceived codes, shaped by the overarching themes deduced from the research questions. In the case of this study, these preconceived codes serve as the foundational pillars that guide the initial coding process, particularly at the first level in Quirkos.

The preconceived codes in this narrative inquiry represent the broader themes encapsulating the essence of the research questions. These codes act as a lens through which the researcher begins the interpretative journey, framing the initial understanding of the data. The first level coding in Quirkos is informed by these preconceived codes, each representing a significant facet of the research focus.

#### *General Impactful Experiences*

The first preconceived code delves into the broader spectrum of impactful experiences. This encompasses a wide array of narrative elements that hold significance in the stories shared by the participants. It acts as a receptacle for overarching impressions and noteworthy incidents that contribute to the overall narrative texture.

#### *VUCA Experiences and Challenges*

As VUCA constitutes a central theme, this preconceived code encapsulates experiences and challenges characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. It serves as a specific lens through which the researcher seeks to understand the nuanced narratives surrounding the VUCA environment in the context of the participants' experiences.

### *VUCA Solutions*

This preconceived code shifts the focus towards the solutions and strategies employed by the participants in response to VUCA challenges. It serves as a repository for narratives detailing innovative approaches, adaptive strategies, and resilience in the face of VUCA-related complexities.

### *Role of Ethical and Professional Standards*

Ethical considerations and adherence to professional standards represent a crucial aspect of the study. This preconceived code captures narratives that shed light on the ethical dilemmas faced by the participants and how they navigated these challenges while upholding professional standards.

### *Definition of Effective Leadership*

One of the foundational preconceived codes revolves around the participants' perspectives on effective leadership. This code serves as a conduit for narratives that articulate their understanding of what constitutes effective leadership in the context of secondary education.

### *Definition of Effective School Environment*

Complementary to the code on effective leadership, this preconceived code explores the participants' articulations of an effective school environment. It encompasses narratives that delve into the elements contributing to a positive and conducive educational setting.

### *Effects of Effective Leadership*

This code encapsulates narratives that unfold the ripple effects and tangible outcomes resulting from effective leadership. It serves as a thematic container for stories that illuminate how effective leadership contributes to positive transformations within the educational landscape.

### *Perceived Needs of Secondary School Principals*

The final preconceived code pertains to the perceived needs expressed by the participants. It serves as a platform for narratives that articulate the requirements and aspirations of secondary school principals, providing insights into their professional and personal needs.

### *Impactful Leadership Experiences*

The first research question of the study was: What are the leadership experiences of Cebu City North District

secondary school principals? The interview questions were designed to learn about the personal experiences of secondary school principals in the North District of Cebu City. After coding the respondents' responses, themes began to emerge (see Table 2).

The participants were asked about their experiences that had influenced or impacted their growth as leadership practitioners in their respective schools. Four themes emerged from their responses: (a) Learning from and interacting with other school leaders, (b) Dealing with challenging and difficult teachers and staff members, (c) Dealing with classroom shortages and shortages of resources in general, and (d) Leadership training and experiential learning.

#### *Theme 1.1.1. Learning from and interacting with other school leaders*

The participating principals valued learning from and interacting with other school leaders because they promote professional growth, collaboration, innovation, and support within the educational community. For example, Sheila said,

*There were many seminars I attended but the most significant ones are those I spent with other leaders outside Cebu City. During those times, I was able to work with other school leaders and learn from them. I also got to enjoy and explore different places.*

Sheila added that the experience she had with other school leaders gave her “valuable insights, knowledge, inspiration, and networking opportunities”.

Nate expressed that,

*I soon realized that working closely with other principals opened up a world of possibilities for my own professional growth and the betterment of my school. Through regular meetings, workshops, and collaborative problem-solving sessions in a span of two (2) weeks... this was over the summer... I developed a strong relationship with the other principals. We shared triumphs and challenges, exchanged best practices, and supported one another in navigating the complexities of educational leadership. I was blessed to be in a community of like-minded professionals who understood the joys and struggles of being a principal.*

Angela also valued working with other school leaders when she said,

*My engagement and involvement in doing tasks with other school leaders shaped me to become who I am today as a leader. I journeyed with them in the implementation of the different programs and projects at the Division, Region, and even National levels. Every time I am with other leaders, I mentally take note of the things that I find worth emulating about them. I also take note of the things I do not like about them (laughs), of course. Also, I share with my school whatever I learned from those projects and activities.*

Lastly, Frank mentioned that even during the pandemic where the meeting is virtual, he was still able to learn from other school leaders as he described the meetings as “a great learning platform where everybody

contributed ideas and shared personal experiences and collaborated to create a curriculum that schools can use during the pandemic.”

Table 2. Leadership Experiences of the Cebu City North District Secondary School Principals

	Mary	Richard	Angela	Frank	Esther	Beatrice	Sheila	Nate
Experiences that had influenced or impacted their growth as leadership practitioners in their respective schools								
1.1.1. Learning from and interacting with other school leaders	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
1.1.2. Dealing with challenging and difficult teachers and staff		x			x		x	
1.1.3. Dealing with classroom shortages and shortages resources in general	x	x			x			
1.1.4. Leadership training and experiential learning		x		x		x	x	
The role of ethical and professional standards								
1.2.1. Model and guide	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1.2.2. Foundation for success	x	x		x			x	
1.2.3. Developing integrity			x		x	x		x

Research indicated the importance of educational leaders engaging in professional learning communities as Theme 1.1.1 suggests. According to Huber (2013), it is becoming more and more common for educational leaders to engage in professional learning communities and networks that allows for the expansion of their understanding of leadership. Green et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of mentoring, which can happen when principals interact with each other, because mentioning “accounts for the most common learning method where a mentor models appropriate professional behaviors and actions to the student”. The crux of leadership development lies in day-to-day practice (Day et al., 2014). When leaders have the opportunity to experience these day-to-day experiences with a coach, they can utilize the coach’s feedback to help in the development of

important skills and abilities. Voluntary engagement in coaching sessions will likely impact school principal's practices (Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014).

*Theme 1.1.2. Dealing with challenging and difficult teachers and staff*

Another theme that influenced principals' growth is dealing with difficult teachers and staff members. According to Esther,

*I learned how to deal with critical teachers and staff and those who wanted to challenge my authority and decisions by attending seminars around that topic. I remembered that our superintendent invited us to attend a seminar, and if I remember correctly, the title was "How to Deal with Difficult People: Taking the challenge Head On".*

Sheila narrated her experience in dealing with teachers who tried to challenge her leadership. She quipped, *Managing from a small integrated school with 26 teachers and hundreds of learners as a school head for a brief period of time to leading a very large school having more than a hundred teachers with thousands of learners presented me with different challenges. I have encountered teachers with different personalities in the field. Some are questioning and challenging my knowledge, abilities, and capabilities because I am younger than them and yet I was tasked to lead them.*

Sheila added,

*But nothing beats the experience of leading the school in times of pandemic where COVID-19 vaccine is a must to open the school with limited face-to-face classes. Some teachers were unvaccinated, and they threatened to sue me if they were forced to get vaccinated. I also must solve conflicts among teachers due to professional jealousy.*

Theme 1.1.2 highlights some of the challenges encountered by school principals. Reeves (2006) described educational institutions as those that "provide avenues for people to show bravery or weakness, industry or laziness, loyalty or treachery, and to be deacons and demons." Indeed, the leadership of school principals is a more controversial, intricate, situated and evolving subject matter than formerly thought (Dinham, 2011). Managing schools combines technical and adaptive work. Due to their complexity and dimension, adaptive challenges are often difficult to address (Fullan, 2005).

*Theme 1.1.3. Dealing with classroom shortages and shortages of resources in general*

The third theme that emerged under research question number 1 highlights another challenge that principals must deal with on a day-to-day basis. Richard, for example, had this to say:

*When I was a teacher, I always knew that the Department of Education does not have all the resources for all the schools in the country. This is the reason why I had to buy my own classroom resources for my students. However, this problem was magnified when I became a principal. I had teachers constantly complaining about the lack of resources and asking for help and support. As a leader, experiencing this constant and seemingly*

*never-ending problem helped me to grow and become someone who is resourceful enough to address the current needs of every classroom, the needs of the school, and especially the students' needs in their classroom.*

Mary also highlighted this problem and considered it as something that helped her become an effective principal when she expressed,

*The problem that is still true to this day is lack of teachers and classrooms, and this is a challenge for school leaders like me. Since this is something bigger than me, I have to adjust and live with it. Learning must continue even with the mentioned shortages.*

Esther, on the other hand, underscored the fact that the Department of Education in itself has a problem of providing schools with adequate resources. Esther said,

*DepEd lacks resources and that is a fact. Operating with very limited resources while being expected to produce the best output is a challenging and demanding situation. However, it had also presented me with an opportunity for creativity, innovation, and resourcefulness.*

Effective school leadership involves finding creative solutions to maximize the impact of available resources and advocating for equitable access to quality education for all students. Research indicates that in addition to effective instructional leadership, it is equally important to pay attention to the organization's management, including budgeting and maintaining facilities (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Therefore, principals should also spend a considerable amount of energy on allocating resources to address identified needs, enlist the best personnel for the job, and maintain a smooth school operation (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

#### *Theme 1.1.4. Leadership training and experiential learning*

A few of the participants interviewed cited leadership training and experiential learning as having an impact on their professional growth in leadership. For instance, Frank said,

*My experience being with different school principals with different abilities and leadership styles has influenced me a lot. I have attended seminars and trainings in management and leadership with them and these helped me in my journey as a school principal.*

Beatrice highlighted her experiences as well regarding this theme when she narrated that “here was also a workshop where situations were given, and we tried applying the skills being learned or given”. Additionally, she said,

*In terms of the significant professional trainings and seminars I have attended, I consider The School Heads Academy for Performance Excellence (SHAPE) and the Enhancement Training Programs for Senior High School Principals: Deepening Instructional Leadership as two very meaningful professional seminars/training-workshops I attended. They cover the whole area of school leadership.*

Mary shared that she learned “core values of discipline, humility, resourcefulness, and all other positive values through experiential learning”. She went on to say,

*It was a life changing experience for me. I realized that as a leader, I have to be aware of the realities in life. I have to be proactive and not reactive.*

Angela also underscored the importance of leadership and experiential trainings when she narrated, *I have had meaningful experiences with seminars, trainings, and workshops where the facilitators asked participants to work on a project or output together, share them to everybody through presentations, and most importantly, asked the participants to implement what they have learned back to their respective school communities.*

Engaging in leadership training and experiential learning is crucial for personal growth, skill development, adaptability, collaboration, and organizational impact. It equips leaders with the necessary tools, knowledge, and confidence to navigate complex challenges, inspire others, and drive positive change. By investing in their own development, leaders can make a lasting impact on their teams, organizations, and the wider community. As pointed out by Polincic (2016), leadership as a process and not as a position as quoted by Greer (2011). By taking the time to engage in leadership training, school principals examine how their experiences help influence, shape, and hone their sense of purpose and contribute to their success (Greer, 2011).

In terms of the role of ethical standards and the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), three themes emerged from the principal's responses: (a) model and guide, (b) foundation for success, and (c) developing integrity.

#### *Theme 1.2.1. Model and guide*

All the participants consider both the ethical standards and the PPSSH as their model and guide in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities as school leaders. For instance, Richard said that the ethical standards “govern the school leaders do what is right and recognize what is not right in managing a school”. He added that the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) “serves as the principals’ guide to become effective school leaders in their school community”.

Sheila revealed,

*I strongly believe that the values and virtues that's within us greatly affect the leadership styles and practices of a school leader. And in order to develop good values and virtues, we, as leaders, need guidance. With the ethical standards for principals laid down for us, we can always use those as our guiding principle.*

Nate mentioned that the ethical standards “provide a moral compass for principals, guiding their behavior, decision-making, and interactions within the school community. By upholding ethical standards, principals foster integrity, trust, equity, and responsible stewardship, contributing to a positive school culture and promoting the well-being and success of students and staff.”

Beatrice expressed,



*Ethical standards for school principals affect me in a more positive way because I need to walk the talk. Modeling or showing a good example is very important - not only for people or subordinates to emulate me, but at the same time to gain the trust and confidence of the people around me.*

Additionally, Beatrice said that the PPSSH helps her to “realize what competencies I need to improve, and it is also my blueprint as a school head that guides me to do better”.

For her part, Mary likened the PPSSH as her “bible” when she said,

*The PPSSH is our bible. It serves as our guide on how we will carry out our tasks. It provides us with the key result areas in the realization of the vision-mission statements of the Department of Education.*

Angela agreed with Mary because she said,

*The PPSSH is basically our ‘bible’ because it delineates our duties and responsibilities and sets high standards of practice to make us the best school leaders there are.*

On the other hand, Esther had this to say about the ethical standards,

*It helps me to be always at my best, to be careful in my choice of words, even my manner of dressing, level of commitment and how I project myself in terms of my body language in everything that I do.*

Frank underlined the importance of ethical standards as he explained that “the job of leading a school is big and the ethical standards affect my duties as a principal in the sense that I must act as a role model to everybody. I must set an example to all.”

The findings of this study as exemplified in Theme 1.2.1 are supported by Apilada (2020) when he discussed about DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020 titled National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020). Apilada (2020) emphasized DepEd’s commitment to “support school heads so they can better perform their roles in schools, including the improvement of teacher quality, and, through this, learner achievement.”

#### *Theme 1.2.2. Foundation for success*

Another theme that emerged from this study in relation to ethical and professional standards is that both can be used as a foundation for success. Sheila said,

*Ethical standards are a foundation to drive positive change, support student achievement, and create a conducive learning environment for both students and staff.*

Nate’s response was in consonance with that of Sheila’s because according to Nate, the “PPSSH can lead us to achieve our goals for school when we use it properly”.

The ethical and professional standards serve as the foundation for school success by creating a positive school culture, enhancing student well-being, building trust and credibility, ensuring equity and fairness, promoting

professionalism, instilling ethical behavior in students, and upholding legal and regulatory requirements. When school principals operate within these ethical boundaries, they create an environment conducive to effective teaching, learning, and overall success.

### *Theme 1.2.3. Developing integrity*

The third theme that emerged as a significant role of ethics and professional standards is developing integrity among leaders. For example, Beatrice said,

*... But at the same time to gain the trust and confidence of the people around me, that I have the integrity of being a leader.*

Richard spoke about ethical standards as something that “govern the school leaders do what is right and recognize what is not right in managing a school.” This statement describes an important quality of effective leadership – to delineate between doing right and wrong.

The findings of this study show that the principals were aware of the role the ethical standards and the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) play in their growth as school leaders. They expressed that ethical standards guide their ways while the PPSSH defines their practice to become effective in their field.

### *Secondary School Principals' VUCA Experiences*

Respondents were asked the following question regarding research question 2: "What experiences are important to secondary school principals when it comes to operating in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous school environment? The participants discerned various aspects pertaining to their unique experiences in a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) environment, and proposed corresponding solutions to address these challenges (refer to Table 3).

In the interview, respondents were asked about their experiences and challenges in relation to the VUCA world. According to their responses, three themes emerged: (a) the COVID-19 pandemic, (b) the challenges presented by the pandemic, and (c) the solutions each principal attempted to mitigate.

### *Theme 2.1.1. The pandemic*

The respondents unanimously mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic when asked about their experiences when it comes to operating in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment. Richard, for instance, said, *If there is one thing that to me fits the definition of a volatile, uncertain, complex, and what's the other one? Ambiguous? Okay – that would be COVID-19. I had been a principal for a year when it happened. It was a complete shock to me personally because suddenly, DepEd ordered school lockdowns.*

Table 3. VUCA Leadership Experiences of the Cebu City North District Secondary School Principals

	Mary	Richard	Angela	Frank	Esther	Beatrice	Sheila	Nate
2.1. VUCA Experiences of Secondary School Principals								
2.1.1. The COVID-19 pandemic	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
2.2. VUCA Challenges								
2.2.1. Modules and lack of resources to produce them	x	x	x			x	x	x
2.2.2. Social distancing		x	x		x	x	x	x
2.2.3. Fear of the illness	x		x	x	x		x	
2.2.4. Uncooperative stakeholders		x		x		x	x	
2.3. VUCA Solutions								
2.3.1. Resourcefulness	x	x			x		x	x
2.3.2. Adaptability			x	x	x		x	x
2.3.3. Asking for help and guidance	x	x			x	x	x	
2.3.4. Resilience	x	x	x		x			
2.3.5. Flexibility and Agility	x	x		x	x	x	x	
2.3.6. Creativity			x	x	x			x
2.3.7. Collaboration	x		x	x	x			

Sheila had this to say,

*When the news about the COVID-19 broke out, I was not so worried at all. I was thinking back then that the first cases in China would be contained easily. However, when the first case in the Philippines happened and it was mentioned that the woman was in Cebu, that's when I started to panic. Then, suddenly, after 2 months, if I am not mistaken, the lockdowns happened. And of course, schools were closed.*

Nate narrated shared about what happened in Cebu City schools during COVID-19. He quipped,

*As the pandemic swept across the country and around the world, schools in the Cebu City and the whole country were forced to close to ensure the safety of students and staff.*

Beatrice had this to say when asked about her VUCA experience,

*VUCA. The thing that I can think of right now is the pandemic. Oh my God! It was really difficult. In my years as a teacher and principal, I never expected such a thing to happen, but it did. I was struggling and my teachers were struggling, too.*

For her part, Mary also spoke about the COVID-19 pandemic in response to the question about VUCA when she said,

*First of all, I do not think anyone was prepared to handle the pandemic. It created a very volatile environment for us, definitely uncertain times as DepEd grapples with the sudden situation of school lockdowns.*

Angela considered her VUCA experience as both challenging and transformative when she spoke about the COVID-19 pandemic. She quipped,

*As a principal during the COVID-19 pandemic, my experience was challenging and transformative.*

Esther summed up her experience when she said,

*We are still in the pandemic, aren't we? When the pandemic hit us, I was sad to have witnessed such a far-reaching horror. The pandemic brought rapid and unpredictable changes to the education landscape, not only locally but globally. Schools experienced sudden closures and shifts between remote, hybrid, and in-person learning models.*

Based on their responses, the respondents considered the COVID-19 pandemic as something that exemplifies VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) due to its rapidly changing circumstances, unpredictable outcomes, intricate global interdependencies, and the ambiguity surrounding the virus, its transmission, and effective containment strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in organizational volatility because a disruption of operations happened due to unexpected events as posited by Horney & O'Shea (2015). It is suggested from the respondents' responses that the COVID-19 pandemic caused uncertainty so that leaders showed lack of confidence and control, which causes inaction, indecisive actions, or sluggish reactions (Horney & O'Shea, 2015). Also, the pandemic enabled simple elements to merge and intertwine in that led to information overload, convolutions, and disruptions (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Bartscht, 2015; Heinonen et al., 2017; Cousins, 2018) and thus presenting itself as a complex situation. Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic presented leaders with the difficulty of knowing which information is valuable in situations they were in when confronted with a high level of information and this aptly describes the ambiguity aspect according to Bennett and Lemoine (2014).

In terms of the challenges that the principals encountered in relation to VUCA, four themes emerged as follows: (a) modules and lack of resources to produce them, (b) social distancing, (c) fear of illness, and (d) uncooperative stakeholders.

*Theme 2.2.1. Modules and lack of resources to produce them*

During school closures as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were required to produce modules to give out to their students. Producing these modules became a huge challenge for principals and teachers because most of the Cebu City schools did not have the needed resources. To wit, Richard said,

*When schools were locked down, students were not allowed in school buildings and most of them had their books and other things in their classrooms. Principals were mandated to have all teachers create modules for students who do not have the capability to do virtual learning.*

Sheila also narrated her experience during the pandemic when all schools were required to produce modules. She quipped,

*DepEd wanted schools to produce modules for our learners during the pandemic. As a school, we encountered multiple problems. First, we had to ask teachers to come up with modules. This is where the issue of uncooperative teachers arose. Anyways, once the modules were finally done, we had to have them printed and sent to the students. The Division office offered to help but with so many schools and students, they could not simply print for us. We had to print them ourselves. But we did not have enough ink or bond papers. We tried appealing to our external stakeholders but as I have mentioned a while ago, they were unsupportive...*

Nate also mentioned the mandate to mass produce modules when he said,

*We devised a plan to shift to online learning, ensuring that every student who had access to a device and an internet connection will benefit from it. For those who lacked the necessary resources, we had to create modules for them. DepEd mandated us to mass produce modules.*

Beatrice, on the other hand, highlighted the issue of lacking ink and paper to print out the modules. She had this to say,

*The biggest challenge that we had, to me, is asking teachers to mass produce modules. We did not have ink and papers. We also had limited printers.*

Mary also underscored her school's problem with producing modules when she narrated that,

*As a school, we were already grappling with the lack of teachers and when DepEd asked schools to reach out to our learners by producing modules, which by the way means creating and printing them in huge quantities, I was already thinking that it would present a huge challenge for us.*

For her part, Angela said that it was important for her to work closely with teachers to produce modules for their learners. She stated,

*Added to this is the fact that most teachers had to create and produce modules for students who did not have access to gadgets. As a principal, I had to work closely with my teachers to provide them with the necessary resources and support to navigate this new virtual landscape.*

The respondents' narratives surfaced a familiar problem all public schools seem to have in the Division of Cebu City – lack of resources to produce the modules. Furthermore, these narratives highlighted each school

principal's role as both an instructional leader and administrative manager to ensure that goals for quality education are met and shall be assisted by an office staff for administrative and fiscal services (De Guzman and Guillermo, 2007; Sutherland & Brooks, 2013) even in the VUCA environment.

Dealing with a lack of resources embodies the uncertainty aspect of VUCA because it involves navigating unpredictable changes, managing complexity, and making strategic decisions in an environment where information is often incomplete or unavailable. In the case of resource constraints, schools may lack clear visibility into future funding, resource allocation, or other factors that affect resource availability. Schools that can effectively address uncertainty in resource management are better positioned to thrive in VUCA conditions.

### *Theme 2.2.2. Social distancing*

Another challenge that the principals faced is following protocols related to social distancing. For instance, teachers were required to provide modules to their students and yet, they cannot physically hand them the modules due to social-distancing requirements. Richard explained that “there was a mandate for social distancing.” Nate also highlighted this challenge when he said,

*Together, we brainstormed ideas on how to continue delivering quality education despite the limitations of physical distancing.*

Nate further narrated other complications as a result of social distancing when he said,

*The challenge that we got from the pandemic was enormous. Not only did we lack resources, but the social distancing also did not allow us to do our job any easier. There were times when we had to drop and leave modules in specific locations so that students could get them but then it would rain and naturally, our modules would get damaged. Then, we had to reprint.*

Esther, on the other hand, mentioned the fact that her school had to conduct virtual and remote classes. She said, *Educating students during the pandemic involved navigating a complex set of challenges. Our school had to address various factors simultaneously, including health and safety protocols, technology infrastructure, remote learning platforms, producing learning modules, equitable access to resources and the lack of it, and support for diverse student needs, to name just a few.*

Similarly, Angela also spoke about remote instruction as a way of avoiding close contact with individuals. She said,

*One of the first challenges was transitioning from in-person to remote learning. All DepEd schools had to close their doors overnight, and teachers had to embrace online platforms to deliver lessons.*

These stories exemplified a particular challenge that the respondents had to navigate – adhering to social distancing guidelines and holding virtual/remote classes in an attempt to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. There is a high degree of uncertainty during a pandemic. Many aspects of the virus, such as its transmission

patterns, long-term effects, and the effectiveness of various interventions, may not be fully understood. That is why the government issued guidelines for social distancing. But even the timeline of the duration of the social distancing protocol was uncertain.

Social distancing, as a preventive measure, introduces ambiguity in terms of how people should adjust their behaviors, how schools should operate, and how communities should function. The ambiguity is further compounded by the need to balance public health with educational considerations and individual freedoms.

### *Theme 2.2.3. Fear of illness*

Some principals expressed that another challenge presented itself during the pandemic – fear of illness. Mary, for example, said,

*And then, there was the fear of the virus itself. How many teachers are really willing to risk their lives getting in contact with the students?*

Angela also talked about this particular challenge when she said, “the pandemic brought a sense of fear, uncertainty, and isolation.”

The fear of the COVID-19 virus poses a challenge for school principals as they need to navigate concerns among students, parents, and staff, balancing the physical well-being of the school community with the educational needs and maintaining a positive learning environment. Managing anxieties, implementing safety measures, and adapting to evolving health guidelines add complexity to their leadership responsibilities.

During the early stages of an illness outbreak, information about the nature of the illness, its transmission, symptoms, and long-term effects may be limited and evolving. This lack of clear information contributes to ambiguity, as individuals and communities may not have a complete understanding of the risks and necessary precautions.

The consequences of an illness, particularly a novel or rapidly spreading one, can be unclear. People may be uncertain about the severity of the illness, its potential impact on different demographics, and the long-term effects. This uncertainty contributes to ambiguity in decision-making and response efforts.

Public health guidelines and recommendations during a pandemic may change as more information becomes available. This can lead to ambiguity in terms of what actions individuals should take to protect themselves and others. Guidelines may evolve based on emerging evidence and the dynamic nature of the situation, creating a sense of ambiguity.

### *Theme 2.2.4. Uncooperative stakeholders*

Compounding principals’ challenges is having uncooperative stakeholders. According to Sheila,



*Then, I have to deal with various external stakeholders who are being unsupportive of our school activities and operations, and I had to encourage them to work with us knowing that education is a shared responsibility.*

Beatrice had a similar experience with Sheila when she narrated,

*I was having a hard time convincing indifferent parents and community members to help us during the pandemic. Or maybe because everybody was struggling, too? The school reached out to our officials and parents through our PTCA but barely got any support. I mean, we have some well-to-do families in our school and I was personally expecting them to help but, wala. Those who have little to give were the once who shared.*

Education stakeholders should support school principals' initiatives because principals play a crucial role in fostering a positive and effective learning environment. Supporting their initiatives enhances overall school performance, promotes a healthy school culture, and contributes to the well-being and success of students. It also reinforces a collaborative approach, aligning efforts toward common educational goals. Papaku Malasa (2007) deduced that not only should an effective school leader demonstrate, establish, and espouse a set of values and beliefs, they must also convey these to their constituents and stakeholders.

Stakeholder relationships are inherently complex. Schools often deal with a variety of stakeholders, each with different interests, perspectives, and levels of influence. Managing these relationships and navigating the complexity of competing priorities can be challenging, especially when some stakeholders are uncooperative.

The respondents also shared what they thought were needed to address the challenges brought about by the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to the question, "how did you overcome those challenges?" brought about seven different themes as follows: (a) resourcefulness, (b) adaptability, (c) asking for help and guidance, (d) resilience, (e) flexibility and agility, (f) creativity, and (g) collaboration. These themes will be discussed in detail.

### *Theme 2.3.1. Resourcefulness*

In discussing about how resourcefulness helped their school, Richard had this to say,

*I learned to reach out to the PTCA for help. I helped the PTCA to initiate projects to raise funds for their children's education. I learned to reach out to local politicians about projects they can fund to address the needs of the school. I also learned to be resourceful and at the same time practice generosity. I did not mind having to reach out to others for help when it comes to printing the modules. As I've said before, my teachers and I used our own money to buy resources for our students.*

Richard narrated further,

*Now, we have our own rain-catcher with an accompanying water storage facility, we have male and female comfort rooms in all floors of our buildings, we got our school fully fenced, our library fixed. We were able to solicit books and computers for our library. The parents also raised funds though their bake sales and they*

*donated the funds to help pay for the expenses of our graduating seniors.*

Sheila also spoke about being resourceful in the face of the pandemic when she said,  
*I had to reach out to people I know from abroad to ask for donations. Luckily, some of them responded and came to the rescue.*

Mary underscored the significance of being a resourceful principal when she said,  
*As a principal, I have to be resourceful. I had to use discretionary funds wisely – only using them for what we really need at that moment. I also had to rely on the help of the community and my staff and teachers.*

Furthermore, Mary explained,  
*The school also had to rely on the community to help them with some of the resources through a donation drive for paper and ink. They also had to create a schedule for synchronous and asynchronous learning for those students who were able to join through Zoom or Google Meet.*

Esther summed up her experience about being resourceful when she narrated that,  
*When resources are limited, it's crucial that as a school, we identify and prioritize the most essential aspects of our work. We allocate resources to priorities that we believe will help us achieve our goal. By concentrating on key priorities, you can allocate limited resources effectively and maximize their impact.*

#### *Theme 2.3.2. Adaptability*

One of the things that the respondents highlighted is the value of adaptability in addressing VUCA challenges. For example, Nate narrated this,  
*As the pandemic continued, I remained vigilant and adaptable. I closely monitored the situation, staying updated on health guidelines and adjusting school policies according to what DepEd would say. I facilitated regular communication with parents and community stakeholders, keeping them informed about the school's plans and addressing their concerns.*

Esther, on the other hand, had this to say,  
*The volatility of the situation meant that plans and policies had to be constantly adjusted and adapted to accommodate changing circumstances. The pandemic definitely brought out certain capabilities in me that I thought I never had or was not even thinking about. I had to be agile and develop adaptability to respond quickly to changing circumstances. I had to be open to new ideas, which is hard given my advanced age... I had to embrace innovation – technology and online platforms to be precise, and I had to be willing to adjust strategies and plans as needed on a day-to-day basis.*

Angela also quipped,  
*One of the most rewarding aspects of being a principal during this challenging time was witnessing the resilience and adaptability of the school community. Students, teachers, and parents supported one another,*

*demonstrating remarkable determination and creativity. We celebrated virtual achievements, organized virtual graduation ceremonies, and found new ways to foster community despite physical distancing.*

Frank also spoke about the importance of adaptability when he said that “school leaders must foster a culture of adaptability and encourage their school community to embrace change.”

As exemplified in our respondents’ stories, adaptability is critical in addressing challenges in a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) environment because it enables individuals and organizations to respond effectively to rapidly changing circumstances. The ability to adjust strategies, embrace innovation, and learn from experiences is vital for navigating uncertainties, complexities, and ambiguities. Being adaptable fosters resilience and enhances the capacity to thrive amid dynamic and unpredictable situations.

#### *Theme 2.3.3. Asking for help and guidance*

The third theme to surface out of the respondents’ responses is the idea of asking for help and guidance from experts and supervisors. For example, Richard expressed that,

*I relied on the guidance of the supervisors and the superintendent. We do not know what is going to happen to our students’ education and our job. One day, DepEd would release guidance, the next day, it would change because the Department of Health has a different recommendation. The situation we were in was as volatile as can be.*

Richard added,

*I also relied heavily on my superiors for guidance. I made sure that I was aware of all pertinent guidelines and if there was something I was not clear about, I did not hesitate to ask for clarification.*

Sheila also highlighted the importance of seeking guidance from supervisors. She said,

*I was fortunate to have been given very useful and effective advice from my supervisors. With their help, those teachers finally budged and did their work.*

Beatrice, for her part, also underscored how she had to rely on DepEd supervisors’ guidance when she said,

*Then, we also have to rely so much on the guidance of the Division Office on what to do. So many memos to read and I had to attend many virtual meetings.*

Relying on superiors for help and guidance during difficult times is significant because they often possess experience, perspective, and organizational knowledge that can provide valuable insights. Seeking their support fosters a sense of collaboration and ensures that decisions are well-informed. Additionally, it can contribute to a more effective problem-solving process and help build a supportive work environment.

#### *Theme 2.3.4. Resilience*

The respondents have identified resilience as one of the characteristics leaders must possess to be able to address VUCA challenges. Esther had this to say,

*I also developed resilience and improved my emotional intelligence. In building resilience, I had to cultivate a positive mindset, maintain well-being, and effectively manage stress. Everybody was stressed out and I mean everybody. I felt emotionally drained but little by little, I was able to overcome it by understanding and managing my emotions and those around me – my family, and virtually – my teachers, staff, and students. I tried to promote effective communication through text, messenger, and virtual office space in Zoom so they can always talk to me. I learned to empathize with others, too.*

Angela also spoke about resilience when she said,

*Despite the immense challenges, I am grateful for the resilience of my school community and the valuable lessons learned during this experience.*

Additionally, Angela also mentioned resilience as a quality she saw in her school. She quipped,

*One of the most rewarding aspects of being a principal during this challenging time was witnessing the resilience and adaptability of the school community.*

The snippets of the respondents' stories showed how resilience is critical in a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) environment as it empowers individuals and organizations to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to changing conditions, and persevere in the face of challenges. The unpredictable nature of a VUCA setting requires the ability to recover quickly, maintain focus, and continue moving forward despite uncertainties. Resilience is, therefore, a key attribute for effectively navigating and thriving in dynamic and complex situations.

#### *Theme 2.3.5. Flexibility and Agility*

One of the solutions to VUCA Success is agility as proposed by Johansen (2009) as part of his "VUCA" solution. Johansen (2009) believes that ambiguity yields to agility. For her part, Sheila expressed that,

*Understanding and agility work together. Understanding provides the leaders with the knowledge and insight to navigate the VUCA situation or environment, while agility enables us, principals, to effectively respond to and take advantage of the challenges and opportunities that arise.*

Esther supported this concept by saying,

*The pandemic definitely brought out certain capabilities in me that I thought I never had or was not even thinking about. I had to be agile and develop adaptability to respond quickly to changing circumstances. I had to be open to new ideas, which is hard given my advanced age... I had to embrace innovation – technology and online platforms to be precise, and I had to be willing to adjust strategies and plans as needed on a day-to-day*

basis.

Richard spoke about how he became a flexible leader during the pandemic. He said,

*One other thing that I learned to do during the pandemic was to be a flexible leader. The pandemic brought chaos into our lives and into our work and everything was just unknown to us but as a leader, I cannot insist on doing things my way. I had to abide by what is mandated to us, what the situation called for and what made the most sense at that moment. I think it helped me a lot that I was flexible enough.*

Beatrice also spoke about being flexible as a leader when she quipped,

*And connected to this is flexibility. I have to be flexible enough to go with the flow. I cannot insist what I wanted to do because I am under DepEd and the pandemic brought all those things on us.*

For her part, Mary said,

*Most of all, I had to be flexible enough and I also told my teachers to be flexible enough. The pandemic presented us with a curve ball, and we had to deal with it one way or another.*

#### *Theme 2.3.6. Creativity*

Another theme that emerged from the respondents' responses is in the area of creativity. For instance, Frank said,

*School leaders must possess strong critical thinking skills and be open to innovative approaches. We can do this by fostering a culture of creativity, where experimentation and learning from failure are valued. We also need to encourage our school community to think outside the box, embrace ambiguity, and adapt to changing circumstances.*

Esther also expressed the need to be creative in the face of the pandemic when she said,

*As a principal, also become creative and innovative to overcome resource limitations. I encourage my head teachers and teacher-teams to think outside the box and explore alternative solutions.*

Highlighted in these narratives about creativity is the fact that creative thinking enables individuals and organizations to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. It allows for the generation of innovative solutions in response to unforeseen challenges, helping to navigate and thrive in a volatile environment.

#### *Theme 2.3.7. Collaboration*

According to the respondents, being able to collaborate with other people in the VUCA world is necessary to hurdle the challenges brought about by volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situation. According to Angela,

*I worked closely with the local health authorities led by the City Health Office, constantly monitoring the*

*evolving guidelines and adjusting our protocols accordingly.*

Similarly, Esther expressed that as a leader, she had to collaborate with others to strengthen their community linkages. She said,

*Together, we look for ways to leverage community partnerships or collaborations to help us realize our goals or projects. As a school, we are strengthening our community linkages to build networks with other individuals, especially the businessmen, local and city government officials, and other community organizations who may have complementary resources or expertise.*

Frank spoke about the importance of collaborative decision making when he explained,

*I believe that collaborative decision-making and seeking input from various stakeholders can help us gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues at hand.*

Collaboration is a powerful tool for addressing problems in a VUCA environment. It leverages the strengths of diverse individuals, fosters innovation, promotes adaptability, and enhances the overall problem-solving capacity of teams and organizations.

#### *The Experiences of Secondary School Principals*

The analysis of the data unveiled profound insights into the experiences of principals, encompassing their encounters within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, along with the influence of ethics, as delineated by the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), on their career trajectories. These discernments and themes are visually depicted in Figure 2. The figure encapsulates a comprehensive summary of the themes derived from the participants' reported experiences as secondary school principals in the North District of Cebu City.

Upon comparing the findings of the participants with the elusive and intricate aspects outlined in the literature review, numerous concepts from the literature were found to resonate in the participants' experiences. As previously mentioned, the intricacies of leadership, as expounded in the literature, manifested prominently in the experiences of the secondary school principals in the North District of Cebu City. Challenges such as the development of modules amid resource constraints, adherence to social distancing protocols, the fear of illness, and uncooperative stakeholders surfaced in the principals' narratives.

A compelling revelation from the research is that the complexity and elusive nature of the job significantly impacted practicing secondary school principals. In their reflections on the most impactful aspects of their experiences, participants consistently cited the challenges and setbacks inherent in the job, grappling with its complexities, and navigating major changes, especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, the individuals who exerted the most influence were their co-leaders, collaborators who supported them through the intricacies of their roles.

The overarching theme that emerged was the courage required to persist in the face of daily challenges, particularly within the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. The principals' experiences were propelled by a continuous cycle of undertaking the job, reflecting on their solutions, and addressing the effects of the VUCA conditions.

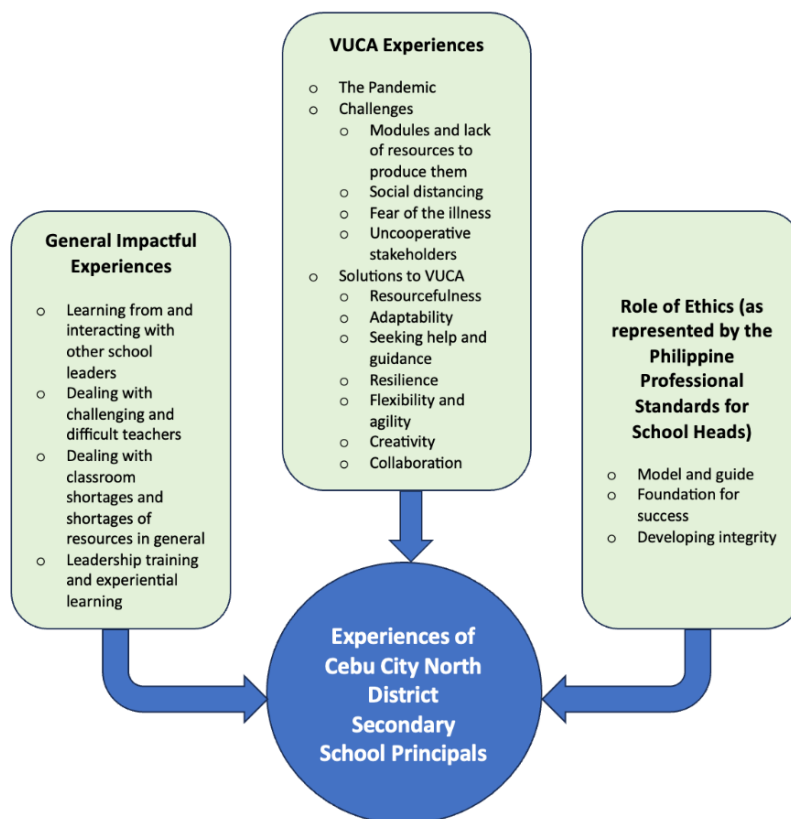


Figure 2. Experiences of Cebu City North District Secondary School Principals

The school principals regarded the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) as a paramount model and compass in executing their duties and fulfilling their responsibilities. Acknowledged as the bedrock for the success of schools, the PPSSH holds a central role in guiding their professional conduct. In the literature review, the Department of Education (DepEd) underscores the significance of professional standards in the ongoing development and progression of supervisors, emphasizing the importance of career-long learning (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020; Llego, M. A., and Gallares, R., 2022). Moreover, the literature review elucidates that the PPSSH serves as the framework delineating the professional standards incumbent upon supervisors (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020; Apilada, 2020). These standards were meticulously crafted to serve as a foundational resource for effective practice among school leaders. The feedback obtained during this research unequivocally affirmed that the principals not only possessed a keen awareness of these professional standards but also attested to their tangible impact on their daily practice.



In summary, the experiences narrated by the secondary school principals in the Cebu City North District closely mirror the elusive characteristics and intricate nature associated with school leadership, aligning with established research on leadership dynamics. From the vantage point of the school principal, the challenges, and complexities inherent in their role significantly influence their approach to problem-solving, with their responses fundamentally shaped by the ethical dimensions embedded within their leadership responsibilities.

#### *Effective Leadership in the VUCA World*

The third research question was, “What does effective leadership in the VUCA World mean to the Cebu City North District secondary school principals?” The sub-questions asked of the participants touched on their definition of effective leadership, the characteristics of an effective school environment, and how effective leadership contributes to school effectiveness. Several themes emerged from the participants’ responses as shown in Table 4.

Six themes surfaced from the respondents’ responses in relation to the definition of effective leadership. These themes are: (a) leadership as both an art and craft, (b) visionary leadership, (c) leading by example, (d) competent, committed, and caring leaders, (e) instructional leadership, and (f) empowered leadership.

#### *Theme 3.1.1. Leadership as both an art and craft*

Several respondents consider leadership as an art. According to Richard,

*For me, leadership is an art since it involves passion, commitment and dedication. A leader has to have the passion to lead teachers, students and the whole school for without passion, he or she will not have to drive to continue leading... Being dedicated to what you do is an art. That is why I consider leadership as an art.*

Esther also believed that leadership is an art. She explained,

*This one is tough, I mean, choosing whether leadership is an art or craft. Hmmm... Well, I consider leadership as an art because it involves the ability to inspire, motivate, and guide teachers and teams toward a shared vision. As an artist, a leader possesses a style and approach that allows them to create something meaningful and impactful. Effective leaders are creative, intuitive, and have the ability to adapt to various situations and personalities. Also, leaders use their interpersonal and communication skills to build relationships, inspire trust, and influence others.*

Angela agreed with Richard and Esther in their view that leadership is an art. She expressed,

*My view about leadership is that it is an art. Definitely an art. You know, in this profession, one must be an artist. I always remind my teachers that they are artists. Even more for us, school leaders. Leadership as an art requires involvement and engagement of the people under our care to achieve the desired outcome or good results. In leading this school, I have to learn so many tricks to get everybody on board in everything I want to achieve. It is not an easy feat. But that is what great leaders do.*

Sheila, on the other hand, believed that leadership is a craft. Sheila explained, *I would say that leadership is a craft. It is a craft because it entails a lot of skills in planning, acting, and evaluating all programs, activities, and projects of the school.*

Frank believed that leadership is also a craft when he said, *Leadership is a craft, for me, because becoming a leader has to be learned and practiced. As an example, you gain respect because you respect others. In the area of management, you must hone or practice management skills before you can effectively put it into practice.*

Nate offered a leadership view that considers effective leadership as both an art and craft. Nate explained, *To me, leadership is both art and craft. While leaders are expected to be strategic and tactical in dealing with issues and concerns in their workplace, they must also be tactful and sensitive to the people they work with so that they can generate optimum cooperation from them and ensure success of any organizational endeavors.*

Overall, the interviewed principals held the consensus that leadership embodies both art and craft. They shared a common belief that not everyone possesses inherent leadership capabilities, as some individuals naturally exhibit qualities that contribute to exceptional leadership. However, there was a prevailing sentiment among them that leadership is a skill set attainable by anyone through continuous improvement, learning, and deliberate refinement of one's abilities.

The responses of the principals are in line with what McCleskey (2014) posited when he stated that many believe leadership can be both innate and learned – a skill is learned while a behavior demonstrates that skill. According to Doh (2003), to cultivate the skill of strategic thinking, one must be able to think analytically and conceptually.

### *Theme 3.1.2. Visionary Leadership*

The participants gave importance to the concept of visionary leadership. For example, Richard said, *A principal should be visionary and open-minded. It is the vision of the principal that guides his actions. When a principal communicates this vision to the school community and the school agrees, that vision creates a clear path of the direction the school is heading towards.*

Mary supported the idea that a leader should be visionary when he posited that “one has to envision things in order to make everything happen and possible.”

Table 4. Effective Leadership in the VUCA World

	Mary	Richard	Angela	Frank	Esther	Beatrice	Sheila	Nate
3.1. Effective Leadership in the VUCA World								

Defined						
3.1.1. Leadership as both an art and craft	x		x	x		x
3.1.2. Visionary Leadership	x	x			x	x
3.1.3. Leading by example				x		x
3.2. Effective School Environment Defined						
3.2.1. Child-friendly and safe	x		x	x	x	x
3.2.2. Conducive to learning		x	x		x	x
3.2.3. Adequate resources and learning spaces	x	x			x	x
3.2.4. Engagement of stakeholders	x		x		x	x
3.2.5. Responsive to students' needs		x			x	x
3.2.6. Supportive stakeholders			x	x		x
3.2.7. High quality instruction		x	x		x	x
3.3. Effective leadership's contribution to school effectiveness						
3.3.1. School success	x		x	x		x
3.3.2. Quality graduates		x			x	
3.3.3. Teacher development					x	x

Esther considered effective leaders as “those who are visionaries and possess people skills.” She added, *The first thing I was tasked to do by the Superintendent was to craft a vision for the school when he appointed me to this position. ... having a vision helps leaders have a clear direction and purpose for any organization they are managing. A vision is a roadmap to an organization's success.*

In essence, visionary leadership provides a roadmap for the future, instills a sense of purpose and direction, and inspires individuals and organizations to achieve their full potential. It is a key factor in driving positive change, fostering innovation, and ensuring long-term success. In the literature review, we learned that visionary leaders develop their own personal vision and integrate it into a shared vision with their colleagues. The communication of this vision is what empowers people to act. According to Heath and Heath (2010), when people fail to act, it is often because the vision has not been effectively communicated, leading individuals to spend their time trying to determine the right direction, resulting in fatigue and unresponsiveness.

### *Theme 3.1.3. Leading by example*

Leading by example is a leadership approach where a leader sets a positive and influential precedent through their own actions, behavior, and work ethic. Instead of merely instructing or directing others, a leader who leads by example actively demonstrates the values, work ethics, and standards they expect from their team or followers. According to Sheila,

*Being a positive role model and demonstrating desirable behaviors and qualities to inspire and guide teachers and students and other staff member.*

Nate narrated that he leads by example. According to him,

*I lead by example. In other words, I walk the talk and I firmly believe that this action contributes to school effectiveness.*

Frank described his experience with a former principal who led by example. Frank had this to say,

*... and she leads us by example. She is always visible in schools through visits - giving technical assistance to teachers who need help in delivering instructions.*

Leading by example is about embodying the principles and values one expects from others. It goes beyond words and theories, emphasizing the importance of consistent and visible actions in leadership. This approach tends to create a positive and productive work environment while fostering a strong sense of trust and mutual respect within the team or organization.

Leading by example is related to Followership Theory. As discussed in the literature review, the significance of Followership Theory within the realm of leadership cannot be emphasized enough. While the study of leadership provides valuable insights into the dynamics of guiding and influencing others, a comprehensive understanding is incomplete without a parallel exploration of followership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) aptly encapsulate followership theory as the examination of how followers influence and interact with leadership processes. Although a predominant portion of leadership research centers on the behaviors and attributes of leaders, it is crucial to recognize the equally pivotal role played by followers and the reciprocal impact they have on leadership dynamics.

In the pursuit of a nuanced comprehension of leadership, delving into followership theory offers a holistic perspective. Understanding followership involves unraveling the intricacies of how individuals contribute to and shape the leadership landscape. It encompasses the examination of followers' behaviors, motivations, and responses within the context of leadership influence. By scrutinizing followership dynamics, scholars and practitioners gain valuable insights into the collaborative and reciprocal nature of the leader-follower relationship.

While the spotlight has historically been on leadership, an evolving paradigm in leadership studies recognizes the symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers. Acknowledging followership as a distinct and influential aspect of organizational dynamics enriches our understanding of leadership effectiveness. Incorporating followership theory into the broader discourse on leadership fosters a more balanced and comprehensive perspective, ultimately contributing to the development of more adaptive and effective leadership practices.

#### *Theme 3.2.1. Child-friendly and safe*

The majority of the respondents considered an effective school environment as being child-friendly and safe for students. Sheila explained,

*First, a school should be child-friendly and safe. That is our top priority. We want that our students are not harmed physically and mentally. We want them to love school and stay in school.*

Mary also considered an effective school environment child friendly. She quipped,

*I also think that it has to be a child-friendly school, where learners, parents, and external stakeholders cooperate with one another and participate meaningfully in the school programs and projects.*

Esther believed in having a safe and hazard-free school environment. She said,

*It would also be good to have a school that is safe and free of hazards. Afterall, we do not want anybody to get harmed... In addition, and this became very important because of COVID, ventilation. I want to have well-ventilated classrooms so that we feel safe.*

Angela agreed with the other principals when she explained that,

*Students need to be safe first and foremost. After we got devastated by Yolanda, I asked the volunteer workers to secure the areas we deemed unsafe. I had people stationed near the area to warn students not to get close. Second, I do not want our students to get distracted by any unnecessary activities or noise. They need to concentrate and be focused on the lesson. When the repair of our building was done, I asked the City government if possible they do it when the school is no longer in session or during the weekends. Luckily for us, only a few of our classrooms were damaged so the repairs went quickly.*

For his part, Frank said,

*An effective school environment is an environment where learning can happen and is child- or learner – friendly. The school should be free from hazards and danger.*

A child-friendly and safe school environment is of paramount importance for several reasons, as it contributes significantly to the well-being, development, and academic success of students.

### *Theme 3.2.2. Conducive to learning*

An effective school environment that is conducive to learning is essential for fostering academic success, cognitive development, and overall well-being of students. Richard described an effective school environment as follows.

*So, an effective school environment is something that is conducive to learning, meaning, it is free from distractors and is safe for all. When classrooms are free from distractors both “external and internal” and “safe for all”.*

Richard explained that,

*Safety should be a priority in all schools because we cannot afford to subject students and teachers to anything that threatens their physical and mental well-being.*

Nate mentioned how effective school leadership helps in creating a school environment that is conducive to learning when he said,

*Definitely, effective school leadership shapes the conditions and environment that is conducive for teaching and learning process. Good leadership results in creating a conducive learning environment where teachers support students' engagement, motivation, and achievement. This environment encourages active participation, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of learning. It recognizes the diverse needs and strengths of students and provides them with the necessary support and opportunities to reach their full potential.*

According to Beatrice, she was able to make a difference in her school. To wit,

*I made a difference for I transformed the school's environment into a more conducive one with facilities and instructional materials being improve.*

Angela defined an effective environment as conducive to learning, too. She said,

*I consider an effective school environment as one where it is conducive to learning. An environment is conducive to learning if it is child-friendly, hazard-free, and secure.*

A conducive learning environment is crucial for creating the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning. It goes beyond the physical space and encompasses factors that contribute to a positive, supportive, and engaging atmosphere, ultimately enhancing the educational experience for students.

### *Theme 3.2.3. Adequate resources and learning spaces*

Another theme that the respondents gave importance is the availability of classroom resources and learning spaces. Richard, for example, said, “Classrooms should be with equipped visual and audio facilities.” Nate narrated that,

*There must be available or adequate equipment and materials for classroom teaching... if not complete, at least there should be some available.*

Beatrice highlighted the importance of providing technology and other tools for student use. She said,

*An effective school environment should also afford students with technology or tools to enhance and make learning an enjoyable experience. In addition, an effective school environment should also provide teachers with resources and support so that they are fully equipped with necessary skills and abilities to provide high quality instruction and experiences for our students.*

Esther emphasized the importance of having adequate learning spaces or classrooms for students. She explained, *I would describe an effective school environment as having adequate classrooms for students. I do not want to see jampacked classrooms because that is detrimental to students' learning. I also want my teachers to have faculty rooms in each department because that will allow them to have space to plan and work together. Another thing is access to internet. Only a few of our classrooms have Wi-Fi connectivity and students rely on their phone's data to access the web.*

Schools should have resources and adequate classrooms for several reasons, as these elements play a crucial role in providing a quality education and creating an environment conducive to learning.

### *Theme 3.2.4. Engagement of stakeholders*

School leaders should engage all stakeholders because it is essential for building a collaborative and supportive educational community. Stakeholder engagement involves actively involving individuals or groups who have an interest or stake in the school's success. This includes teachers, students, parents, staff, community members, and other relevant parties. Beatrice had this to say,

*Teachers' participation and cooperation in different school activities are more observable, and the parents' involvement in school activities also increase.*

Mary also thought that schools should engage all stakeholders. She explained,

*I also think that it has to be a child-friendly school, where learners, parents, and external stakeholders cooperate with one another and participate meaningfully in the school programs and projects.*

Engaging all stakeholders is crucial for creating a collaborative and supportive school community. It leads to better decision-making, improved communication, and a positive culture that benefits everyone involved in the



educational process.

#### *Theme 3.2.5. Responsive to students' needs*

An effective school environment should be responsive to students' needs because it directly impacts their learning experiences, well-being, and overall development. For instance, Nate said,

*First, an effective environment must have nurturing teachers and supportive school staff for all students' endeavors.*

Beatrice stated her belief in support of the idea that an effective school environment should be responsive to students' needs when she stated,

*It is my belief that an effective school environment is responsive to the students with diverse need socio-economically, and culturally. It should also be an environment where students come first, and where the emphasis is on active learning.*

Responsiveness to students' needs is fundamental to creating an effective and inclusive school environment. It ensures that education is student-centered, promotes holistic development, and prepares students for success in a dynamic and diverse world.

#### *Theme 3.2.6. Supportive stakeholders*

The respondents also stated that an effective school environment should have supportive stakeholders. Nate narrated that,

*There should be supportive parents, community, and other stakeholders for students' holistic education. External stakeholders bring diverse perspectives, expertise, and experiences that enrich the educational process inside a school. They can provide insights and knowledge from different fields, industries, or community contexts that may not be readily available within the school. This diversity of perspectives helps students develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world around them. Additionally, in terms of augmenting the resources of the school, external stakeholders can be a big help. The collaboration between the school and external stakeholders enhances the support system for students and creates opportunities for shared resources, mentorship, and community involvement in education.*

Supportive stakeholders are essential in schools for several reasons, as they play a vital role in contributing to the overall success, well-being, and positive development of the educational community.

#### *Theme 3.2.7. High quality instruction*

A school that offers high-quality instruction creates a dynamic and supportive learning environment that prioritizes the individual needs of students, values effective teaching practices, and is committed to continuous improvement. Esther quipped,

*Lastly, I would say that an effective school environment is one that fosters high quality instruction. There is high quality instruction when teachers commit to improving student learning using evidence-based effective practices. The school community should also have a deep understanding of how to engage and support all learners. That is the reason why we have schools in the first place, agree? In a school that values high quality instruction, teachers strive to create meaningful and impactful learning experiences that empower students to achieve their full potential.*

High-quality instruction is fundamental to the success and well-being of students. It lays the foundation for lifelong learning, personal development, and societal contributions, ensuring that education serves as a transformative force in the lives of individuals and communities.

In response to the sub-question regarding the contribution of effective leadership to school effectiveness, the participants' answers can be categorized into three themes as follows: (a) school success, (b) quality graduates, and (c) teacher development.

#### *Theme 3.3.1. School success*

Most of the respondents identified school success as a result of effective leadership. Beatrice mentioned that effective leadership helped improve the school's performance to a little notch higher. Nate, on the other hand, narrated,

*Definitely, effective school leadership shapes the conditions and environment that is conducive for teaching and learning process.*

Mary said that,

*In terms of effective leadership, I believe that it contributes greatly to the success of school operations... The school has become more active and participative, not only in our own school programs and activities, but in all DepEd's programs.*

Angela also explained that,

*Effective leadership directly impacts school success. It helps shape the right conditions and environment of the teaching and learning process. Effective leaders in fact put everyone under their care on the right path towards success. Therefore, if at the end of a school year the school is underachieving, you can blame it on leadership. That is why I have to give my all to this job.*

Additionally, Frank stated that,

*An effective school environment can lead to the success of the school. He said that students being safe helps in their learning and "contributes to improving their performance in the National Achievement Test."*

Effective leadership directly impacts school success because school leaders play a crucial role in shaping the vision, culture, and overall functioning of the educational institution. Leadership influences every aspect of a

school community, from teaching and learning to organizational effectiveness.

### *Theme 3.3.2. Quality graduates*

Schools should aim to produce quality graduates for various reasons, as the quality of education directly impacts the personal, academic, and professional development of students, as well as broader societal and economic outcomes. Richard stated that,

*If the school leader is effective in managing the school, then he or she will be able to transform the school and produce quality graduates. Quality graduates means that they can attain the standards set by the Department of Education. They should be able to compete globally in terms of their academic skills and abilities, including technical skills.*

Producing quality graduates is not only essential for the individuals themselves but also for the prosperity and well-being of communities, nations, and the world. Quality education is an investment in the future, shaping individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society and address the complex challenges of the 21st century.

### *Theme 3.3.3. Teacher development*

School leaders should actively promote teacher development for several compelling reasons, as investing in the professional growth of educators has a direct and positive impact on both the individual teachers and the overall success of the school. It is Esther's belief that teacher development primarily impacts their effectiveness. She stated,

*By creating a supportive and nurturing environment, providing guidance and resources, and fostering a culture of continuous learning, school leaders can significantly impact the development and effectiveness of their teachers.*

Esther further explained,

*Well, an effective teacher goes beyond the transmission of knowledge. They inspire, motivate, and empower their students to become lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens. They make a lasting impact on their students' lives, shaping their future and igniting a love for learning that extends far beyond the classroom.*

Promoting teacher development is a strategic investment that benefits not only individual educators but also contributes to the overall success and effectiveness of the school. It aligns with the evolving needs of the educational landscape and fosters a culture of continuous improvement and excellence.

### *Effective Leadership defined by Secondary School Principals*

The themes discerned in the analysis of effective leadership, as perceived by school principals, originated from (a) the criteria defining an effective school environment, (b) the articulation of effective leadership

characteristics, and (c) the impact of an effective leader on cultivating a conducive school environment. Figure 3 illustrates the interconnected themes encapsulating the perspectives of principals in each of these thematic categories.

As per the insights garnered from the literature review, the emerging cadre of school principals embodies the intricate interplay of leadership theories, a perspective corroborated by the findings of this research. The exploration of leader influence and the definition of effective leaders draws from diverse leadership theories, with the literature review succinctly acknowledging that there is currently "no unified theory of leadership" (Dinh et al., 2019). Conversations with secondary school principals brought forth elements from various leadership theories, including components of transformational leadership emphasizing the development of leadership capacity, servant leadership grounded in ethical and caring behavior, invitational leadership founded on respect and trust, and followership theory accentuating the significance of the teacher-principal relationship. Importantly, no single theory emerged with more prominence in delineating the characteristics of an effective leader than another.

In the study, as principals articulated their definition of effective leadership, the predominant themes that surfaced are visually encapsulated in Figure 2 under the banner of effective leadership. Notably, many of these themes closely align with what was delineated in the literature review. Empowered leadership and instructional leadership emerged as the most recurrent themes, resonating both among the perspectives of the principals and the insights gleaned from the literature. Principals emphasized the crucial aspect of effective leadership, akin to the literature review, which expressed this as the comprehension and development of individuals, motivation, and adept people management.

Fostering a collaborative vision-building process and implementing systems to align actions with that vision facilitates the establishment of transparent expectations for everyone involved. This shared approach was identified as a common thread between the literature review and the insights from school principals. Principals underscored the personal attributes they deemed crucial for effective leadership, including competence, commitment, care, and visionary qualities. Correspondingly, the literature introduced descriptors like flexibility, resilience, and optimism (Leithwood et al., 2006).

A noteworthy revelation from the principals' viewpoint, underscored in the literature review, revolves around the concept of followership, epitomized by what the principals termed as "leading by example." The principals frequently emphasized the significance of not just articulating principles but embodying them through action, portraying a compelling model for others. The notion of "walking the talk" emerged prominently, reflecting the conviction that being a positive exemplar is integral to the definition of an effective leader.

Upon conducting a comprehensive literature review, the study delved into the pivotal role of school leadership. Notably, various studies by Seashore Louis et al. (2004), Suber (2011), and Grissom and Loeb (2011) underscore the direct impact of the principal on the overall effectiveness of the school. This impact is

particularly palpable in the direct influence principals exert on teachers within the school (Gordon, 2006). Principal perspectives on the influence of effective leaders reiterated the critical nature of this impact. What stands out as a significant contribution from the principal perspective, augmenting the insights from the literature, is the identification of specific behaviors deemed essential for contributing to the effectiveness of schools. These behaviors are elucidated in Figure 2 under the heading of "effective leader influence." Noteworthy among these common behaviors, as perceived by the principals, are engaging in activities focused on teacher development, fostering the production of quality graduates, and ensuring overall school success.

The exploration of whether leadership is an innate trait, or a learned skill was a central focus in the interviews with school principals. Consistent with the findings in the literature review, the prevailing belief among most principals is that leadership encompasses both inherent dispositions and acquirable skills that can be cultivated or enhanced over time. Additionally, there was alignment with the literature's assertion that specific tactics or processes related to leadership could be taught (Greer, 2011). However, principals emphasized that intentional effort is necessary for leaders to actively learn and refine their natural skills, highlighting the importance of proactive engagement in the learning process.

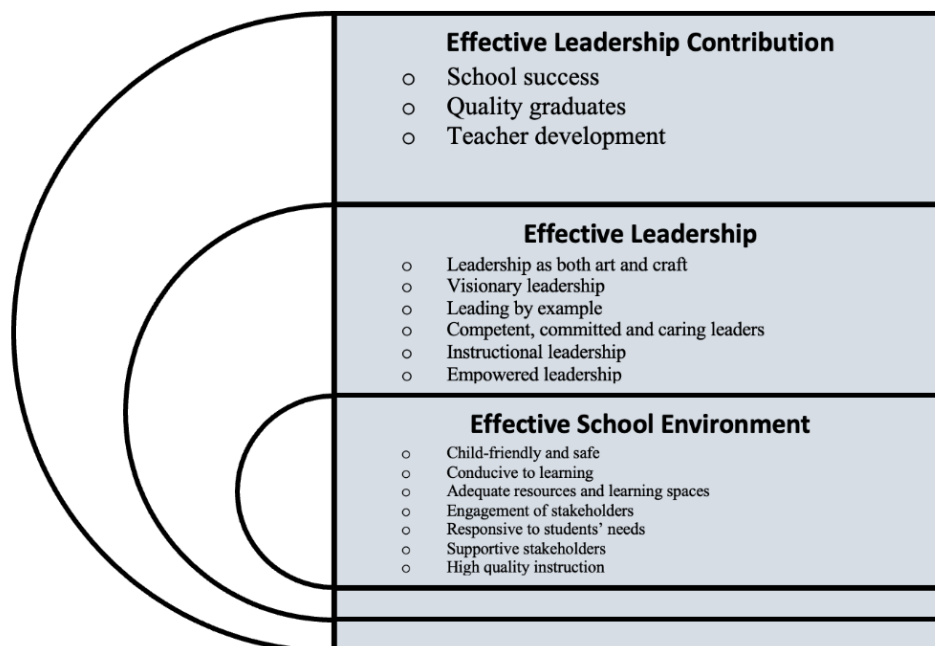


Figure 3. Effective leadership as defined by the Cebu City North District secondary school principals.

The viewpoint of the principals in this study aligns with several concepts from the existing leadership literature, yet their insights contribute authentic additions to the discourse. According to the perspective of the secondary school principals in the Cebu City North District, both knowledge and experience are deemed crucial attributes for an effective leader, and they identify specific behaviors associated with the influential impact of effective leaders on a school's overall effectiveness.

*The Perceived Needs of Secondary School Principals*

A fourth research question was posed to the study, which explored the perspectives of Cebu City North District secondary school principals regarding effective leadership. What do secondary school principals need to develop to become effective leaders in a VUCA environment? It was specifically asked of the principals what information they contained in their own personal development plans. It was noted that each principal had a variety of personal goals, whether these were connected with their professional evaluation as a principal or separate. The three themes that emerged from their goals are (a) conducting action research and data-driven leadership training, (b) developing effective leadership skills in the context of the VUCA world, and (c) providing mentoring and coaching support to leaders (See Table 5).

*Theme 4.1.1. Conducting Action Research and data-driven leadership training*

Conducting action research and engaging in data-driven leadership training are important for teachers for several reasons. These practices contribute to ongoing professional development, enhance instructional effectiveness, and promote a culture of continuous improvement within the educational environment. Sheila explicitly wanted to conduct action research in the future. She said,

*I would like to conduct action research. It is the “in thing” now, right? My plan is to publish the result of our research internationally.*

Table 5. Perceived Needs of Cebu City North District Secondary School Principals

	Mary	Richard	Angela	Frank	Esther	Beatrice	Sheila	Nate
Research Question 4: On the Perceived Needs of School Principals								
4.1.1. Conducting Action Research and data-driven leadership training	x					x	x	x
4.1.2. Developing effective leadership skills in the VUCA world		x	x	x	x		x	x
4.1.3. Mentoring and coaching support for leaders	x	x	x	x		x		

Mary also expressed a desire to engage in a training seminar about action research. She stated,

*I would like to attend leadership seminars and training about developing action research. Being emerged in the various duties and responsibilities as a school leader, it is so easy to forget about the other components of my*

*personal professional growth plan as a school principal which is to conduct action research. I have to engage in this practice and so should my teachers. But I cannot give them what I do not have that is why I believe I need to be trained or exposed to action research first.*

Nate, on the other hand, underscored. The importance of using assessment and data to solve problems. He quipped,

*... and find better assessment tools that I can use to learn more about problems encountered and how to resolve them.*

Although Beatrice identified several things that she wanted to learn, she mentioned data-driven leadership in her statement. To wit, she said,

*I would like to learn more about the other components of my professional growth as a secondary school principal which are adaptability – how to adapt to situations, productivity – producing quality results, data-driven leadership, being accurate in making decisions and speech improvement or communication skills enhancement.*

Conducting action research and engaging in data-driven leadership training are critical components of effective professional development for teachers. These practices empower educators to continuously improve their teaching practices, make informed decisions, and contribute to the overall success of their students and schools.

#### *Theme 4.1.2. Developing effective leadership skills in the VUCA world*

Due to the challenges that the VUCA world presented our principals, they expressed that they wanted to attend training-seminars on developing leadership skills in the VUCA World. One of them is Sheila when she said,

*I also would like to attend various trainings and seminars around effective leadership, especially in around VUCA, and how to handle difficult people.*

Nate stated that he wants to develop several skills including developing his leadership strengths. He stated, *My personal growth plan involves developing my strengths in leadership, improving potential, learning new skills, improving self-awareness and self-knowledge, renewing identity, and improving my career.*

Developing leadership skills in a VUCA world is essential for leaders to navigate complexity, drive innovation, and lead organizations toward sustained success in the face of constant change and uncertainty. Leadership development equips individuals with the capabilities needed to thrive and excel in dynamic and challenging environments.

#### *Theme 4.1.3. Mentoring and coaching support for leaders*

School leaders benefit significantly from coaching and mentoring for several reasons, as these support structures contribute to their professional growth, leadership effectiveness, and overall success in leading educational



institutions. Richard, for instance, stated,

*I also would like to learn more about how to effectively mentor teachers or provide them with mentors that can help them grow as professionals through proper coaching so that teachers can overcome some difficulties in the teaching and learning process.*

Frank said that he needs mentoring and coaching. Frank stated,

*The biggest need I have right now is for me to be able to get mentored and coached because I am still learning. Umm... I think that with a coach and mentor, I would be guided, supported, and offered needed insights about the different tasks of a school principal. I also need someone to remind me to reflect on my practices because I seldom do that due to my busy schedule. You know, I can easily get overwhelmed with so many things I do every day.*

Coaching and mentoring play a vital role in supporting school leaders throughout their careers. These structures offer personalized guidance, foster continuous learning, and contribute to the overall effectiveness, well-being, and success of educational leaders in their pivotal roles.

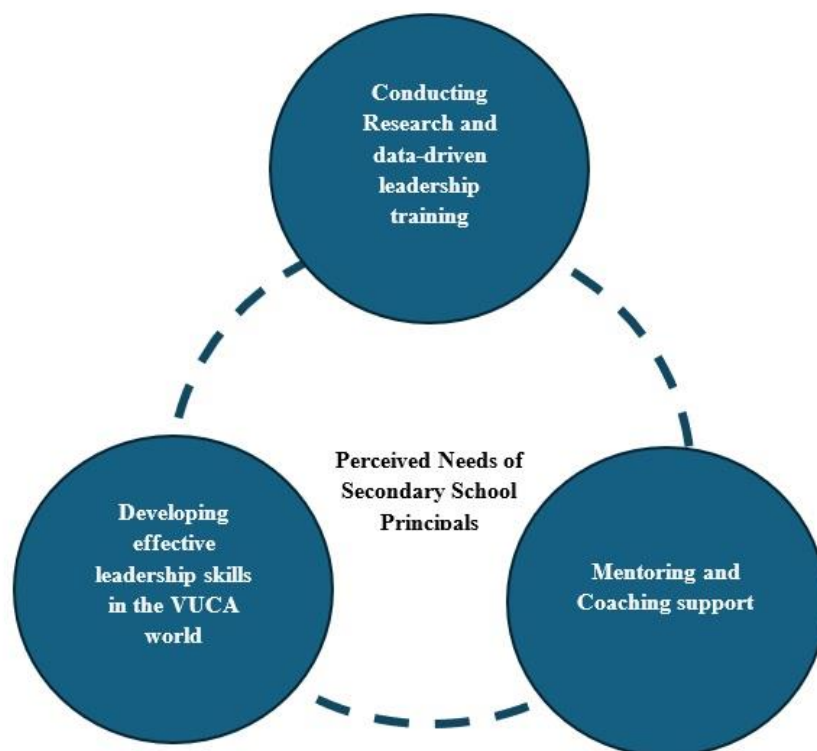


Figure 4. Perceived Needs of the Cebu City North District Secondary School Principals

The literature review highlighted continuous learning as a personal pursuit for a leader, and the insights from the school principals substantiated this concept. Each principal articulated personal pursuits they had identified for their own development. These pursuits were centered around three primary themes: engaging in action research and data-driven leadership training, cultivating effective leadership skills within the context of VUCA, and

seeking mentoring and coaching support.

The literature review emphasized that purposeful learning for leaders involves self-knowledge and the integration of new information gained from experiences into addressing new challenges (Day et al., 2014). The perspectives from school principals in this research study provided concrete examples pertinent to professional development and learning. Every interviewed principal expressed a preference for learning from others. In line with the literature review, the popularity of professional learning communities or networks and on-the-job training was underscored (Huber, 2013). The principal viewpoint on meaningful learning experiences revolved around learning from others and applying acquired knowledge through coaching and mentoring. Additionally, principals expressed a desire for training in areas such as conducting action research and refining data-driven leadership skills. Figure 4 encapsulates the secondary school principals' perspectives on their perceived needs within the continuous cycle of learning.

#### *The Integral VUCA Leadership Framework for Secondary School Principals*

This Integral VUCA Leadership Framework (see Figure 5) emerged from the responses of the Cebu City North District Secondary School Principals aimed at unraveling the intricate tapestry of their experiences, particularly focusing on their general impactful encounters, volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) experiences, leadership perceptions, and perceived needs. This research delved into the multifaceted realm of educational leadership, recognizing that secondary school principals play a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment, fostering academic excellence, and navigating the challenges inherent in the modern educational landscape.

As stewards of educational institutions, secondary school principals face a dynamic and ever-evolving set of circumstances that demand astute leadership. The study at hand seeks to illuminate the nuanced interplay between the general impactful experiences encountered by these leaders and the specific challenges posed by the VUCA nature of the educational ecosystem. By exploring the landscape of leadership perceptions, the research aimed at unveiling the lenses through which principals interpret their roles, responsibilities, and the overarching educational mission.

Furthermore, the investigation extended its purview to the perceived needs of secondary school principals. Understanding the gaps and requisites in their professional toolkit is fundamental for enhancing leadership effectiveness and ensuring the cultivation of a thriving educational community. The Integral VUCA Leadership Framework thus endeavors to provide a structured and insightful approach to leadership in secondary education, grounded in the empirical findings of this research.

Through an in-depth exploration of these key dimensions, the Integral VUCA Leadership Framework not only seeks to shed light on the challenges faced by secondary school principals but also endeavors to offer practical insights and strategic guidance for educational leaders. In doing so, this framework aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective educational leadership, offering a roadmap for principals to navigate the

complexities of their roles and foster environments conducive to the holistic development of students.

In the contemporary educational landscape, secondary school principals face the formidable task of leading in a VUCA environment. These challenges are not merely external forces but shape the very fabric of their leadership experiences. Navigating through the intricacies of a VUCA context requires a keen awareness of the dynamic forces at play, compelling principals to evolve their leadership styles to remain effective.

A crucial aspect of this evolution is the integration of ethical and professional standards into the decision-making processes of secondary school principals. These standards serve as a moral compass, guiding leaders to make principled choices even in the face of ambiguity. Ethical considerations become paramount in fostering trust within the school community and ensuring that decision-making aligns with a broader commitment to integrity and social responsibility. Professional standards complement ethical principles by setting benchmarks for competence, creating a framework that underscores the importance of continuous improvement and adherence to best practices. Ethical and professional standards act as guiding beacons amid the turbulence of the VUCA environment. They provide a structured approach to decision-making, ensuring that leaders adhere to established norms and values. Principals guided by these standards are better equipped to balance competing priorities, maintain transparency, and foster a culture of accountability within their schools. The integration of these standards into leadership practices contributes to the formation of a resilient and ethically grounded leadership approach.

The experiences within a VUCA environment contribute significantly to shaping principals' perceptions of effective leadership and an effective school environment. Volatility necessitates a leadership style that is agile and responsive. Uncertainty requires leaders to exhibit foresight, preparing for a range of potential scenarios. Complexity demands a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted challenges facing schools, and ambiguity calls for a level of comfort with making decisions without complete information. Through the crucible of these experiences, principals develop a multifaceted understanding of what it means to be an effective leader in a VUCA environment.

As secondary school principals grapple with the challenges presented by a VUCA environment, they inevitably find themselves identifying the unique needs of their schools. These needs may range from academic support for students to professional development opportunities for teachers or enhancements to the overall school infrastructure. The experiences within the VUCA paradigm sharpen principals' ability to discern between urgent and important needs, allowing them to prioritize interventions that will have a lasting impact on the school community.

Simultaneously, the process of identifying needs within a VUCA environment prompts secondary school principals to seek out and implement appropriate supports. Whether through collaboration with educational stakeholders, leveraging community resources, or fostering partnerships with external organizations, effective leaders understand the value of a network of support. Ethical considerations continue to play a role in these

endeavors, ensuring that support mechanisms align with the overarching values of the school community.

The cyclical nature of the relationship between experiences, ethical and professional standards, effective leadership perception, and the identification of needs and supports creates a dynamic framework for continuous improvement. Principals, informed by their experiences and guided by ethical principles, refine their understanding of effective leadership over time. This evolving understanding, in turn, informs their ability to identify and address the evolving needs of their schools, fostering a responsive and adaptive educational leadership model within the VUCA paradigm.

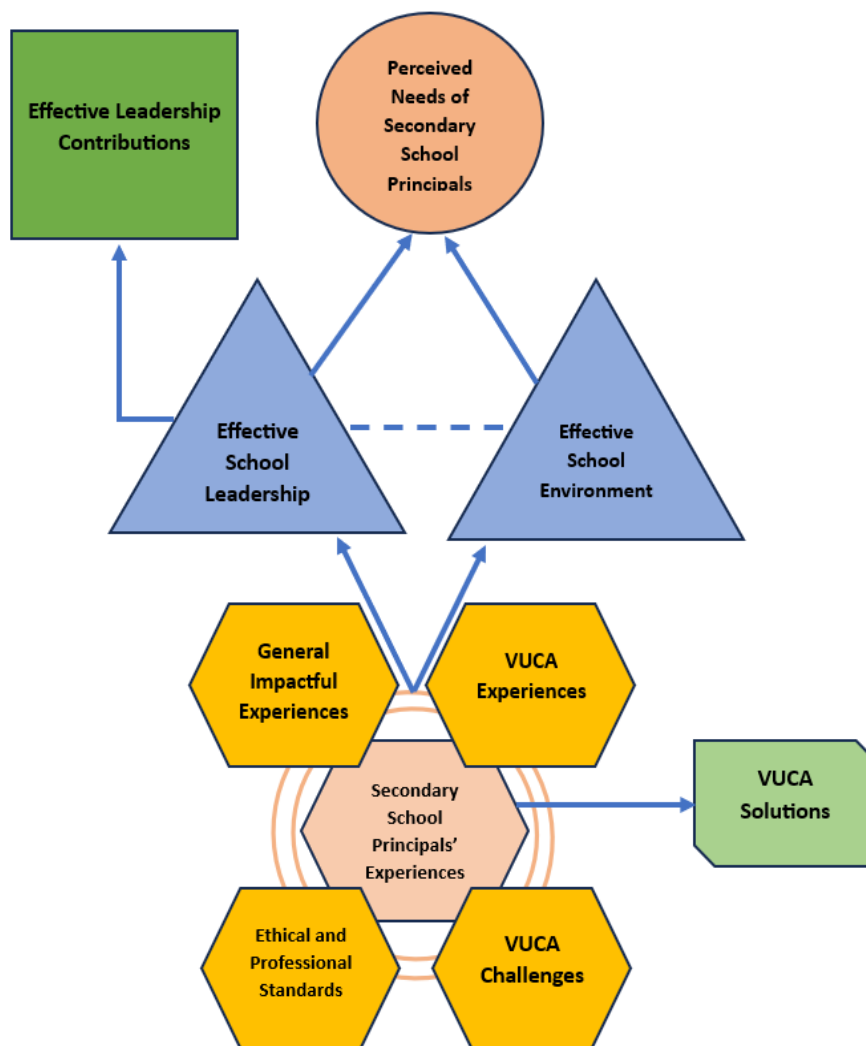


Figure 5. The Integral VUCA Leadership Framework

*The Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership*

In conjunction with the Integral VUCA Leadership Framework for Secondary Principals, a groundbreaking theory known as the *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* emerges, providing a comprehensive perspective on the pivotal role of secondary school principals in navigating the volatile,

uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) educational landscape. This innovative theory posits that “the effectiveness of secondary school principals within a VUCA environment is intricately linked to their ability to leverage personal strengths and abilities while actively pursuing continuous learning and development of leadership skills”. By placing a deliberate emphasis on their inherent strengths and abilities, secondary school principals can significantly enhance their leadership impact, effectively addressing challenges and fulfilling the evolving needs within their educational institutions.

A tenet of the *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* is centered around the idea that cultivating a culture of continuous learning and development tailored to individual needs is essential for empowering secondary school principals. This tailored approach not only equips them with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of the VUCA world but also facilitates the transformation of poor decision-making habits and undesirable leadership styles. The theory recognizes the dynamic nature of educational leadership, acknowledging that principals must adapt and evolve to meet the ever-changing demands of the educational landscape.

In practical terms, the *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* advocates for the implementation of targeted professional development programs that align with the unique strengths and growth areas of each secondary school principal. These programs should not only address immediate challenges but also foster a mindset of lifelong learning, encouraging principals to proactively seek opportunities for self-improvement and skill enhancement.

Furthermore, the theory underscores the importance of fostering a collaborative and supportive environment within secondary schools. Principals are encouraged to engage in knowledge-sharing initiatives, creating a community of practice where experiences, insights, and successful strategies can be exchanged. This collaborative approach not only enriches individual leadership journeys but also contributes to the overall resilience and adaptability of the entire educational ecosystem. *The Nationalian Theoretical Framework on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* is developed to capture the essence of the *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* (see Figure 6).

The theoretical framework encompasses several dynamic components, each playing a crucial role in guiding secondary school principals through the intricate landscape of VUCA challenges they encounter daily. Illustrated as an intricate structure, the outermost circle delineates the pervasive realm of VUCA, representing the multifaceted environment that demands the attention and adeptness of school leaders.

Moving inward, the framework unfolds into a rectangular configuration divided into four distinct quadrants. While analyzing the emerging themes from the responses, the researcher drew parallels with the Johari Window Model—a four-pane model designed to enhance self and interpersonal understanding. Leveraging their background in mathematics, the researcher deliberately integrated quadrants into the framework. Drawing inspiration from the Cartesian coordinate system in mathematics, the four quadrants typically represent different

combinations of positive and negative values for both the x and y coordinates. These quadrants include the first quadrant, where both x and y values are positive; the second quadrant, where x values are negative and y values are positive; the third quadrant, where both x and y values are negative; and the fourth quadrant, where x values are positive and y values are negative. By incorporating this mathematical analogy, the researcher aimed to provide a structured framework in creating a theoretical framework about leadership in the VUCA world. The upper two quadrants form the Area of Positivity, while the lower two compose the Area of Focus. Within the Area of Positivity, Quadrant 1 (Q1) is dedicated to Learning and Development, while Quadrant 2 (Q2) centers around Strengths and Abilities. In Quadrant 1, the comprehensive study illuminated a compelling revelation. Participants articulated a shared aspiration to refine their VUCA leadership skills. They expressed a strong desire to engage in action research, facilitated through effective coaching and mentoring methodologies. This explicit desire stands as a testament to their unwavering commitment to continuous learning and development as leaders. By actively seeking opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge, they position themselves strategically to navigate the dynamic challenges inherent in the VUCA landscape with greater agility and confidence. This proactive stance reflects their recognition of the imperative to evolve as leaders in an ever-changing and unpredictable environment, demonstrating their readiness to embrace complexity and drive positive change within their organizations.

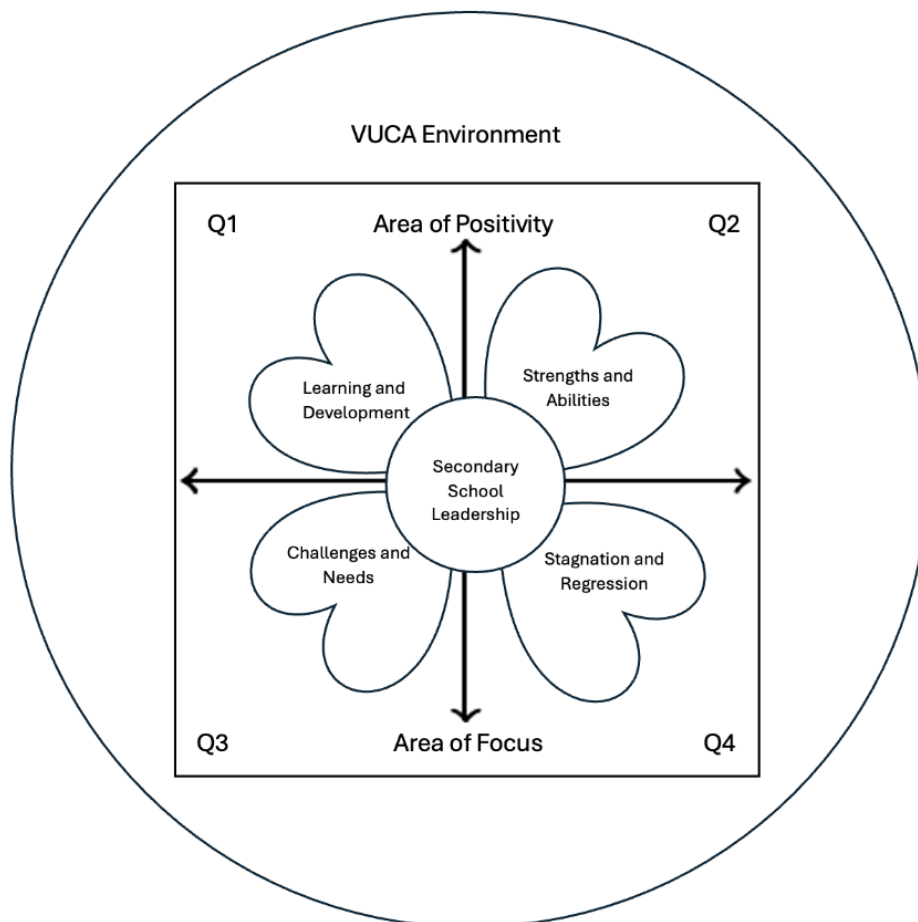


Figure 6. The Nationalian Theoretical Framework on Secondary School VUCA Leadership

In delving into the Strengths and Abilities quadrant (Q2), participants in the study undertook a thorough exploration of the fundamental attributes deemed indispensable for effectively addressing the multifaceted challenges inherent in a VUCA environment. Through introspective reflection and collaborative dialogue, they identified a spectrum of key characteristics that are not only desirable but crucial for navigating the complexities of such a dynamic landscape.

At the forefront of these attributes lies adaptability—the ability to swiftly adjust one's approach and mindset in response to evolving circumstances. Participants emphasized the importance of being resilient in the face of adversity, possessing the mental fortitude to withstand setbacks and emerge stronger from challenges encountered along the way. Flexibility emerged as another vital trait, enabling individuals to embrace change with an open mind and a willingness to explore alternative pathways to success.

Moreover, the participants underscored the significance of agility—the capacity to move with speed and precision in a rapidly changing environment. They recognized creativity as a powerful force for innovation and problem-solving, emphasizing the need to foster a culture that encourages out-of-the-box thinking and novel approaches to addressing complex issues.

Resourcefulness emerged as a cornerstone attribute, equipping individuals with the ingenuity and resourcefulness to effectively utilize available resources and overcome constraints. Collaboration was highlighted as essential for leveraging collective intelligence and diverse perspectives to tackle challenges collaboratively, emphasizing the value of teamwork and shared goals.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged the importance of seeking guidance from authorities and subject matter experts when confronted with unfamiliar or complex situations, recognizing the wisdom in drawing upon external expertise to inform decision-making and problem-solving efforts.

By recognizing these strengths and abilities as critical tools in their arsenal, participants demonstrated a heightened awareness of their capacity to navigate the intricacies of the VUCA landscape with confidence and resilience. Through intentional cultivation and continuous refinement of these attributes, they position themselves not merely as passive observers but as proactive agents of change, poised to thrive amidst uncertainty and volatility.

Transitioning to the Area of Focus, Quadrant 3 (Q3) encapsulates Challenges and Needs while Quadrant 4 (Q4) delves into Stagnation and Regression. Within Quadrant 3, aptly labeled as "Challenges and Needs," participants articulated a rich tapestry of experiences and insights, shedding light on the myriad obstacles and constraints encountered within the ever-evolving landscape of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). Through candid discourse and reflective dialogue, participants underscored the profound impact of disruptive forces such as the global pandemic, resource scarcity, and uncooperative stakeholders, among other formidable challenges that loomed large on the horizon.



The seismic shockwaves unleashed by the pandemic reverberated across all facets of organizational life, thrusting school leaders into uncharted territories fraught with unprecedented levels of uncertainty and ambiguity. Participants recounted the Herculean task of navigating the rapidly shifting terrain of remote work, virtual collaboration, and digital transformation, grappling with the dual imperatives of ensuring business continuity while safeguarding the health and well-being of their teams.

Resource scarcity emerged as another formidable adversary, compelling leaders to reconcile competing priorities amidst finite resources and escalating demands. From budgetary constraints to talent shortages, participants confronted the sobering reality of doing more with less, wrestling with the intricate calculus of resource allocation and optimization in the face of mounting pressures.

Moreover, the specter of uncooperative stakeholders cast a shadow of uncertainty, presenting leaders with the formidable challenge of managing divergent interests, conflicting agendas, and competing demands. Participants lamented the fractious nature of stakeholder relations, navigating treacherous waters fraught with political intrigue, power struggles, and interpersonal dynamics.

In response to these formidable challenges, participants articulated a resolute commitment to harnessing their identified strengths and abilities as a bulwark against the tempestuous winds of VUCA. They embraced a proactive stance, leveraging their collective ingenuity, resilience, and adaptability to address and mitigate the impact of VUCA-related difficulties head-on.

Drawing upon their reservoir of strengths—including adaptability, resilience, creativity, and collaboration—participants charted a course of action characterized by strategic agility, innovative problem-solving, and collaborative leadership. They recognized the imperative of fostering a culture of continuous learning and experimentation, embracing failure as a steppingstone to growth and innovation.

Quadrant 4, encapsulating the realm of Stagnation and Regression, unfolded as a pivotal area of exploration within the study, shedding light on participants' nuanced perspectives and aspirations regarding leadership dynamics in the face of VUCA challenges. Participants articulated a multifaceted understanding of leadership paradigms, emphasizing the critical importance of visionary, instructional, empowered, and transformational leadership approaches in fostering organizational resilience and growth.

Central to their discourse was a profound appreciation for Visionary Leadership—a forward-thinking, aspirational approach that inspires individuals to rally behind a compelling future vision. Participants recognized the transformative potential of leaders with the vision to anticipate and navigate the complexities of the VUCA landscape, steering their organizations toward sustainable success amidst uncertainty.

Instructional Leadership emerged as another cornerstone concept, characterized by leaders' commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional development. Participants underscored the pivotal

role of instructional leaders in equipping their teams with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Empowered Leadership resonated deeply with participants, reflecting a paradigm shift towards decentralization and empowerment within organizational structures. Participants expressed a keen desire for leaders who empower their teams to take ownership of their roles and responsibilities, fostering a sense of autonomy, creativity, and accountability in pursuit of shared goals.

Transformational Leadership, renowned for its ability to inspire and motivate individuals toward collective action and meaningful change, was also a focal point of discussion. Participants recognized the transformative impact of leaders who lead by example, embodying authenticity, empathy, and a commitment to organizational values.

Notably, participants expressed a conscientious avoidance of emulating any undesirable leadership traits or styles observed in their former school leaders. Drawing upon past experiences and insights from successes and failures, they articulated a collective commitment to cultivating leadership practices prioritizing ethical conduct, inclusivity, and integrity.

Furthermore, participants articulated a pressing need to learn and adopt effective strategies to confront the challenges brought about by VUCA. They emphasized the importance of resilience, adaptability, and strategic foresight in navigating turbulent times, highlighting the value of collaborative problem-solving and a willingness to embrace change as catalysts for organizational renewal and growth.

It is crucial to underscore the dynamic nature inherent in the *Nationalian Theoretical Framework on Secondary School VUCA Leadership*. Within this framework, a compelling interplay of opposing elements, which concurrently complement and compensate, is evident in both the Area of Positivity and Area of Focus. Specifically, Quadrant 1 (Learning and Development) and Quadrant 3 (Stagnation and Regression) exemplify this synergistic relationship, as do Quadrant 2 (Strengths and Abilities) and Quadrant 4 (Challenges and Needs).

The essence of this framework lies in the reciprocal influence between these paired quadrants, where enlarging one results in a proportional reduction in its opposing counterpart, and vice versa. For instance, the act of cultivating and expanding strengths and abilities in Quadrant 2 (Q2) possesses the transformative power to mitigate the challenges and needs articulated in Quadrant 4 (Q4), thereby substantially diminishing the magnitude of these inherent difficulties for school principals. However, it is imperative to recognize the converse scenario – neglecting the cultivation and development of strengths and abilities may lead to a proliferation of overwhelming challenges and needs. The study uncovers a compelling nexus between effective leadership practices and the fulfillment of participants' expressed needs. For instance, leaders who adeptly lead by example, demonstrating both competence and unwavering commitment, not only inspire trust and confidence but also set a precedent for excellence within their organizations. By embodying the principles they espouse,

these leaders cultivate a culture of accountability and integrity, laying the groundwork for sustained organizational success.

Furthermore, the participants' profound desire for strong instructional leadership aligns seamlessly with their aspirations for continuous professional development and growth. Leaders who prioritize the enhancement of teacher skills and competencies through targeted research and leadership training, mentoring, and coaching initiatives not only foster a supportive and nurturing environment but also empower their teams to thrive amidst the complexities of the educational landscape. Through these transformative interventions, leaders can equip educators with the tools and resources necessary to excel in their roles, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes and fostering a culture of excellence.

Moreover, the study underscores the paramount importance of developing effective leadership skills as a cornerstone for addressing the multifaceted challenges inherent in the educational ecosystem. Leaders who invest in their own professional development, honing their strategic acumen, communication prowess, and interpersonal skills, are better equipped to navigate the turbulent waters of change and uncertainty. By cultivating a cadre of visionary and adaptive leaders, organizations can fortify their resilience and agility, positioning themselves for sustained growth and impact in an ever-evolving landscape.

In essence, framework illuminates a symbiotic relationship between effective leadership practices and the fulfillment of participants' expressed needs. By harnessing the power of exemplary leadership, fostering a culture of continuous learning and development, and prioritizing the enhancement of leadership competencies at all levels, organizations can chart a course toward sustainable success and enduring impact in the dynamic and challenging realm of education.

A nuanced interplay emerges between Quadrant 1 (Learning and Development) and Quadrant 3 (Stagnation and Regression), illustrating a dichotomy that underpins the fabric of organizational growth and resilience within the volatile landscape of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). Quadrant 1 embodies the ethos of perpetual growth and evolution, where the relentless pursuit of continuous learning and development serves as a potent antidote to the insidious specter of stagnation and regression lurking within Quadrant 3.

In Quadrant 1, leaders and organizations embark on a journey of self-discovery and professional enhancement, leveraging learning opportunities to expand their horizons, refine their skills, and stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices. This relentless quest for improvement not only fosters a culture of innovation and adaptability but also imbues individuals with the resilience and agility needed to navigate the turbulent waters of VUCA with confidence and poise.

Conversely, Quadrant 3 embodies the antithesis of growth—a realm characterized by complacency, inertia, and resistance to change. Here, the reluctance to embrace new ideas or challenge the status quo engenders a sense of stagnation, impeding progress and eroding organizational vitality. Leaders who succumb to the allure of inertia

risk being blindsided by the rapid pace of change inherent in the VUCA landscape, leaving their organizations ill-equipped to confront the myriad challenges that lie ahead.

The symbiotic relationship between Quadrant 1 and Quadrant 3 underscores the delicate balance required for effective VUCA leadership. While Quadrant 1 propels individuals and organizations towards a future defined by innovation and resilience, Quadrant 3 serves as a cautionary tale—a stark reminder of the perils of complacency and stagnation. By navigating the tension between these opposing forces, leaders can cultivate a dynamic equilibrium that fosters sustained growth, adaptability, and organizational vitality in the face of uncertainty and volatility.

The interconnectedness of Quadrant 1 and Quadrant 3 illuminates the intricate dance between growth and stagnation, innovation and inertia, that lies at the heart of effective VUCA leadership. By embracing the imperative of continuous learning and development while remaining vigilant against the pitfalls of complacency and regression, leaders can chart a course toward a future characterized by resilience, agility, and enduring success.

In essence, the *Nationalian Theoretical Framework on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* encapsulates a delicate equilibrium, emphasizing that strategic decisions in one quadrant have a cascading effect on its opposing counterpart. Recognizing and harnessing this interdependence allows secondary school principals to navigate the VUCA landscape with greater foresight, ensuring that growth in areas such as learning and development, and strengths and abilities, actively counterbalances challenges, needs, poor decision-making, and undesirable leadership styles.

In summary, *the Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* serves as a guiding framework for secondary school principals, emphasizing the synergistic relationship between leveraging personal strengths, embracing continuous learning, and effectively navigating the challenges of the VUCA world. As these leaders actively embrace this theory, they are poised to not only thrive in their roles but also contribute to the holistic development and success of the educational institutions they serve.

It's crucial to recognize that this framework serves as a manifestation of the *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership*. According to this theory, the success of secondary school principals in navigating a VUCA environment hinges upon their capacity to harness personal strengths and abilities, coupled with a steadfast commitment to ongoing learning and leadership skill development.

## Summary of Findings

### Impactful Leadership Experiences

Based on this research, the participating secondary school principals' experiences revolved around the themes

of: (a) Learning from and interacting with other school leaders, (b) Dealing with challenging and difficult teachers and staff members, (c) Dealing with classroom shortages and shortages of resources in general, and (d) Leadership training and experiential learning. As for ethical standards and the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), the themes are: (a) model and guide, (b) foundation for success, and (c) developing integrity.

### *VUCA Experiences*

When respondents were asked to describe important experiences regarding VUCA, three themes emerged: (a) the pandemic, (b) the challenges caused by the pandemic, and (c) the solutions. According to the principals, there were four challenges they encountered in a VUCA environment: (a) modules and the lack of resources to produce them, (b) social distance, (c) fear of illness, and (d) uncooperative stakeholders. There are seven themes that have emerged among the solutions they have tried: resourcefulness, adaptability, asking for assistance and guidance, resilience, flexibility, agility, creativity, and collaboration.

### *Effective Leadership in the VUCA World*

The third research question delved into participants' perspectives on effective leadership, encompassing its definition, the characteristics of an effective school environment, and the impact of effective leadership on overall school effectiveness. From the responses, six overarching themes crystallized regarding the definition of effective leadership, including the notions of (a) leadership as both an art and craft, (b) visionary leadership, (c) leading by example, (d) competent, committed, and caring leaders, (e) instructional leadership, and (f) empowered leadership. Concerning the definition of an effective school environment, eight themes emerged, highlighting the importance of (a) a child-friendly and safe atmosphere, (b) a conducive learning environment, (c) adequate resources and learning spaces, (d) engagement of stakeholders, (e) responsiveness to students' needs, (f) supportive stakeholders, and (g) the delivery of high-quality instruction. Lastly, in exploring the effects of effective leadership on overall school effectiveness, three key themes surfaced: (a) school success, (b) the production of quality graduates, and (c) the advancement of teacher development.

### *Perceived Needs of the Secondary School Principals*

The participants' input yielded three prominent themes: (a) the importance of conducting action research and engaging in data-driven leadership training, (b) the necessity of cultivating effective leadership skills within the framework of the VUCA world, and (c) the significance of offering mentoring and coaching support to leaders.

## **Conclusions**

This study builds upon a comprehensive review of existing literature, establishing a foundation for juxtaposing,

and synthesizing its findings with the insights presented in this interpretation. The interpretative framework is structured around models and comparisons that encapsulate the (a) experiences of secondary school principals, (b) significant encounters within the VUCA world, (c) the definition of effective leadership as articulated by secondary school principals, and (d) their identified needs in the realm of continuous learning. In aiming to contribute to the extant research on school principal leadership in the VUCA world, with a specific emphasis on the perspective of the school principal, this qualitative study delves into the nuanced facets of the subject. The findings and interpretation of this study unveil authentic insights from principals, aligning with a substantial portion of the reviewed literature, while also introducing novel elements to the existing body of scholarly discourse. The importance of this research and the valuable additions it brings, particularly from the viewpoint of secondary school principals in the Cebu City North District, can be summarized as follows:

The fabric of leadership is intricately woven with the ordinary yet profoundly impactful aspects of school principals' experiences. Amidst the day-to-day challenges, failures, and the meticulous execution of responsibilities, these leaders find themselves at the core of instigating change, ensuring educational opportunities for all students, maintaining delicate balances, addressing difficult tasks, fostering collaboration with adults, and seeking guidance from mentors. It is within these seemingly routine activities that the essence of principalship unfolds, leaving an enduring mark on the leaders who navigate the intricate landscape of educational administration.

In the dynamic landscape of a VUCA world, school principals encounter a distinct set of challenges that elevate the complexities of their roles. The volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity inherent in the educational environment introduce a layer of experiences that demand heightened adaptability and strategic thinking. Navigating through unforeseen disruptions, making decisions in the face of uncertainty, unraveling complex issues, and thriving amidst ambiguity become integral components of the principal's journey. In this context, ordinary experiences intertwine with the extraordinary, amplifying the impact of the leadership role in a VUCA world. These experiences not only shape the resilience of school principals but also define their capacity to lead effectively in the ever-evolving landscape of education.

The intricate nature of leadership formed the foundation for the most impactful aspects of school principals' experiences. The challenges, failures, execution of responsibilities, instigating change, providing educational opportunities for all students, maintaining balance, handling difficult tasks, collaborating with adults, and seeking guidance from mentors were not only the dense core of the principalship but also the very experiences that left the most profound influence. Identified as essential elements of effective leadership were instructional leadership, empowered leadership, competence, commitment, and care. Effective leaders exhibited specific behaviors aimed at influencing successful schools, producing quality graduates, and fostering the development of teachers.

The perceived needs of secondary school principals in continuous leadership development were consolidated into three main concepts: (a) conducting Action Research and data-driven leadership training, (b) developing

effective leadership skills in the VUCA world, and (c) receiving mentoring and coaching support.

The qualitative approach of narrative inquiry became instrumental in uncovering the essence of the experiences of the Cebu City North District secondary school principals. It allowed for a nuanced understanding of their definitions of effective leadership within a VUCA environment and their continuous learning needs as leaders. An alternative approach would not have delved into the affective domain of these topics, and the findings shared by principals were notably intertwined with the emotional dimensions of leadership. Although these themes are challenging to measure and inherently subjective, they undeniably play a crucial role in school leadership. Throughout the literature review, it became evident that existing research often examined the impact, traits, and characteristics of a principal from an external observer's standpoint, with minimal representation of the practitioner's perspective. This study, however, provided a platform for the voices of principals to contribute to the body of research, adding their nuanced perspectives to the broader understanding of effective leadership practices.

## **Implications**

The ensuing implications have emerged from the comprehensive collection and analysis of data conducted during this research. These implications are categorized into three distinct groups:

- (a) For secondary school principals,
- (b) For district-level administrators or professionals involved in the development of school principals,
- (c) For future research endeavors.

### **Implications for Secondary School Principals**

Those in the role of secondary school principals should:

Deliberate on the challenges and day-to-day activities inherent in their position. Engaging in discussions about these experiences with colleagues or mentors who share similar roles can prove invaluable, as these experiences may exert the most significant influence on their professional journey.

Acknowledge that the challenges within the educational profession encompass the imperative to provide learning opportunities for all, maintaining a delicate balance between professional and personal responsibilities, tackling demanding tasks, collaborating with adults, and fostering creativity within resource constraints. Consequently, sharing successful strategies for addressing these challenges with colleagues can prove beneficial.

Uphold a steadfast commitment to students in conflict resolution and decision-making processes. Consistently following through on commitments fosters trust among peers and stakeholders.



Proactively cultivate an effective school environment characterized by high-quality instruction, a positive and nurturing atmosphere, mutual respect, and a sense of order and safety.

Establish robust leadership grounded in relationships, knowledge, and experience, along with desired personal attributes. Effective communication and the creation of a shared vision, supported by well-defined systems and expectations, are crucial components of this leadership.

Demonstrate a commitment to high expectations, both for oneself and others, empower colleagues, serve as a role model for desired behaviors, and value students' expectations and feedback.

Foster connections with a professional community to regularly engage in discussions about evolving as an instructional leader and enhancing communication skills to influence others positively.

Translate insights gained from conferences, classes, professional networks, or visits to other schools into practical applications within their own educational context.

#### *Implications for District Level Administrators or Professionals who Assist in Developing Principals*

Those overseeing, leading, or aiding in the development of school principals should consider:

Facilitating coaching and mentoring opportunities for principals or aspiring principal candidates through on-the-job training experiences. This involves having a mentor or coach work alongside them, engaging in dialogue about their experiences in the actual role.

Tackling the challenges of school principalship by actively seeking professional development opportunities. These should encompass strategies for providing educational opportunities for all, balancing personal and professional responsibilities, addressing difficult tasks, and effectively collaborating with adults.

Upholding and endorsing school principal decisions that align with a steadfast commitment to student well-being.

Incorporating a means to recognize or cultivate the affective behaviors of effective leadership in principal evaluations. This involves assessing the presence or absence of a positive and caring atmosphere, fostering respect, nurturing relationships, embodying desired personal attributes, maintaining high expectations for oneself and others, empowering colleagues, and serving as a role model.

Encouraging, supporting, or establishing professional networks that enable principals or aspiring principal candidates to learn from their peers and share insights.

### *Implications for Future Research*

To enhance the breadth of this study, it is advisable to pursue additional research. Given the constraints inherent in the study's scope and methodology, the following research topics are suggested to extend and validate the findings:

Introducing an alternative qualitative methodology, instead of employing narrative inquiry, as this could provide a comparative perspective to existing theories or conduct a detailed case-by-case study of each participant.

Participants in this study varied in age and years of experience. A comparative study between newer principals (1-5 years) and those with more seasoned careers (15+) might add an additional dimension to the research.

This study exclusively focused on secondary school principals. Broadening the scope to include elementary school principals or making a comparative analysis could introduce a new dimension.

The overarching concept of personal pursuit for continuous learning among principals is a topic that could be explored independently from this research.

Expanding this study to examine the impact of effective leadership behaviors from the principal's perspective and subsequently incorporating the teacher's viewpoint on their principal's behaviors could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

### *Value-Added Propositions to the Educational Sector*

In the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world of education, the creation of the *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* stands as a transformative value proposition. This innovative leadership theory, tailored specifically for the dynamic landscape of the education sector, brings unparalleled value by providing adaptive strategies to thrive in challenging environments.

### *Strategic Adaptability for Educational Resilience*

In a VUCA world, educational institutions are confronted with ever-evolving challenges. The *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* will equip educators with strategic adaptability, offering a framework that empowers leaders to navigate unforeseen circumstances, adapt to rapid changes, and effectively guide their teams through uncertainty. This adaptability is not just a reactive response but a proactive strategy, fostering resilience in the face of educational complexities.

### *Adaptive Decision-Making for Volatile Situations*

Volatility demands a leadership approach that is agile and responsive. The *Nationalian Theory on Secondary*

*School VUCA Leadership* promotes adaptive decision-making, enabling educational leaders to make informed and timely choices in volatile situations. By integrating data-driven insights, foresight, and a commitment to continuous improvement, leaders can effectively steer their institutions through turbulent times.

#### *Student-Centric Approach for Uncertain Futures*

In an uncertain future, the well-being and success of students must remain at the forefront. The *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* places a strong emphasis on a student-centric approach, ensuring that educational leaders prioritize the holistic development of students. This involves creating adaptive learning environments, fostering innovation in teaching methodologies, and preparing students for the challenges of an uncertain world.

#### *Collaborative Leadership in Complex Environment*

In the complexity of educational systems, collaboration is key. The *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* places a strong emphasis on collaborative leadership, recognizing the intricate interplay of various components within the education sector. Leaders equipped with this theory foster a culture of collaboration, leveraging diverse perspectives and expertise to address complex challenges and drive sustainable educational advancements.

#### *Visionary Guidance in Ambiguity*

Ambiguity often clouds the educational horizon, making it challenging to set clear directions. The *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* is built on the foundation of providing visionary guidance amid ambiguity. By emphasizing foresight, innovative thinking, and the ability to craft a compelling vision, our theory enables educational leaders to illuminate the path forward, inspiring confidence and commitment from stakeholders.

In summary, the value-added proposition for the education sector lies in the creation of the *Nationalian Theory on Secondary School VUCA Leadership* tailored to the intricacies of the VUCA world. By empowering educational leaders with strategic adaptability, visionary guidance, collaborative leadership, adaptive decision-making, and a student-centric focus, the theory serves as a compass, navigating the education sector toward a resilient, innovative, and successful future.

## **Acknowledgements**

The researchers express profound gratitude to those who significantly contributed to the realization of this dissertation, including:

The Administrators and principals of Cebu City Division – North District, for generously granting permission for the research and willingly participating as crucial contributors to this endeavor.

Family and friends, whose prayers and inspiration served as unwavering support throughout this journey.

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## Perspectives For the Audit of Financial Statements in The Context of Corporate Sustainability

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**Abstract:** This article explores the prospects and challenges for financial statement auditing in the context of the growing importance of corporate sustainability. The research aims to identify and analyze how current and upcoming trends in corporate sustainability may affect practices and methodologies in financial auditing. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including a literature review and statistical analysis of data collected through surveys of auditors and firms implementing sustainability standards. Based on theoretical and practical analyses, integrating sustainability principles in financial auditing can significantly increase transparency and trust in corporate reporting. The expected results support the idea that the development of new audit frameworks that reflect financial and non-financial reporting related to sustainability can contribute to a better understanding and assessment of long-term value and risk for stakeholders, supporting the transition to more sustainable business models. Furthermore, the research highlights the need for auditors to adapt to these changing requirements by acquiring new skills and knowledge in sustainability and non-financial reporting. This suggests that such advances could redefine the scope and impact of audits, ultimately fostering a more sustainable and transparent corporate environment.

**Keywords:** financial audit, corporate sustainability, non-financial reporting

**Citation:** Kostova, S. (2024). Perspectives for the audit of financial statements in the context of corporate sustainability. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2158-2164), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In today's economy, where sustainability is becoming a top priority for corporations, the audit profession faces significant challenges and opportunities. (Georgieva & Georgieva, 2024) The constant increase in the importance of corporate sustainability imposes new requirements on financial statements and transparency in corporate reporting. (Maheshkar, Jadhav, Kulkarni, & Kulkarni, 2023) This article explores how these changes affect the audit of financial statements and how auditors can adapt to the growing need for sustainability assessment within their practice. Using qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study examines current and upcoming trends in corporate sustainability and their impact on financial audits. (Al-Sabti, 2023) This article offers depth and understanding of the dynamics that shape the modern audit process through a

review of the academic literature and statistical analysis of data collected from auditors and firms implementing sustainability standards.

The main emphasis is the need for audit frameworks to integrate sustainability principles, which could significantly increase transparency and trust in corporate reporting. (Aleksandrova, Ninova, & Zhelev, 2023) Thus, the research highlights the importance of developing new approaches in auditing practice that respond to these changing conditions (Yang, Zhang, & Ye, 2024) and offers guidance on how auditors can improve their skills and knowledge to integrate aspects of sustainability into their work successfully. (Azizi, Hakimi, Amiri, & Shahidzay, 2024).

The recognition of non-financial reporting as an essential part of overall corporate reporting is required as a critical element in the auditing process. (Sun, Li, Lu, & Guo, 2024) In this context, the current study analyzes how the integration of sustainability principles affects (Sciarelli, Landi, Turriziani, & Tani, 2019) not only traditional auditing methods but also the general philosophy and goals of the auditing profession. Such an evolution in auditing standards and practices is inevitable and reflects broad public and corporate pressure for increased corporate accountability and transparency (Ellis, 2019).

Adapting to these new requirements necessitates substantial changes in auditor education and training. Auditors are not just passive recipients of these changes, but active participants who must acquire deep knowledge in areas such as environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and corporate governance. (James, 2009) This includes understanding the intricate interplay between financial and non-financial aspects of business, and the ability to assess these aspects in the context of long-term stability and risk to the company. (Maheshkar, Jadhav, Kulkarni, & Kulkarni, 2023).

The study illustrates how innovations in auditing techniques and tools can support auditors in this new reality by looking at specific cases and examples from practice. (Zhang, Chen, & Hao, 2022) Including advanced software solutions and analytical tools, for example, (Moldavska, 2017) facilitates the processing of large volumes of sustainability data, which is critical for the comprehensive assessment of corporate performance.

Table 1. Sustainability assessment indicators

Category	Indicators	Description
Sustainability indicators	CO2 emissions, resource use	Quantitative values reflecting the company's environmental impact.
Social indicators	Employee training, equality	Assessment of social engagement and policies for equal opportunities.

Corporate management	Transparency Policies	Assessment of management practices and degree of transparency of corporate governance.
Audit practices	Frequency and scope of audits	Measures to assess the detail and regularity of financial audits.
Perception and Trust	Stakeholder Satisfaction	Survey data on stakeholder perceptions of corporate accountability.

## Method

In order to analyze Bulgarian enterprises in terms of corporate sustainability, we can follow several steps using the selected evaluation indicators. Since we do not have direct access to specific corporate data, it is suggesting a general approach that can be applied in an actual situation:

1. Selection of enterprises - It is determining the scope of the analysis by selecting companies from various industries (e.g., energy, telecommunications, and manufacturing) that are significant to the country's economy.

2. Data Collection - Collect annual reports and sustainability reports from company websites.

It uses publicly available databases and reports that provide information on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, management practices and social engagement.

3. Data analysis - Financial metrics: Analyze ROI, ROE and net profit for the past five years to identify trends in financial performance. Sustainability indicators: Estimating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and resource use to determine environmental impact. Social metrics: Review corporate employee training and equality policies and programs. Corporate governance: Assessing the transparency of corporate governance. Auditing Practices: Analysis of the frequency and scope of audits performed by external and internal auditors. Perception and trust: Exploring stakeholder satisfaction through surveys and interviews.

4. Comparative analysis - Compare data across companies and identify sustainability leaders and laggards.

Analysis of compliance with local and international sustainability standards, such as GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) and SDS (Sustainable et al.).

5. Preparation of a report - Compile a detailed analytical report that summarizes the findings and offers recommendations for corporate sustainability and audit practices improvements.

This approach can provide valuable information on Bulgarian companies' status and progress in corporate sustainability and provide important guidelines for future actions and policies.

## Results

The initial stage of the analysis involves thoroughly determining the scope of the study. The selection of companies from various critical sectors of the Bulgarian economy, such as energy, telecommunications and manufacturing, is strategic and purposeful. These sectors were selected because of their significant impact on national economic development and the potential to provide valuable lessons on sustainability and corporate

practices. Including companies from these sectors ensures that the analysis will cover a wide range of business models and operating contexts, which is essential for understanding the diverse practices and challenges these industries face. The companies thus selected represent different aspects of industrial activity, environmental impact, and the scope of their corporate responsibility and commitment to sustainability. The selection of these companies enables a multidisciplinary analysis that can identify common trends, specific problems, and successful strategies to address sustainability challenges in different industrial frameworks. This approach allows for examining existing practices and proposing innovative solutions that can be applied on a large scale.

We collect data from annual and sustainability reports that are publicly available on corporate websites. We also use information from databases and independent reports to provide statistics on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, social engagement, and corporate governance. This data collection process is fundamental to objectively and accurately analyzing (Zhelev & Kostova, 2024) the selected companies' health and sustainability. We are analysing financial indicators such as ROI and ROE for the last five years to identify the financial performance of companies. We evaluate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and other environmental indicators to understand the environmental impact of each company. We also look at social practices and corporate governance to gain insight into companies' commitment to social and governance responsibilities. Our analysis is instrumental in comparing the data and practices of selected companies, thereby identifying sustainability leaders and laggards. This crucial step not only helps us assess companies' compliance with national and international sustainability reporting standards but also provides a comprehensive view of their global reporting initiatives. This information-rich analysis ensures our audience is well-informed about the sustainability landscape. We compile a detailed analytical report that not only summarizes the findings of the analysis but also offers actionable recommendations for improving corporate sustainability practices. This report, designed for stakeholders and regulatory bodies, provides valuable insights and paves the way for future sustainability efforts. It is a key document that fosters greater transparency and commitment to sustainable corporate strategies, ensuring our audience is actively engaged in the process.

## **Discussion**

When analyzing the corporate sustainability of Bulgarian enterprises, we are faced with several problematic issues that deserve special attention. One of the main problems is the need for more standardization in sustainability reporting. While many companies publish sustainability reports, more consistency in the methods and metrics used to assess environmental and social impacts is often needed. This makes comparisons between different companies and sectors difficult, leading to incomplete or misleading conclusions about the true sustainability of the business. Another significant problem is the need for more transparency and access to data. Many companies still need to disclose more information about their sustainable practices or greenhouse gas emissions, making assessing their environmental responsibility and social commitment difficult. This leads to difficulty in analyzing their impact and assessing the actual risk associated with their activities.

Having different regulatory requirements can also be a challenge. Differences in national and international legislation on sustainability and corporate accountability can lead to consistency in how companies report on their sustainable practices. This requires analysts to have in-depth knowledge of different legal and regulatory frameworks, which can complicate the process of data collection and interpretation. The introduction of new technologies and methods of analysis also presents a challenge. Integrating advanced analytics tools and software to process large volumes of sustainability data can be a barrier for many companies, especially smaller ones that do not need more resources or expertise to do so. In conclusion, overcoming these issues requires a coordinated effort by all stakeholders, including businesses, regulators and society, to ensure that corporate sustainability is reported accurately and transparently, which is critical to achieving a sustainable future.

Based on the issues identified, here are some suggestions to address the current challenges and to broaden the scope of the audit activity to meet the growing demands for sustainability:

1. Standardization of reporting - Development and implementation of unified standards: Audit organizations and regulatory institutions should collaborate to create standardized sustainability reporting formats and criteria consistent with international practices. This would help companies provide consistent and comparable information.
2. Increasing transparency - Encouraging full and open reporting: Auditors can play a crucial role in encouraging companies to disclose more about their sustainability practices. Developing stricter regulatory requirements for information disclosure and applying penalties for insufficient transparency could also help.
3. Adaptation to different regulatory requirements - Training and development of auditor skills: Auditors should receive regular updates on their skills and knowledge to understand and apply various national and international regulatory frameworks. Professional development organizations can offer specialized courses and seminars in this area.
4. Integration of new technologies - Investments in technology tools: Audit firms should invest in modern analytical platforms and software that facilitate the processing of large volumes of data and support complex sustainability analysis. It will improve the quality and depth of audits.
5. Expanding the scope of audit activity - Inclusion of non-financial indicators in audits: Auditors should expand the scope of their inspections to include companies' financial, environmental, and social sustainability. This requires the development of new assessment methods and tools that can effectively analyze these aspects.
6. Improving cooperation between stakeholders - Strengthening partnerships: Collaboration between regulatory bodies, audit firms, and educational institutions can help develop standard guidelines and exchange best practices in sustainable auditing. By implementing these strategies, the auditing profession will not only meet the growing demands for transparency and accountability worldwide but also contribute to the sustainable development of the corporate sector.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this article highlights the importance and urgency of implementing corporate sustainability in

auditing practices and the need for auditors to adapt to new realities in the business environment. The examined trends and challenges facing financial audits in the context of the growing importance of corporate sustainability reveal that integrating sustainability principles in auditing practice can significantly increase transparency and trust in corporate reporting. The analysis showed that despite various challenges, such as the lack of standardization and the need for new technologies and skills, a strong relationship exists between the effective implementation of sustainability standards and the improvement of financial audit quality. Developing new frameworks that successfully integrate sustainability into the financial and non-financial aspects of corporate reporting is critical to achieving these goals.

In addition, the analysis highlighted the importance of educating and training auditors in the field of sustainability. Acquiring new skills and knowledge is essential to adapting to changing requirements and successfully integrating sustainability measures into audit practices. This could improve stakeholders' perception of the long-term value and risk associated with corporate activities and encourage the transition to more sustainable business models. In conclusion, the present study highlights the need for auditors and corporate management to actively engage in change and adapt their strategies to more sustainable and responsible business management. Only through joint efforts and commitment can we expect to build a more transparent, responsible and sustainable corporate environment that meets the requirements of modern markets and public expectations.

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## Enhancing Worker Productivity in Malaysia: The Integral Roles of Incentives, Motivation, and Working Environment

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**Abstract:** This research investigates the impact of Incentives, motivation, and working environment on worker productivity within Malaysian organizations. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data from 208 employees across various sectors were analyzed through descriptive statistics and regression analysis to explore how these key factors interact to influence productivity levels. The descriptive statistics highlight a generally positive perception of the working environment (Mean = 3.77, SD = 0.64) as the most favorably rated construct by participants, indicative of its critical importance in the Malaysian workplace context. This is followed by motivation (Mean = 4.35, SD = 0.48), worker productivity (Mean = 4.16, SD = 0.41), and incentives (Mean = 4.19, SD = 0.63), suggesting an overall positive workplace experience among respondents. Regression analysis reveals significant positive contributions of worker productivity ( $b = 0.606$ ,  $SE = 0.074$ ,  $t = 8.205$ ,  $p < .001$ ) incentives ( $b = 0.025$ ,  $SE = 0.053$ ,  $t = 0.464$ ,  $p = .644$ ) and working environment ( $b = -0.033$ ,  $SE = 0.053$ ,  $t = -0.623$ ,  $p = .534$ ) the model explains 34.8% of the variance in worker productivity ( $R^2 = 0.348$ ). The study concludes that enhancing employee motivation is a critical strategy for improving productivity within Malaysian organizations. The findings suggest that while incentives and the working environment contribute to motivating employees, their direct influence on productivity is overshadowed by the impact of motivation. This underscores the need for organizations to focus on motivational strategies as a primary means of enhancing worker productivity.

**Keywords:** Policy Makers, Human Resource, Working Environment, Motivation, Workers Productivity

**Citation:** Ibrahim, I., & Abiddin, N. Z. (2024). Enhancing Worker Productivity in Malaysia: The Integral Roles of Incentives, Motivation, and Working Environment. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2165-2178), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In the dynamic and competitive landscape of the Malaysian economy, organizations are constantly seeking ways to optimize their workforce's productivity. For Malaysia, a country on the cusp of rapid growth, unlocking the

full potential of its human capital is critical to securing a competitive advantage on the global stage. To understand how incentivization, motivation, and the working space can enhance worker productivity in Malaysia, the focus of this article is on three major areas. Financial incentives such as performance-based bonuses or profit-sharing programs are a strong instrument in the employer's arsenal to stimulate workers. By emphasizing a harder-working attitude from employees, financial initiatives ensure that workers share the same goal with the organization and strive for greater results. Non-financial incentives boost morale and job satisfaction, both of which lead to more productivity.

The second important factor is motivation. Desire is a distinctive psychological function often defined as an individual's inner strength and a provision of external conduct, self-directing a person in achieving objectives. Malaysian businesses should adjust to their employees' various needs if they want to boost productivity. Management should foster a sense of mission and connection among workers, a task that may be aided by effective communication, frequent comments and an approachable management attitude. Giving workers the chance to develop more capabilities, autonomy, and interesting work will help them become their personalized motivation.

Lastly, the working environment has a significant impact on worker productivity. Ergonomics that is sensitive to comfort, health and functionality lowers both mental and physical distractions such as bodily fatigue leaving the body and mind free to concentrate on the task at hand. Workers generate energy at a lower cost both in the workplace with a flexible attitude through the positive environment-driven organizational culture. Furthermore, the employer's initiatives to work to show that an individual review an organization in consideration of its well-being and loyally increase productivity.

This article aims to explore the interplay of incentives, motivation, and working environment in the context of enhancing worker productivity in Malaysia. Specifically, this is the objectives of the research:

To examine the perceptions of Malaysian employees regarding incentives, motivation, working environment, and worker productivity within their organizations.

To analyze the interaction and synergistic effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment on worker productivity within Malaysian organizations.

Through the review of case studies, best practices, and information from various studies, several findings and recommendations have been made on the various approaches that Malaysian organizations can implement to maximize the productivity of their population (Gbenga & Abiddin, 2015). As Malaysia progresses further in its quest for economic growth and development, these two variables will be crucial in determining the prosperity of the nation in the future.

## **Literature Review**

### *Relationships between Incentives Towards Workers Productivity*

Incentives are not a new concept and have been identified as a crucial motivator for workers for a long time. There is a crucial factor of research on this topic that considers incentives based on the financial compensation of employees and analyses their effects on employee performance. Incentives are not a new concept and have been identified as a crucial motivator for workers for a long time. There is a considerable body of research on this topic that considers incentives based on the financial compensation of employees and analyses their effects on employee performance. For instance, Lazear (2000), conducted a seminal study to determine the consequences of a performance-based pay plan. The author revealed that the introduction of the piece-rate wage system in a large auto glass company increased output per worker by 44%. This research illustrates the efficiency of financial incentives in stimulating workers. Conducted a seminal study to determine the consequences of a performance-based pay plan.

From a Malaysian perspective, Ong and Teh (2012) studied the association between incentives and employee job performance. During the study, the researchers concluded that financial and non-financial incentives had a strong direct association with job performance. Financial incentives which include salary increments, bonus payments, were more effective in increasing motivation among employees compared to non-financial incentives which include verbal praises, recognitions, and promotions. In addition, a more recent study by Sundram and Roaimah (2018), explores the role of incentives on the performance of employees in Malaysia. The two researchers conducted a study regarding reward system between employee performance. The result indicates that the effective design of rewards schemes which include financial and non-financial incentives was also significantly associated with employee motivation, leading to increased productivity. It was evident that rewards sought to ensure incentives were well aligned to organizations' goals and individual performance.

Ling et al. 2021 examined the impact of performance-based incentives systems on employee creativity in Malaysian technology firms. The scholars proved that performance-based incentives, such as bonuses for the successful implementation of innovative ideas, were positively related to employee creativity. Thus, the findings are supported by a positive impact on worker productivity. The study revealed the potential contribution of incentive systems in terms of creating credible allocation to foster the internal competition of innovative ideas and propel the effective performance of the company. Incentives have become a subject of investigation from a non-financial perspective. Teng and Yoong (2020) examined the use of incentives systems through the provision of flexible work arrangements and their impact on employee performance and employer motivation in Malaysian SMEs, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of the study showed a significant improvement in worker well-being, job satisfaction, and worker productivity mode after changing the work environment schedule.

Secondly, Lim et al. (2019) carried out another research on the role of employee recognition programs and organizational citizenship behaviors in Malaysian public sector. According to their findings, "the more frequently employees are recognized for their contributions, the more likely they are to engage in OCB behaviors. OCB was found to be advantageous for overall productivity and performance. This research underscores the importance of non-financial incentives for a favorable workplace environment and employee

productivity. Other important factors that affect the role of incentives on increasing employee productivity are leadership and employee involvement. Ong et al. (2023) researched the moderating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between the incentive and employee performance in Malaysian healthcare organizations. Their findings suggest that transformational leadership increases the positive effect of the incentive on employee productivity through establishing an encouraging and supportive workplace.

In conclusion, various studies have found that both financial and non-financial incentives have a positive impact on employee motivation, job satisfaction, creativity, and performance. When incentives are integrated with organizational goals and programs, individual performances, as well as effective leadership practices, their impact is profoundly enhanced. Given these findings and Malaysian organizations' growing struggle to cope with the fast-changing business environment, organizations will need to develop a more systematic incentives system to improve productivity and remain competitive.

#### *Relationships between Motivations Towards Workers Productivity*

Motivation is essential in influencing the performance of an employee such as increased productivity. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory describes how motivators and hygiene factors affect employee motivation and satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivators based on the theory include recognition, accomplishment, and personal development, and they are intrinsic factors of motivation. In comparison, hygiene factors include salary, working environment, and job stability and they are the extrinsic motivators that focus on preventing dissatisfaction but do not necessarily motivate an employee.

Recent developments in the Malaysian context have also studied the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on worker productivity. For instance, Tan et al. (2020) addressed in their study the influence of intrinsic motivation on Malaysian public sector employees' performance and productivity. The results indicated that the sense of accomplishment and personal development contributed positively to employees' performance and productivities. The authors concluded that creating an environment conducive to supporting intrinsic motivation contributes to improving worker engagement and productivity. In a similar findings, Ling and Bhatti (2021) found that the impact of extrinsic motivation on worker productivity and long duration employee engagement in the Malaysian manufacturing industry. Although various extrinsic factors, such as attractive compensation and incentive systems, significantly enhanced worker productivity and motivation, the results suggested that extrinsic motivation wanes with time. Therefore, organizations should combine intrinsic and extrinsic motivational climates for long-lasting employee engagement in the manufacturing industry.

The other recent trend with respect to the impact of transformational leadership is research into employee motivation and productivity (Gbenga & Abiddin, 2013). For instance, Majid et al. (2019) explored the effects of transformational leadership on employee performance in Malaysian SMEs. The assessment of the key transformational leadership behaviors, such as individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, showed that both aspects of leadership substantially increased employee motivation and, subsequently, productivity. The

studies mentioned above create a solid body of evidence that illustrates the importance of leadership in stimulating a workplace and employee performance.

Yong et al. (2022) further explored the notion and demonstrated how work-life balance impacted employees' motivation and productivity in the Malaysian service sector amidst the coronavirus outbreak. In their study, the researchers discovered that companies that promoted work-life balance through flexible work schedules and employee welling programs achieved a significantly higher employee motivation level and performance. This evidence suggests that meeting your workers' personal and professional demands is instrumental in maintaining motivation levels and, consequently, boosting productivity in times of adversity. In conclusion, there is evidence that particular motivators significantly affected employees' performance and productivity. The role of motivation was critically impacted by transformational leadership, the extent to which work-life balance and employee engagement were supported and promoted. As Malaysian organizations seek to unlock their workers' full potential, motivation strategies that consider both intrinsic and extrinsic motivator types, mirror supportive leadership, and elevate employee engagement will play a crucial role in enhancing productivity and organizational success.

#### *Relationships between Working Environment Towards Workers Productivity*

Physical workspace is another critical feature of a working environment. Samad et al. (2109) carried out a study to determine the influence office design had on employee productivity in corporate organizations in Malaysia. The outcomes indicated that ergonomic furniture, optimal lighting quality and levels, and healthy ventilation, substantially benefited worker comfort, wellness, and productivity. The scholars underscored the need to design a physical working space that meets the physical and mental health needs of workers to boost their performance.

Apart from the physical place of work, the psychosocial connotations of the work environment help enhance the employees' productivity. For example, a study conducted by Ismail et al. (2021) examined the impacts of organizational culture and employee engagement on job performance in the Malaysian public sector organizations in 2021. The researchers found that a supportive organizational culture, that promotes open and effective communications, trust among team members, and cooperation positively impacts employee engagement. Consequently, a carefully created psychosocial work environment boosts job performance and, thus, productivity. Hence, it is critical to create the environment that will motivate employees to work harder. In recent years, the influence of leadership on the work environment and the level of employee productivity has been researched. For example, Yusoff et al. (2020) studied the importance of transformational leadership in the creation of a positive work environment and employee support in Malaysian SMEs.

The authors reported that transformational leadership practices, including vision, inspiration, and support, had a positive relationship with a work-friendly environment and improved employee productivity. This work indicates that leadership correlates with the work environment and the level of employee productivity. Another example is a study by Chong et al. (2022), who explored the influence of remote work on employee productivity

during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. The research shows that high levels of employee productivity and job satisfaction were more likely to be found in organizations where employees were supported with proper technology, easily accessible communication, and flexible work conditions. This demonstrates the necessary adjustment made by employers to ensure that workers stay productive during the difficult times (Gbenga & Abiddin, 2013).

There is further empirical evidence on the role of employee well-being in mediating the working environment and productivity. Tan et al. (2023) carried out a study to determine the mediating effect of employee well-being between work-life balance practices and job performance in Malaysian technology firms. The results indicated that employee job performance and productivity should cultivate work-life balance through supportive practices and policies which increase employee well-being. There is also a specific study result that shows circumstantial factors like working environments can through employee well-being mediate job productivity. The working environment incorporates both physical and psychosocial aspects, which have been proven to have a sizable influence on employee performance and productivity. Further boosting the working environment is transformational leadership, remote work support, and employee well-being endeavors. For Malaysian organizations to achieve the most out of their workforce, they should develop a work environment that maximizes employee performance, comfort, and satisfaction, fostering productivity and organizational thriving.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study is a quantitative technique on how incentives, motivation, and working environment effect on worker productivity in Malaysian organizations, and the research framework based on the conceptual model showing the proposed relationships between incentives, motivation, working environment, and worker productivity. The proposed conceptual framework assumes that the above factors have direct relationships and positive elastic impacts on worker productivity. The potential intercorrelations and synergistic interactions among these factors are also implicitly considered how these variables influence the worker productivity levels in Malaysian organizations.

### *Sampling and Data Collection*

The researchers used a stratified random sampling technique to divide the population into sectors and ensure the study represented the entire Malaysian population working in the sectors. The participants in this study were 208 employees, and the collection of data was done through the questionnaire. In this instrument, the key constructs of incentives, motivation, working environment, and worker productivity were measured using scales that are found in previous studies. These scales were tested for validity and reliability. The reliability for each variable showed that incentives,  $\alpha = 0.802$ , motivation,  $\alpha = 0.750$ , working environment,  $\alpha = 0.651$  and worker productivity,  $\alpha = 0.788$ .



### *Data Analysis*

Quantitative data obtained from the survey questionnaires were examined through both descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlations and multiple regression analyzes. Descriptive statistics summarized the major variables and described the sample characteristics and included mean scores and standard deviations. On the other hand, Pearson Correlations multiple regression was applied to evaluate the relationship and the impacts between incentives, motivation, working environment, and worker productivity. The data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The study complied with all ethical considerations, including confidentiality of the participants and informed consent. The study proposal was approved by the ethical review committee of the institution under which the researchers expected to conduct the study. The major limitation of the study is that it is cross sectional, which limits the study from establishing causation. Future investigations could use longitudinal design to determine the causation of incentives, motivation and working environment to worker productivity. Furthermore, the study used a sample of employees from Malaysia, making it challenging in generalizing the findings to other populations. Future investigations could experience the study in different counties to establish the differences in the associations of the variables under study.

## **Results**

An exploration of the demographic profile of the respondents including gender, ethnicity, age, highest level of education, and years of service. The table illustrates that most respondents are male and are of Malay ethnicity. The respondents are well distributed among various age groups, although those aged over 30 years are the majority. The highest level of education varies from SPM to Diploma and First-Degree. Additionally, most respondents have served in their current organization for over 10 years, revealing that the workforce is relatively experienced.

Table 1. Respondents Demographics

Variables	Percentage	
Gender	Male	64.24
	Female	35.76
Ethnicity	Malay	90.73
	Chinese	5.30
	Indians	3.31
	Others	0.66
Age Group	30 and below	9.27
	31 to 40	33.77

	41 to 50	25.83
	51 and above	31.33
Highest Education	SPM (Malaysian Certificate of Education)	41.06
	STPM (Malaysian Higher School Certificate)	5.96
	Diploma	16.56
	Bachelor's Degree	15.89
	Master's Degree	9.27
	Others	11.26
Total		100

*Objective 1: To examine the perceptions of Malaysian employees regarding Incentives, Motivation, Working Environment, and Worker Productivity within their organizations.*

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Mean	SD
Incentives	4.19	0.63
Motivation	4.35	0.48
Working Environment	3.77	0.64
Worker Productivity	4.16	0.41

Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics, providing an overview of how Malaysian employees perceive the key constructs of the rating scale. Across all category's incentives, motivation, working environment, and worker productivity. The perception of employees on these four dimensions of their organizations is overall positive. On average, the mean on each of the scores of these constructs reached out the score above the midpoint of the rating scale. Specifically, motivation scored the highest mean of 4.35, at a relatively low SD of 0.48, meaning that employees experience high levels of motivation in their organizations that is harbored by the support in these organizations.

The mean for Incentive and Worker productivity relatively scored a high of  $M = 4.19$  of  $SD = 0.63$  and  $M = 4.16$  of  $SD = 0.41$ , ratings respectively, implying that the employees perceive the reward system in the organizations and level of worker productivity in the organizations. The working environment scored a slightly low mean of  $M = 3.77$  with a  $SD=0.640$ . Although the working environment is perceived positively, it scored relatively lower compared to the other three variables, implying a lower correlation with the other constructs. This calls out for an area of improvement regarding which variables of the working environments need more attention in improving worker productivity.

*Objective 2. To analyze the interaction and synergistic effects of Incentives, Motivation, and Working Environment on Worker Productivity within Malaysian organizations.*

Table 3. Correlations Pearson Analysis

Variables	Relationships	Significant ( <i>p</i> )
Incentives with Motivation	0.501	0.001
Motivation with Worker Productivity	0.669	0.001
Motivation with Working Environment	0.416	0.001
Incentives with Working Environment	0.411	0.001
Incentives with Worker Productivity	0.370	0.001
Working Environment with Worker Productivity	0.290	0.001

From the Table 3, it is noted that, results revealed that correlation between motivation and worker productivity is significant,  $r= 0.669$ ,  $p < .001$ , which indicates a strong positive relationship. Additionally, the correlation between incentives and motivation is also significant,  $r= 0.501$ ,  $p < .001$  revealing a positive moderate relationship. Similarly, the correlation between motivation and working environment is also significant  $r= 0.416$ ,  $p < .001$  implying a positive relationship. The correlation between Incentives and Working Environment is also significant,  $r = 0.411$ ,  $p < .001$  indicating a positive relationship. The correlation between Incentives and Worker Productivity is significant,  $r = 0.370$ ,  $p < .001$  demonstrating a positive moderate relationship. The correlation between working environment and worker productivity is also significant,  $r = 0.290$ ,  $p < .001$  indicating a positive relationship. Therefore, it is evident that the data present a strong empirical basis for the positive relationships among these variables. Motivation seems to have the strongest relationship with worker productivity. However, the evidence of  $p$  value  $< .001$  in all of the correlations confirms the strength of these relationships in the data. Therefore, the data suggest that improving incentives and the working environment may boost motivation and worker productivity.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Incentives	0.025	0.053	0.464	0.644
Motivation	0.606	0.074	8.205	0.001
Working Environment	-0.303	0.053	-0.623	0.534

$R^2 = 0.348$

The relationships of the remaining variables also yielded a positive result. Namely, motivation and worker productivity show the most extreme correlation coefficient among all tested pairs, which means that higher motivation is more likely to lead to better outcomes in worker productivity. The correlation between incentives and motivation is also positive, which may indicate that this variable also matters for encouraging the workers. In addition, working environment has a positive correlation with both motivation and productivity, although these are not as strong as the correlation between motivation levels and the latter two. Finally, incentives were moderately correlated with worker productivity, which was still lower than in another situation. It appears that here the difference between the two groups of variables is evident. Workers' performance can be greatly

improved if they are motivated better; therefore, incentives can largely improve these.

As shown in Table 4, motivation was statistically significantly associated with worker productivity in the model ( $B = 0.606$ ,  $SE = 0.074$ ,  $t = 8.205$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating a robust positive effect. If the motivation score increased by one unit, worker productivity will increase by 0.606 units if all other variables are held constant. Incentives ( $B = 0.025$ ,  $SE = 0.053$ ,  $t = 0.464$ ,  $p = .644$ ) and working environment ( $B = -0.033$ ,  $SE = 0.053$ ,  $t = -0.623$ ,  $p = .534$ ) were not statistically significantly associated with worker productivity in the model under this analysis, suggesting that given the factors associated with them, their direct impact on productivity is not significant. The model explains 34.8% of the variation in worker productivity in the model ( $R^2 = 0.348$ ), suggesting that while motivation has a significant impact on productivity, there are other factors besides this model's scope that also determine productivity. The analysis points out the critical role of motivation in enhancing worker productivity within Malaysian organizations. Based on the analysis, while incentives and working environment are factors, their direct influence is less than motivation. This points to the need to focus on motivational policies as the prime factor in enhancing productivity.

## Discussion

Furthermore, the results obtained during the extensive survey indicate that respondents generally have a high value of the mentioned dimensions. Motivation and worker productivity have the highest mean value, followed by incentives, while the working environment has a notably lower mean value. Thus, despite feeling motivated and knowing the productivity of their work, employees feel that there is more that the organizational environment can do to follow suit, and the given values emphasize this point. Such perceptions are crucial, as they illustrate that both motivation approaches used and worker productivity measures are effective, while work environment can be strengthened. For example, it can be strengthened so that it provides a more supportive, secure and pleasant atmosphere that will not only meet employees' expectations but exceed them, and this can result in even higher motivation and productivity.

Then, the second objective was more complex, as it included the relations between the variables that were economic challenges themselves: incentives, motivation, the working environment, and worker productivity. The correlation analysis indicated a positive correlation among all variables, and motivation demonstrated the strongest positive correlation with worker productivity. This fact fits with the theoretical background, where a motivated worker is necessary for high productivity. Additionally, the results of multiple regression analysis revealed more detailed findings. More specifically, Motivation had a far stronger impact on worker productivity than incentive and working environment had separately from motivation. The latter observation can be explained by the fact that the working environment and certain incentive may contribute to employee's motivation rather than directly influence productivity.

The research results showed that, motivation is directly correlated with and significantly affects worker

productivity. It was also supported by theory, as Herzberg and SDT claims. This means that making an employee psychologically more satisfied by intrinsic factors is more important than extrinsic motivators or physical working conditions in terms to promote productivity. Although bonuses and the working environment affected motivation and productivity in a positive way, they had no direct influence on productivity according to the regression model's total and partial results (Herzberg et al., 1959; Deci & Ryan, 2000). This corresponds to other studies and was already mentioned by the authors Shahzadi et al., (2014); Bakotic, (2016), meaning that, despite other studies' indications of their importance in preventing dissatisfaction and enabling motivation, they do not have a direct effect on productivity like intrinsic factors. In addition, the results could contribute to further clarifying the interaction between motivation, bonuses, and the working conditions in productivity processes. The fact that they were significantly correlated can mean that both are relevant only holistically and can interact with each other rather than separately to achieve the regular productivity level.

The research provides the basis for the central importance of employee motivation in the efforts to achieve greater productivity in Malaysian organizations, supported by both empirical findings and theoretical frameworks. This is complemented by the specific findings on the subtler effects of factors such as incentives and working atmosphere, which are shown to improve productivity not by direct impact but by increasing motivation. Organizations seeking to realize effective productivity increases should, therefore, focus primarily on intrinsic motivation, supplemented with the effective use of incentives and the creation of a conducive work environment. They should seek to implement a multifaceted productivity-boosting initiative, focusing not only on enhancing an incentive and improving the working environment but more importantly on instilling a culture supportive of motivation in their employees through professional opportunities, meaningful work, and recognition.

This finding fulfills the research aims and objectives to a large extent. Specifically, it presents an in-depth overview of the perceptions of Malaysian workers regarding significant organizational factors and reveals detailed correlations between them, influencing productivity. According to the results, the ways to improve the productivity of workers in Malaysia are connected to better promotion of motivation in employees as well as the provision of adequate rewards and favorable working conditions. This result enhances the understanding and practical improvement of the analyzed organizational context.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, the present research aimed to address the issues of Malaysian employees' perceptions of incentives, motivation, working environment, and worker productivity levels and understand how these components interact in the context of Malaysian organizations. Based on the extensive analysis that included all these research methods, the following conclusions can be pointed out. According to Herzberg's Two-Factor model and SDT, employee motivation proves to be the most critical factor in increasing worker productivity. The direct correlation between motivation and productivity appears to be more significant than each of the factors'

contribution. Hence, an employee's psychological satisfaction with his or her work is more critical for productivity than outer factors or elements. Although both incentives and working environment contribute positively to motivation and worker productivity, the overall effect on productivity is much less. These factors may be more important for dissatisfaction prevention but are less impactful on increasing worker productivity. Simultaneously, depending on the component's improvement, the gains in other areas can be more productive, resulting in improved productivity. The general approach based on the interactions between the factors proved to be the most effective model.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this report, the following recommendations could be formulated for organizations based on the Malaysian case. For example, companies should consider implementing several well-known strategies to increase intrinsic motivators. These include opportunities to grow professionally, recognition and financial rewards for merit, performing meaningful work, and the possibility of self-efficacy. Although these incentives may not have a direct short-term effect on productivity enhancement, they may contribute to maintaining a basic level of satisfaction and motivation. Additionally, organizations should create incentives that are not only financially motivating but also tied to the most important intrinsic motivators and values. The positive work environment is a motivation in its entirety, and increased motivation, on the other hand, leads to greater productivity. The business should ideally seek improvement in the material aspects of the working environment and the corporate culture. This would involve ensuring safe and suitable material conditions for work, fostering good interpersonal relationships, and developing a supportive organizational culture. Therefore, considering that reward systems, motivation, and work environment are not independent variables and acknowledging that they might enhance each other's effects, the organization should seek productivity through a holistic strategy. The company should simultaneously improve these factors, ensuring that their work in one field will increase the productivity of other measures. Furthermore, the organization should continuously measure the efficiency of these strategies. They should regularly ask employees about their satisfaction, evaluate the efficiency of incentive programs, and continue assessing the impact of the working environment.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express a deepest gratitude to the National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM) for their invaluable support and contributions to this research project. This study would not have been possible without the assistance and resources provided by UPNM.

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## Optimizing Workplace Productivity in Malaysia: The Synergistic Effects of Incentives, Motivation, and Working Environment

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**Abstract:** This study explores the influence of incentives, motivation, and working environment on worker productivity in Malaysia, utilizing a sample of 300 employees across diverse sectors. Through correlation and regression analyses, there is interrelations among these variables to understand their collective impact on productivity. The findings reveal a moderate positive correlation between incentives and worker productivity ( $r = 0.45$ ), indicating that enhancing incentives is likely to improve productivity. Similarly, motivation is positively correlated with productivity ( $r = 0.51$ ), suggesting that higher motivation levels contribute to increased productivity. Notably, the working environment exhibits a strong positive correlation with productivity ( $r = 0.41$ ), highlighting its critical role in fostering productivity gains. The regression model, explaining approximately 45 % of the variance in productivity, confirms the significant impact of a conducive working environment and well-structured incentives on productivity. While motivation aligns positively with productivity, its complex relationship within the regression framework suggests the influence of other unexplored variables. These insights underscore the importance of holistic organizational strategies that prioritize the enhancement of the working environment and the implementation of strategic incentive programs. The nuanced role of motivation in productivity underscores the need for further research to explore its direct and indirect effects comprehensively. By providing empirical evidence on the dynamics between key workplace factors and productivity, this study offers actionable guidance for Human Resource practitioners, organizational leaders, and policymakers aiming to optimize workplace outcomes. Emphasizing the synergistic effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment, this research advocates for targeted interventions to cultivate a productive, motivated workforce in Malaysia's evolving economic landscape.

**Keywords:** Incentives, Motivation, Working Environment, Human Resource, Economic Growth

**Citation:** Ibrahim, I., & Abiddin, N. Z. (2024). Optimizing Workplace Productivity in Malaysia: The Synergistic Effects of Incentives, Motivation, and Working Environment. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2179-2191), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Organizations are increasingly searching for ways to improve workplace productivity as a means of remaining competitive in the current business environment. Malaysia, as a rapidly growing country, is not an exception. The nation has a varied workforce and an emerging economy, and for firms to be successful, they must first understand what affects productivity in Malaysian workplaces. The purpose of this study is to investigate how incentives, motivation, and working environment work in tandem to enhance productivity in Malaysian workplaces.

Incentives are critical and effective for ensuring improved employee performance and productivity. Several studies have indicated that incentive programs developed and applied in the workplace enable employees to work extra-hard beyond their scope or duties in the organization (Lazear, 2000; Prendergast, 1999). In the Malaysian situation, it is critical to understand which incentives or what kinds of encouragement work best among the locals and how they influence their productivity. Motivation factors have also been shown to influence productivity; motivation can achieve either extrinsic or intrinsic avenues. Intrinsic motivation is the will or passion to conduct a task based on inherent rewards, while extrinsic motivation forces one to do some work due to outside rewards or recognition (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The relationship between motivation and employee productivity asserts why Malaysia retains substantial differences in people's productivity. The productivity levels from the working environment will take into consideration the physical, social, and psychological aspects that impact employee productivity and productivity (Chandrasekar, 2011). A good working environment is beneficial in comforting or ensuring that employees work together and maintain a work-life balance. In Malaysia, understanding this factor among the people, and across the industry is critical due to the prevailing diversity factors noted.

While previous studies have investigated the individual effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment on productivity, there is limited research on their synergistic effects, particularly in the Malaysian context. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how these factors interact and influence each other to optimize workplace productivity in Malaysia. These are the objectives of the research:

To investigate the impact of incentives, motivation, and working environment on workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations.

To analyze the synergistic effects and interplay between incentives, motivation, and working environment in driving productivity in the Malaysian context.

To provide practical recommendations for Malaysian organizations to optimize workplace productivity based on the research findings, considering the optimal combination of incentives, motivation, and working environment.

The above objectives capture the scope and dimensions of this study, involving the individual and interactive influence of rewards, motivation, and working environment on productivity in Malaysian workplaces.

Therefore, the results of this study: The results will provide a body of knowledge required to draw evidence-based conclusions that will enhance human performance and organizational success in a Malaysian setting. This research will also provide information on how rewards, motivation, and working environment interact to influence human performance. The results of this study in general will influence the performance of industries, organizations, and companies in Malaysia and use the recommendations to enhance the performance of employees to ensure their organizations achieve their goals. Furthermore, this study will act as a basis for future studies on productivity in similar industrial set-ups across the world.

### **Literature Review**

Workplace productivity is one of the more critical factors in how to measure whether an organization is successful or not. It is especially more pertinent in the context of Malaysia as the country boasts of having a diversified workforce and an ever-growing business environment. This literature review examines existing research on the extent of the influence of incentives, motivation, and work environment on workplace productivity.

Incentive is an integral tool for enhancing performance and motivating employees. For example, according to Lazear (2000), the implementation of a piece-rate incentive system increased productivity of workers in a major auto glass company by 44%. Similarly, reviewing other studies, Prendergast (1999) concludes that the incentive tool is effective in aligning employees' and employers' interests and thus increasing performance. In Malaysia, financial incentives significantly impacted motivation and performance, as Ismail et al. (2011) found in the banking sector. Moreover, recent studies continue to explore the relationship between incentives and performance in the workplace in Malaysia. For example, Azman et al. (2021) investigated the effect of performance-based pay on job performance in the public sector in Malaysia. The researchers concluded that performance-related pay positively impacted motivation in organizations. It suggests that an effective incentive system should be implemented to increase performance efficiently.

Another determinate of productivity at the workplace is motivation, which may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Ryan and Deci (2000) propounded the SDT theory which postulated that intrinsic sources of motivation are substantial for bolstering employee motivation. In their study of Malaysian public employees, Salleh et al. (2013) revealed that intrinsic motivation had a more salient impact on job performance when compared to extrinsic motivation. However extrinsic, according to Tan and Amna (2011), including rewards and recognition, is also imperative to the motivation of Malaysian employees. In this regard, recent studies have examined the contribution of motivation to workplace productivity in Malaysia. Mustafa et al. (2020) researched the influence of transformational leadership on employee morale and performance in Malaysian SMEs. They showed that transformational leadership had a significantly positive consequence on the employees' intrinsic motivation, thereby improving job performance. The study indicates the relevance of the work environment in fueling intrinsic motivation.

The working environment, whether in terms of physical, social, or psychological factors, greatly influences the workers' well-being and productivity level. According to Chandrasekar (2011), a conducive working environment can facilitate an organization's enhanced performance, meaning that such factors as lighting, ventilation, and ergonomics can directly affect the level of employee's comfort and productivity. In their study of the impact of a conducive working environment on Malaysian private sector employees, Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) found that a working environment suitable to work with, a supporting team, and proper work-family balance had a significant role to play in job satisfaction and productivity. More recent research explored the impact of the working environment on productivity in Malaysia. Rashid et al. (2021) studied the connection between the green office environment and employee productivity in Malaysian service sector organizations. They discovered that the green office environment, including natural light and plants and eco-attitude, had a significant positive effect on employees' well-being. This research underlines the importance of environmental factors in the working environment.

Although each of the factors; incentives, motivation, and working environment, have been studied independently regarding their impact on productivity, there is a gap in the available literature regarding their combined or interaction effects especially from the Malaysian perspective. As Gupta and Shaw indicated, "desirable incentives play an important role, and their impact is enhanced by the task, social, and people (Gupta, and Shaw, 2014). They recommended that the design of incentives should consider the nature of work, the culture of the organisation, and the characteristics of the people undertaking the work. Various previous studies have also found a positive interaction between incentives, motivation, and working environment on productivity. For example, a recent study by Lee et al. (2022) investigated interaction effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment in the manufacturing industry in Malaysia. The study established that incentives had a stronger effect when coupled with intrinsic motivation and a favourable working environment. This implies that a comprehensive approach that explores interaction effects is important in enhancing productivity. Some previous studies have recommended that organisations should exploit interaction effects to maximise productivity. Other studies have also purported that it is important for organisations to counteract the harmful effects of COVID-19 on productivity. For instance, Kaur et al. (2021) conducted a study in Malaysia to investigate organizational practices regarding remote working during COVID-19 and their impact on productivity. They established that organisations that provided the necessary resources, support, and communication channels had maintained productivity and employee's well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study implies that it is also important for organisations to change their practices to improve upon productivity.

To sum up, the review of the literature has demonstrated that incentives, motivation, and work environment have a notable impact on workplace productivity in Malaysia. Moreover, recent research has elucidated how these variables function interactionally and the critical necessity to respond to the challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these revelations, Malaysian entities can gain further understanding regarding the situation and enhance their worker's productivity through certain evidence-based approaches, ensuring success despite the existing challenges and probable future uncertainties.

## Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach, specifically a cross-sectional survey design. The following subsections provide details on the research methodology, including the research design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. This methodology enables the collection of data from a large sample drawn at a single point in one point, and the researchers utilized it to establish the relationship between incentives with motivation; and working environment with productivity in the Malaysian context.

This study targeted the Malay population of employees working in different sectors such as manufacturing, services, and public service. Consideration was given to the division of the sample as stratified random sampling was done to cover different subgroups of employees, categorized by sectors and employee level, including entry level, middle management, and senior management. The study calculated the sample size based on a power analysis, which considered the desired level of statistical significance, effect size, and power. According to the power, the sample size was established at 300 to guarantee the desired power level and account for any possible non-responses or incomplete questionnaires. For data collection, an online survey questionnaire was used based on validated influences from prior studies but adapted to the Malaysian factor. Further, for data analysis, the statistical results included descriptive statistics to describe the sample's demographic characteristics and variables distributions. It also comprised reliability and validity analysis to assess the scales' internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and construct validity. Correlation analysis was used to estimate bivariate relations between incentives, motivation, working environment and productivity, and multiple data regress and analysis. The latter was applied to determine how incentives, motivation, and the working environment had an individual and combined influence on productivity, even after controlling for other demographic influences. Statistical software used consisted of SPSS.

Finally, the outcomes has been presented with respect to the research questions and existing literature, make recommendations, and developed on the data obtained. The study also ensured ethical considerations were made, such informed consent from participants, anonymity, and confidentially, and approval from the necessary institutional Review Board before initiation.

## Results

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effects of incentives, motivation and working environment on Malaysian organizational productivity. This was achieved through the assessment of possible relationships between the variables and providing recommendations to maximize productivity levels. The study utilized 300 respondent workers from several sectors in the country, gathered through an online survey questionnaire. The questionnaire included sections on the respondents' perceptions of incentives, motivation, work environment and self-reported productivity, as well as demographic data on gender, age, level of education and years of work

experience. The study employed various techniques, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression to attain the study objectives.

*Objective 1: To investigate the impact of incentives, motivation, and working environment on workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations.*

Based on Table 1, showed that incentives the average score suggests that employees generally view the incentives provided by their organizations positively. A standard deviation of 0.79 indicates that there is some variation in how employees perceive these incentives, but it's not overly broad. Motivation (M = 4.25, SD = 0.72), with the highest mean score among the variables, motivation appears to be a strong point within the organizations. Employees feel highly motivated, and the relatively low standard deviation points to a consistent feeling across the workforce.

Working Environment (M = 3.98, SD = 0.84), this score suggests a generally positive perception of the working environment among employees, though it's slightly lower than the scores for incentives and motivation. The standard deviation is the highest among the variables, indicating a wider variation in how employees perceive their working environment. Productivity (M = 4.08, SD = 0.81), the productivity level, as reported by employees, is high, aligning closely with their perceptions of incentives and working environment. The standard deviation is moderate, suggesting some variation in perceived productivity levels.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Incentives	4.12	0.79
Motivation	4.25	0.72
Working Environment	3.98	0.84
Productivity	4.08	0.81

Table 2 reveals significant positive relationships among all the study variables, suggesting that improvements in incentives, motivation, and the working environment could lead to higher productivity levels. Incentives and Productivity ( $r = 0.45$ ), showed a moderate positive correlation suggests that as perceptions of incentives improve, so does perceived productivity. This relationship underscores the importance of effective incentive programs. Motivation and Productivity ( $r = 0.51$ ), showed a strong positive correlation indicates that higher motivation levels are closely linked with higher productivity. Motivation appears to be the most critical factor influencing productivity among the variables studied. Working Environment and Productivity ( $r = 0.41$ ), showed a moderate positive correlation shows that a better working environment is associated with higher productivity. This finding highlights the role of the physical and psychological aspects of the workplace in enhancing employee output.



Table 2. Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	Incentives	Motivation	Working Environment	Productivity
Incentives	-	0.56***	0.48***	0.45***
Motivation		-	0.52***	0.51***
Working Environment			-	0.41***
Productivity				-

*Objective 2. To analyze the synergistic effects and interplay between incentives, motivation, and working environment in driving productivity in the Malaysian context.*

To examine the synergistic effects and interplay between incentives, motivation, and working environment in driving productivity, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. A hierarchical multiple regression was performed with productivity as the dependent variable.

Table 1. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Productivity

	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1: Control Variables				0.10	
Age	0.12	3.14	0.002		
Gender	-0.06	-1.57	0.118		
Education Level	0.08	2.09	0.037		
Years of Service	0.15	3.92	< 0.001		
Step 2: Main Effects				0.45	0.35***
Incentives	0.28	7.85	< 0.001		
Motivation	0.32	9.03	< 0.001		
Working Environment	0.19	5.34	< 0.001		
Step 3: Interaction Effects				0.47	0.02**
Incentives × Motivation	0.15	3.21	0.001		
Incentives × Working Environment	0.06	1.28	0.202		
Step 1: Control Variables				0.10	
Age	0.12	3.14	0.002		

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

In the first step, demographic control variables were entered, followed by incentives, motivation, and working environment in the second step. The results showed that the model explained a significant proportion of the variance in productivity ( $R^2 = 0.45$ ,  $F(10, 789) = 64.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Incentives ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), motivation ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and working environment ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) all had significant positive effects on productivity, after controlling for demographics. While, the results for interaction effects, a third step was added to the regression model, which included three two-way interaction terms: incentives × motivation,

incentives  $\times$  working environment, and motivation  $\times$  working environment. The results showed that the interaction between incentives and motivation was significant ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that the impact of incentives on productivity was stronger when employees were highly motivated. The other two interaction terms were not significant.

In summary, these findings show a symbiotic relationship and a non-linear effect of incentives, motivation, and working environment on productivity in the Malaysian setting. The findings imply that the country's organizations need to implement strong incentive systems, ensure high work motivation, and maintain a conducive working environment to promote high productivity levels. Moreover, the results for the interaction effect of incentives and motivation indicate that the both parties work mutually when directed towards inciting employees to maximize their productivity levels.

*Objective 3. To provide practical recommendations for Malaysian organizations to optimize workplace productivity based on the research findings, considering the optimal combination of incentives, motivation, and working environment.*

Summing up the literature review and research findings, the following practical recommendations can be provided for Malaysian organizations to enhance workplace productivity in a holistic manner, considering the newly discovered integration effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment. Firstly, organizations should adjust their systems of incentives to be a hybrid of organizational goals and workers' needs and reflect the differences in cultural values, job complexity, and workforce trends. Since incentives should complement organizational goals, they should be carefully aligned with them, constantly monitored, and modernized to remain relevant and efficient in the changing organizational landscape. Secondly, intrinsic motivation through job enrichment and employees' empowerment should be implemented in the organization. This can be done through the assignment of challenging and rewarding tasks that have meaning beyond profit, facilitating employees' independence, providing them with opportunities for personal and professional growth, and recognizing their contribution to the company's success. Thirdly, a positive working environment should be established. This requires investments in comfortable office equipment, developing teamwork cultures, introducing flexible work hours, and organizing social events and team-building activities. Fourthly, the system of incentives and motivation should be constantly monitored, evaluated, and improved. This involves regular surveys and questionnaires of employees, monitoring essential KPIs, and responding to the changes on time. Fifthly, significant managers and directors should be equipped with the necessary skills and resources. This implies that sufficient training on the implementation of incentive programs and motivational strategies should be provided, and the means supporting their real-time implementation should be introduced. Finally, a culture of open and honest communication and involvement should be established. This means that the transparency of communication, shared decision-making processes, and frequent information centering on the goals and achievements of the organization should be promoted. By following these steps, organizations in Malaysia can develop a comprehensive model for increasing workplace productivity, considering the combined influence of incentives, motivation, and working conditions and achieving sustainable performance and worker satisfaction as a result.

## Discussion

In summary, the present study sought to determine the relationship between incentives, motivation, and working environment and workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations while establishing whether there was any interaction or cohesion among the factors discussed above. Evidently, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the adequacy of workplace productivity in the sense that previous researchers have barely conducted similar research in Malaysia.

Based on the descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, most employees had a positive perception of the incentives, motivation, and working environment factors and a directly proportional relationship with the dependent variable productivity (Sharma & Sharma, 2021; Ngwa et al., 2019; Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). In this regard, this finding affirmed the literature review, which regarded motivation, incentives, and working environment critical in determining employee performance and organizational excellence so far. Additionally, the multiple regression further confirmed that each of grants, injected, and controlling the working setting as independent variables significantly determines productivity proportionately, with motivation being the most important factor after harmonization, and incentives and working conditions come last. Evidently, this finding harmonized with the conclusion Singh (2022), made partially, and Adeoti et al. (2021) deduced fully.

Hierarchal multiple regressions were used to identify their combination or synergistic effects and interaction with each other. The results implied that incentives not only played a direct role in enhancing productivity, but these also played a facilitative role via the mediator, motivation and a spreading role through the mediator working environment. That is, well thought out incentives contributed to increasing motivation and the creation of a favorable environment, but it also served as a motivator for enhanced productivity. These findings are consistent with Nguyen et al. (2021), who found that financial and nonfinancial incentives had an indirect impact on output through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Zeb et al. (2022) also demonstrated that rewards influence output indirectly.

The practical recommendations of this study are related to the importance of integrating the incentive systems with organizational and employee goals, promoting intrinsic motivation through work design and employee empowerment, developing a supportive and motivating work environment, continuously monitoring and enhancing all of these factors, training managers and providing them with the necessary resources, and promoting a culture of open communication and employee involvement. All of these recommendations are in line with the findings of recent studies regarding the comprehensive approach to increasing workplace productivity. To give some examples, Hanaysha (2022) emphasized the importance of work environment, developmental opportunities, and recognition of contributions offered by the employer in ensuring that the staff is more motivated and productive. Ong et al. (2019) focused on the critical role of communication and employee involvement in decision-making processes in ensuring that work is done in an orderly, timely, and motivated fashion.

However, these results have some limitations while interpreting. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes the possibility of drawing conclusions about causality. Longitudinal research would allow determining the exact relationship between incentives, motivation, work environment, and productivity and how it changes. Secondly, self-reported measures may carry some biases. The inclusion of validity checks such as output data from work or performance appraisals can address this issue in future studies. Nevertheless, this study still enables a meaningful understanding of the factors that affect productivity in Malaysian workplaces. The results emphasize the importance of the holistic approach to organizational processes that take place in the context of interacted motivational, incentivized, and environment-driven factors. The application of the revealed practical recommendations through this study would enable the achievement of a work environment that would keep workers motivated, engaged and, on the whole, productive, contributing to the improvement of organizational performance and competitiveness.

The findings of this study highlight the roles of incentives, motivation, and working environment in enhancing workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations. With the three factors working in synergy and directly or indirectly influencing each other, the optimal approach for organizations is to consider a holistic and integrated system for enhancing productivity that can be customized based on the workforce's needs and the organization's context. Consequently, it is recommended that researchers investigate the effects of an organization's implementation of the present recommendations or a combination of the recommendations on the productivity of Malaysian workers. Furthermore, scholars can study the various moderating variable aspects of individual differences and organizations in the relationships between incentives, motivation, working environment, and productivity.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the current study was conducted to explore the importance of incentives, motivation, and working environment on workplace productivity among Malaysian organizations. The results clearly showed the positive impacts of these factors on workplace productivity both individually and collectively. In addition, the results emphasize the importance of the interaction of incentives, motivation, and working environment in developing strategies to optimize workplace productivity. Moreover, based on the practical recommendations offered by the current study, the Malaysian organization can adopt an integrated approach to enhance their workplace productivity.

Specifically, by ensuring that incentive systems also meet organizational objectives and employee needs, fostering intrinsic motivation based on job design and employee empowerment, maintaining supportive and pleasant working conditions, monitoring and optimizing these three factors continuously, and finally, providing managers with the necessary skills and resources and engaging employees in an open and inclusive culture. The overall work environment created by the organization can maximize employee potential and improve organizational performance.

The current study has some limitations, such as cross-sectional design and productivity measurements using scale. In future studies, it is advisable to address these limitations by conducting a longitudinal study and incorporating productivity measurement with scales to validate the results found here. However, despite these limitations, the current study is still relevant to the growing body of literature on determinants of workplace productivity, particularly in the Malaysian context. This study finding and recommendation provide a basis for designing target interventions and strategies for improving productivity in the workplace that suit specific human resource needs and economies.

Ultimately, proven findings from the current study can help a struggling organization work in today's highly competitive business environment, creating a work environment that keeps employees motivated, engaged, and productive. Indeed, when organizations focus on employee welfare and satisfaction, they can improve more than organizational performance, but develop a strong foundation for long-term success and relativity. Finally, the foregoing study reiterates the interdependence of employee incentives, motivation, and the working environment in promoting workplace productivity when implemented in an organization setting. Future research can replicate these findings to further explore the application of the interaction factor identified here to drive organizational productivity.

## **Recommendations**

The study's results suggest that Malaysian organizations should be advised to undertake a much more comprehensive approach to enhancing employee well-being and productivity. Firstly, incentive programs should be designed to respond to both the needs of individuals and their teams, rather than be restricted to short-term bonus payments. The ultimate goal for firms should be to build a culture in which work satisfaction becomes the primary motivator, achieved through recognition and professional growth opportunities. Additionally, firms in Malaysia should invest in enhancing the physical and psychological aspects of the working environment to increase worker satisfaction and productivity.

Finally, continuous feedback mechanisms should be used to leverage these measures, adjusting them to keep pace with workers' evolving needs and global trends in working conditions. Technology may be particularly useful in this respect, and policymakers should consider these recommendations to create a more supportive and enabling labor climate. By focusing on all three areas, organizations in this country can increase productivity while simultaneously boosting workforce performance.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to express a deepest gratitude to the National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM) for their invaluable support and contributions to this research project. This study would not have been possible without the assistance and resources provided by UPNM.

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## Mitigating Against Learning Crisis During the COVID-19: ESL Teachers' Use of Instructional Reading Strategies Via WhatsApp

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**Abstract:** When COVID-19 paralyzed national state of health, the Malaysian government enforced the Movement Control Order to flatten the curve of spreading the virus. Although home-based learning is perceived as the best solution, the realities concerning Internet and electronic access remains a challenge to many, including teachers. This can be observed when English language teachers must rethink of strategies to teach reading via WhatsApp. Cognizant with the foregoing issue, this study answered two questions: (1) what the frequently used WhatsApp features is and (2) what is the frequently used reading strategies by teachers via WhatsApp. Findings revealed that teachers frequently uploaded images and documents as their strategies to teach reading. It was also revealed that the most frequently used reading strategies are skimming and scanning. This study contributes towards understanding practical strategies to teach reading in asynchronous ESL teaching and learning, besides discussing on the implementation of WhatsApp as a means for instructional reading skills during the pandemic. As asynchronous learning is implemented widely in areas with limited internet access during MCO, this study is pertinent to understand teaching reading via WhatsApp is possible and enable students to learn reading comprehension successfully.

**Keywords:** ESL school teachers, Home-based Learning, Instructional reading strategies, Mobile Assisted Language Learning, WhatsApp

**Citation:** Indiran, D., Ismail, H.H., & Rashid, R. A. (2024). Mitigating Against Learning Crisis During the COVID-19: ESL Teachers' Use of Instructional Reading Strategies Via WhatsApp. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2192-2210), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In lieu of the recent development of COVID-19, most countries have closed schools and all educational settings which impacts 94% student body in the world and close to 99% in low and lower-middle income countries (UNESCO 2021). To mitigate the consequences from the pandemic on learning, the world accepts online class engagements to prevent learning losses. Like other countries elsewhere, the process of teaching and learning in Malaysia is now at a functional standstill to protect students from the danger of contracting the virus within the community. In Malaysia, the Movement Control Order (MCO) was immediately enforced to flatten the curve of virus spreading. This dramatic shift required the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) to expeditiously identify, adopt and implement digitalized learning methodologies, also known as Home-based Learning (HBL), that provide flexibility and meet students' needs (Budianto & Yudhi, 2021).

Within the first two weeks in March 2020, Malaysian learning institutions were resilient, quick to adapt and proactive in overcoming the challenges as presented by the MCO (Chung et al., 2020) where teaching lessons, assessments, homework, and projects were carried out through the aid of technology. However, this one size-fits-all-approach is arguably challenging for Malaysian teachers. Although online learning was claimed to be the best solution to curb the pandemic, the reality of accessing a good, digitalized learning opportunity among primary and secondary school students remains challenging. Digital exclusion entrenches the impediment across age, geographical locations, and socio-economic factors. In spite of the fact that the thought of adopting an online learning approach to compensate for the loss of face-to-face contact is noble, it does not cover all learners (Dube, 2020).

In this precarious situation, many schools in Malaysia have adopted asynchronous teaching pedagogy to ensure learning livelihood. As smartphone technologies are ubiquitous and readily available among Malaysian parents and students, minimal technologies such as mobile learning (m-learning) via smartphones offer the best choices to disseminate educational information. Besides being universally available, Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) applications present in smartphones are able to foster a competent and supportive learning and learning platform (Alqahtani et al., 2018).

Given this context, reading is a basic skill that serves as the cornerstone of all learning. It is critical for students to develop strong reading abilities, as these skills foster their capacity to acquire and understand new information across all subjects. Unfortunately, Malaysia has been grappling with low scores in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for reading both in 2018 and 2022, highlighting a significant challenge in the education system. Prior to the pandemic, 15 years-old Malaysia students scored 415 points versus an alarming drop to 388 points in 2022 (Asia News Network, 2024). Addressing this issue is crucial as poor reading skills can impede students' overall academic progress and future opportunities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring the continuity of teaching reading skills remains essential. Using WhatsApp as a medium

for instruction allows teachers to continue fostering these crucial skills, thereby supporting students' overall educational development despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

At present, WhatsApp usage has increased by 40% by mid COVID-19 phase (Singh, 2020). Online platforms especially WhatsApp emerged as the best option to learn asynchronously due to its massive user base and end-to-end encryption which has 2 billion active monthly users worldwide (Iqbal, 2021). WhatsApp does not only act as a tool to facilitate communication, but it can also provide a medium where teachers can achieve quicker and more seamless communication with their students (Abaido & El-Messiry, 2016). Thus, achieving more from its availability and accessibility as a student-friendly digital tool (Haleman & Yamat, 2021), WhatsApp fills in the immediate need for asynchronous learning, and thus shifts from the conventional secondary role to playing as the main role as a teaching and learning platform for HBL. Aware of the aforementioned issue and limited research conducted on the Malaysian teaching and learning context during the pandemic, this study poses two questions:

- 1) What are the frequently used WhatsApp features in teaching reading?
- 2) What are the frequently used strategies to teach reading comprehension via WhatsApp?

**Literature Review**

**Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)**

As learning with mobile applications is significantly different from vis-à-vis classroom teaching, Kukulska-Hulme et al. (2015) propose the MALL Pedagogical Framework to associate important concepts which teachers need to incorporate in creating a mobile-assisted language lesson.

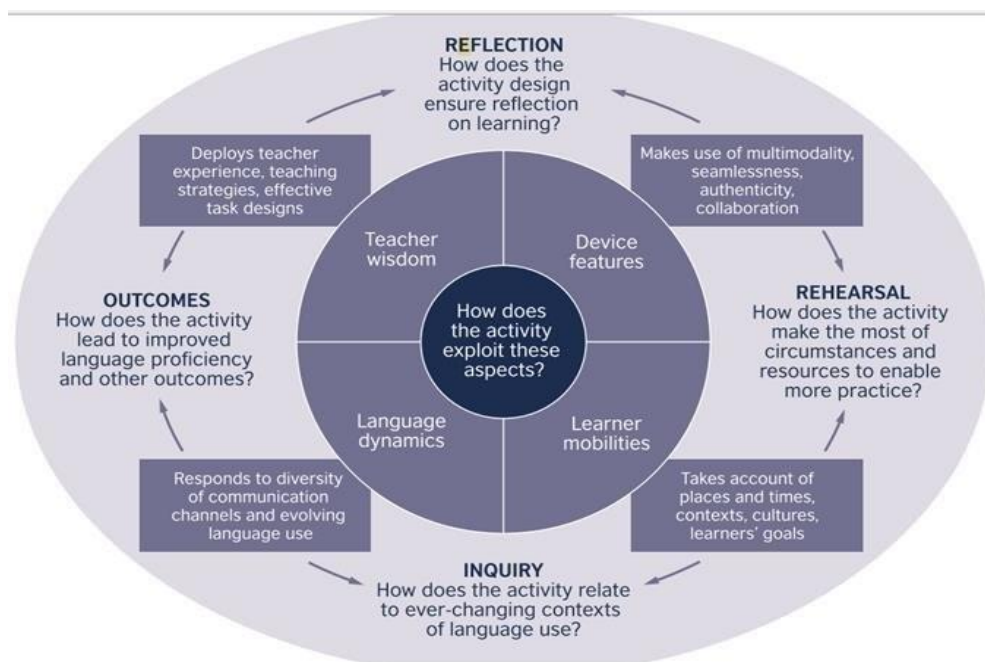


Figure 1. MALL Pedagogical Framework (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2015)

It is within the first layer of 4 components consisting of (1) “teacher wisdom”, (2) “device features”, (3) ‘language dynamics’ and (4) ‘learner mobilities’, where teaching activities take place. According to Kukulska-Hulme et al. (2015), “teacher wisdom” gives prominence to the personal role and experience of a teacher in creating a lesson. As shown in the framework, a teacher’s wisdom does not only deploy his or her experiences, but also the incorporation of teaching strategies and effective task designs to facilitate active participation from the students.

In MALL, creating a mobile pedagogy requires an incorporation of all the components to work together with one another. Secondly, “device features” include features in any mobile devices (such as the Internet, text messaging, video calling and downloading materials). The teaching and learning using MALL pedagogical framework make use of the device’s capability of multimodality, seamlessness, authenticity, and collaboration. Indirectly, this component also requires teachers to be aware of aspects such as students’ internet availability and locations that may hinder effective learning process (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2015). Thirdly, “learner mobilities” are also considered in terms of places and time when the students can learn, their contextual and cultural settings and sensitivity and the students’ personal goals that would help motivate them to continue learning at home or anywhere beyond the classroom setting without constriction. Finally, the ‘language dynamics’ see language as a fluid and changeable entity partly due to the rapid development of technology and social media. Teachers may use these new channels and media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Google Classroom to practice target language and enhance teaching and learning.

Outside the first layer lies another set of 4 components, which are referred to as the ‘connecting concepts’: (1) ‘outcomes’, (2) ‘inquiry’, (3) ‘rehearsal’ and (4) ‘reflection’. First, ‘learning outcomes’ connect the teacher’s wisdom in teaching and the target language dynamics. Students become proficient learners with the help of their teachers. Second, ‘inquiry’ connects language dynamics, and “learner mobilities”. Mobile devices should also be viewed as instruments for teaching and learning. Third, ‘rehearsal’ links ‘learner mobilities’ and “device features”. Mobile technologies help students in rehearsing and practising the target language. Finally, ‘reflection’ ties both the teacher’s wisdom and ‘device features’. Mobile devices can assist teachers to reflect the pros and cons of their lessons frequently unlike before. Past studies have confirmed the effectiveness of using MALL as part of classroom experience. Short Message Service (SMS) is useful to expand students’ vocabulary and encourage retention (Alemi et al., 2012) where using mobile features (such as SMS on a regular basis) encourages independent learning. Azli et al. (2018) find out students perceived MALL as useful and easy to use as well.

#### *Learning Via Mobile Assisted Language Learning*

Specifically designed for language learning purposes, MALL, a form of technology-enabled learning (Wang et al., 2024), has gained wide acceptance in the educational industry prior to the pandemic itself. With connectivity, mobile system development has to have capability to share learning materials anywhere, including

the usage of SMS and mobile e-mail, various social platforms as well as learning management systems (LMS). When implemented properly and in a principled manner, mobile phones have the value and potential to be used in different settings and opportunities of learning such as learning on the move (Tekin, 2024) which bridges the gap between the real and virtual world learning (Sanjaya, 2024).

Furthermore, Valarmathi (2011) asserts that mobile phones can be used as a tool for their content creation and content delivery systems irrespective type of learning – be it in a face-to-face, distant, or online mode. All in all, mobile phones are used as a pedagogical tool to help teachers enhance the process of teaching and learning in a fun and interactive way. In an experimental research conducted by Baleghizadeh and Oladrostam (2010), the usage of mobile phones has firmly shown efficacy in boosting EFL students' grammatical accuracy in speaking skills. The use of mobile phones provides them the opportunity to speak, record their voices and correct themselves while listening to the recording. Mutiaraningrum and Nugroho (2021) supports the usage of mobile phones as the use of MALL has become increasingly popular for supporting language learning in both indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Although mobile technologies are advancing, there are several potential drawbacks of using mobile phones in teaching and learning. Whilst mobile phones are accessible even in the poorest areas, Miangah and Nezarat (2012) note that most mobile phones are not equipped with educational design in mind. Chinnery (2006) posits some challenges with mobile media such as its smaller visual display unit, lower audiovisual quality, and virtual keyboards causing limited availability, limited nonverbal communications and limited social interaction.

#### *WhatsApp as an Asynchronous Mobile Learning Tool*

Many studies have assessed the effectiveness of WhatsApp for teaching and learning purposes. Abaido & Messiry (2016), for instance, investigates the impact of using the application on the quality of education. Samples showed a positive attitude towards integrating WhatsApp as a learning tool where they could easily construct and share knowledge through the social networking application. Annamalai (2019) also discovers that WhatsApp interactions provide bite-size learning where students are empowered positively, which allows for knowledge concretization and consolidates learning further. WhatsApp messaging also works to improve interactions between teachers and students during the creating, sharing, and exchanging of information and ideas online. While it acts as a leverage to expedite collaboration among learners, it also encourages communication between learners and instructors on the other hand (Awada, 2016). WhatsApp is effective for teachers to share language learning ideas, strategies, or techniques which in turn improves teaching and learning and allows for an easier acquisition of lesson learning objectives.

#### *Reading Strategies Through a Three-Phase Approach*

Strategy training is important in developing reading skills. Reading strategies help in understanding a text, which include comprehension supports, teacher modelling, reading aloud, making connection of words and phonics and multisensory activities including audio books or video clips (Moughamian et al., 2009; Wiseman,

2011; Cisco & Padrón, 2012; Al Raqqad et al., 2019). Strategies are planned and used strategically to help read better. Brown (2007) describes 2 broad categories of strategies: learning and communication strategies. Learning strategies correlate to input while communication strategies relate to output (in terms of writing or speaking). Since reading is considered a receptive skill (Karami, 2008), learning strategies are given importance here.

Effective reading involves three main phases: pre-, while- and post-reading (Saricoban, 2002). Each phase has its own functionalities. Pre-reading activities pique students' interest in the topic, foresee early information (through guessing and activating schema theory) and prepare them for the context of the text (Saricoban, 2002; Ajideh, 2003; Mihara, 2011; Nordin et al., 2013). While-reading activities help students to understand linguistic and sociolinguistic elements in the text, understand the passage, make use of contextual clues, and develop abilities to judge, summarise, skim and scan (Janzen, 2002; Saricoban, 2002; Nordin et al., 2013). Meanwhile, the post-reading stage helps students use the knowledge acquired to interpret information, extract main and supporting ideas, summarize main points as well as integrate readings with listening, speaking, and writing skills (Saricoban, 2002; Hamidon et al., 2013).

Weaker and struggling students benefit from the rich and diversified teaching methodologies that allows for comprehensive reading skill development with the subject content taught. By combining reading strategies with the teaching of various subjects, teachers can create a more holistic learning experience. This approach helps in improving students' literacy and boosts their confidence to read more independently especially during the pandemic COVID-19. Brown (2007) and Saricoban (2002) enumerate strategies for an efficient reading comprehension as according to phases of reading (Table 1).

Table 1. Three Phases of Reading Strategies (Brown, 2007; Saricoban, 2002)

Phases of reading	Strategies
Pre-reading	Identifying the purpose in reading Giving opinions before reading Predicting or guessing the main ideas
While-reading	Using graphemic rules and patterns to aid in bottom-up decoding Using efficient silent reading techniques for improving fluency Skimming the text for main ideas Scanning the text for specific information
Post-reading	Using semantic mapping or clustering Guessing when you are not certain Analyzing vocabulary Distinguishing between literal and implied meanings Capitalizing on discourse markers to process the relationships Reading extensively beyond the given text



With the use of instructional reading strategies, teachers allow students to interpret, evaluate and appreciate a reading text. Students will be able to draw upon their prior knowledge, cognitively interact with the author by thinking from their point of view as well as understand the language structure (syntax, sentence structure, graphics, and imagery) (Afflerbach et al., 2008). This in turn, allows the students to have a clearer picture and motive in reading. These strategies enable their minds to think rationally and extensively to find an answer to given questions about a particular text.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive research design, gathering data through a series of questionnaires. The aim is to investigate two primary aspects related to the use of WhatsApp in educational spaces. First, the study examined which WhatsApp features are most commonly employed by teachers when teaching reading. Second, the research delved into the strategies frequently used to teach reading comprehension through WhatsApp. By analyzing these aspects, the study provided a comprehensive overview of how WhatsApp can be effectively integrated into reading instruction as a primary tool of teaching and learning.

### Research Sample

The samples were selected among in-service teachers who continue their part time study in a Master programme on Teaching as a Second Language (TESL) at a public university in Malaysia. They were conveniently selected because they have been teaching reading through WhatsApp. The participants are primary and secondary school teachers from various states in Malaysia. The survey was distributed to 40 enrolled students, and 25 responses were received, yielding a 62.5% response rate. This aligns with Finham's (2008) recommendation that survey research should aim for response rates around 60%. Table 2 presents the demographic information of the participants based on the questionnaire results.

Table 2. Participants' Demographics

Demographics	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
a) Gender		
Male	2	8
Female	23	92
b) Education Background		
Graduate (Masters)	7	28
Graduate (Degree)	17	68
Undergraduate	1	4
c) English Teaching Experience (years)		
0-10	21	84



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11-20		2	8
21-30		2	8
d) School Type			
Primary		14	56
Secondary		11	34
e) School Location			
Urban		12	48
Suburban		6	24
Rural		7	28
f) Work from home			
Yes		25	100
No		0	0

#### *Research Instrument and Procedures*

This research employed a questionnaire to identify the WhatsApp features and strategies used to teach reading comprehension employed by teachers during the pandemic. There are 27 items across three sections: demographics, strategies to teach reading comprehension and features of WhatsApp used for teaching reading. Section A contains 6 items on demographics: gender, education background, English teaching experience, school type, school location, and whether they are working from home or not. Section B contains 14 items on strategies that teachers use to teach reading comprehension. This section mainly states the activities that students need to do as a part of their learning. Section C contains 6 items on the WhatsApp features that are used by teachers to disseminate and enhance their teaching. Table 3 lists these descriptions.

Questions in Section B were modified from the 10 reading comprehension strategies proposed by Brown (2007), whereas questions in Section C were adapted based on the technical considerations of WhatsApp outlined in the research conducted by Bouhnik et al. (2014). Both sections B and C were created based on 2 notions of the MALL theory: “teacher wisdom” and “device features” These two sections consist of statements that require samples to choose appropriate responses on their choices in teaching strategies and WhatsApp features that appear in a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never used) to 5 (Always). These statements were scrutinized using face and content validity where two experts’ opinions were referred to.

Table 3. Cronbach’s Alpha

<b>Reliability Analysis</b>	
Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of items
0.951	20

In addition to running face and content validity checks, another commonly employed measure of internal consistency is the Cronbach Alpha coefficient (Taherdoost, 2016). The data gathered from the Google form was exported to Excel and thereafter, imported into the SPSS Version 26 system. As shown in Table 3, the Cronbach alpha exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Md Yunus et al., 2021), thus indicating reliable survey items.

The data collection procedure was administered through Google Form due to COVID-19 where a link was shared via Telegram and Whatsapp. Participants who voluntarily took part in the survey clicked on the link to answer the survey questions. They could easily answer the questionnaire with the help of the internet and mobile phone accessibility. To reduce the possibility of skipped questions, the 'required' function in Google form was used to allow complete responses from the participants (Md Yunus et al., 2021). Data from the questionnaire was analyzed in Excel and SPSS versions.

## Findings and Discussion

### Frequency of Using WhatsApp Features in Teaching Reading

This study investigated 14 strategies used by teachers to teach reading comprehensions and 6 features of WhatsApp that are used to teach reading comprehension. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis of WhatsApp Features

Items	Never used	Occasionally (1-2 times per week)	Frequently (3-4 times per week)	Most of the time (4-5 times per week)	Always (more than 5 times)	Mean score (M)
B1 Uploading/receiving video or audio recordings	8% (2)	4% (1)	20% (5)	40% (10)	28% (7)	3.76
B2 Uploading document files	4% (1)	0% (0)	16% (4)	48% (12)	32% (5)	4.04
B3 Uploading images	0% (0)	8% (2)	12% (3)	52% (13)	28% (7)	4.00
B4 Sharing activity links from other educational platforms	4% (1)	4% (1)	20% (5)	44% (11)	28% (7)	3.88

www.icres.net		April 27-30, 2024		Antalya, Turkiye		www.istes.org	
B5	Discussion or commentary sessions	12% (3)	12% (3)	16% (4)	44% (11)	16% (4)	3.40
B6	Voice or video calls with students	20% (5)	16% (4)	8% (2)	44% (11)	12% (3)	3.12

Based on 25 responses, Section B reveals a notable pattern in responses whereby the most frequent answers are ‘3 to 4 times per week’, ‘4 to 5 times per week’ and ‘always’ with the majority leaning towards 4 to 5 times per week. This shows that most (40% to 52%) teachers used all the WhatsApp features mentioned in the questionnaire frequently every week. With regards to mean score, however, some features were used more often than others. Teachers were observed to teach reading the most by uploading document files (M=4.04), followed by uploading images (M=4.00); sharing activity links from other educational platforms (M=3.88); uploading/receiving video or audio recordings (M=3.76); having discussion or commentary sessions with students (M=3.40); and finally voice or video calling sessions with students (M=3.12). This indicates that 48% to 52% of primary and secondary school teachers frequently used the uploading feature in WhatsApp. Data shows that images and document files were uploaded in a higher frequency with a combined total of 80% of teachers using each of these two features from “4 to 5 times” to “always” in teaching reading.

Thus, with WhatsApp, photos can be sent quickly even with a slow connection as WhatsApp applies lossy compression algorithms that decrease the size of media files before being uploaded (TechieDip, 2020) . This makes giving a reading activity with instructions in the captions easier for teachers and students. One advantage of using WhatsApp is the capability of sending documents such as PDF, Doc, XL, PPT and JPG files, including audio and video files which renders it possible for teachers to upload reading materials, and recorded video lessons through WhatsApp. Materials such as reading texts and worksheets can be shared easily without the hassle of email or separate file sharing apps. As WhatsApp helps students and parents to download materials faster and even with low internet data, uploading them seem to be the best choice there is in this pandemic.

Academically, similar to teaching and learning in the classroom, sharing images and texts mimics vis-à-vis learning whereby students mostly learn with visuals and texts. A consensus in research is that visuals facilitate reading comprehension. Within the context of these studies, learners become more attentive and engaged in the reading comprehension tasks that are given as it becomes real, contextualized, and easy to understand the reading text.

With a margin difference of only 0.12, the results of the study also show closer mean scores between 2 WhatsApp features. 44% of teachers shared links from other educational platforms while 40% of teachers uploaded video or audio recordings or links and/or received students’ video or audio recordings 4 to 5 times per week. 28% of teachers used both these features on a regular basis as well. This shows that teachers did not confine their instructional reading to visuals and texts. These findings show that ESL teachers were able to utilize potentially useful technology, promote learner autonomy and create stimulating lessons. In this instance,

WhatsApp is being used for resource sharing from other websites such as Youtube, Prezi, Animoto together with dynamic language activities such as Quizizz, Doodle, Storybird and SurveyMonkey (Raw and Ismail, 2021).

The findings also indicate a major mean difference for discussion or commentary sessions and voice or video calling via WhatsApp. Both these features were used the least in comparison to the other features. Nevertheless, 60% of teachers held discussion sessions and 56% of teachers had video or voice calling sessions with their students more than 4 times per week. These findings reiterate Susanti and Tarmuji (2016), Wijaya (2018) and Wirayuda (2019) that most successful WhatsApp group discussions conducted are designed with one WhatsApp group with one class of students where the teacher can manipulate the WhatsApp features to create interactive lessons. These findings also corroborate with Ahmad et al. (2020) that WhatsApp is essentially used as a flexible communication medium whereby sharing of information, collaboration and cooperation between students and teachers happens.

*The Frequency of Using Strategies to Teach Reading Via WhatsApp*

Section C (C1 to C14) reveals a notable pattern in responses whereby the most frequent answers are between ‘3 to 4 times per week’ and ‘4 to 5 times per week’. A variety of 24% to 52% of the answers are edging towards ‘4 to 5 times per week’. Focusing on the second research question of the study, Tables 5 to 7 describe the primary and secondary school teachers who are inclined towards using strategies to teach reading in a certain order. Overall, they preferred giving activities on skimming and scanning (M = 3.44), followed by comprehension based on a text (M = 3.40); identifying keywords (M=3.28); making inferences (M=3.28); recognize words by saying it aloud (M= 3.24); reading aloud (M= 3.20); rereading aloud (M= 3.16); read a timed text (M= 3.12); summarize (M= 3.08); match pictures to new words (M= 3.04); and read similar topics to activate prior knowledge (M= 3.00).

The data also shows that teachers were not inclined on certain strategies as much as others. They seldom asked students to act and perform after reading a text (M= 2.88) or read extensively (M= 2.80). The most under-utilized strategy is reading at a set pace (M= 3.68). The strategies to teach reading comprehension are divided into 3 sections: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. Each strategy will be discussed individually.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis of Strategies to Teach Pre-Reading

Items	Never used	Occasionally (1-2 times per week)	Frequently (3-4 times per week)	Most of the time (4-5 times per week)	Always (more than 5 times)	Mean score (M)
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	www.icres.net	April 27-30, 2024	Antalya, Turkiye	www.istes.org			
C1	Read similar topics to activate prior knowledge	8% (2)	28% (7)	24% (6)	36% (9)	4% (1)	3.00
	C2	Identify keywords	8% (2)	16% (4)	24% (6)	44% (11)	8% (2)

Table 5 shows that teachers ranged between 24% to 36% in giving similar topics to activate students' prior knowledge. The majority of 36% of teachers gave topics to activate students' schemata 4 to 5 times a week. Similarly, 44% of teachers asked students to identify keywords prior to reading texts 4 or 5 times a week. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the both C1 and C2 pre-reading strategies have comparatively lower mean score than while- and post-reading strategies.

Table 6. Descriptive Analysis of Strategies to Teach While-Reading

Items	Never used	Occasionally (1-2 times per week)	Frequently (3-4 times per week)	Most of the time (4-5 times per week)	Always (more than 5 times)	Mean score (M)
C3 Skim and scan	8% (2)	12% (3)	24% (6)	40% (10)	16% (4)	3.44
C4 Match pictures to new words	12% (3)	24% (6)	16% (4)	44% (11)	4% (1)	3.04
C5 Recognize words by saying it aloud	8% (2)	16% (4)	28% (7)	40% (10)	8% (2)	3.24
C6 Read aloud	8% (2)	24% (6)	20% (5)	36% (9)	12% (3)	3.20
C7 Read a timed reading text	16% (4)	16% (4)	16% (4)	44% (11)	8% (2)	3.12
C8 Read at a set pace	24% (6)	20% (5)	20% (5)	36% (9)	0% (0)	2.68

On the aspect of while-reading strategies, findings from items C3 to C8 in Table 6 reveals that the most utilized reading strategy overall were the skimming and scanning of texts. 24% use it 3 to 4 times, 40% used it 4 to 5 times and 16% used it all the time. 44% of the respondents used 'matching pictures to new words' strategy 4 to 5 times a week, while only 24% used it 1 to 2 times a week. Regarding the strategy of recognizing words by

saying it aloud, 40% used it 4 to 5 times per week and 28% 1 to 2 times per week.

With minimal margin of difference, teachers preferred to provide activities related to skimming and scanning, identifying keywords as well as recognising words by saying it aloud. These activities show that the teachers provided “supported reading” (Bassiri, 2012) for their students. These while-reading activities help students to focus on specific parts of the texts without being overwhelmed with the idea of reading an entire text passage with unknown words. To further support reading in a HBL environment, teachers also use strategies such as matching pictures with new words to reinforce the learning. Similarly, 36% of teachers used the reading aloud strategy 4 to 5 times per week and 24% used it 1 to 2 times per week. Interestingly, 44% of teachers gave a timed reading text to their students, however, 16% each can be seen to range from never used the strategy at all, to 1 to 2 times or 3 to 4 times per week.

Moreover, in comparison to items C3 to C6, item C7 had 24% of teachers to have never used the strategy before, while the rest have used it in a range of 1 to 5 times per week. The application of pace reading, where the teacher regulates the allotted time and signals specific points in the text by tapping on the desk (Bell, 2001), is not suitable or applicable in a HBL setting. Teachers using asynchronous teaching may find it time consuming to focus on each student individually. Besides, students may not feel comfortable reading with a controlled pace as it invokes anxiety and hinders full comprehension of words being read (Bell, 2001).

Table 7. Descriptive Analysis of Strategies to Teach Post-Reading

Items	Never used	Occasionally (1-2 times per week)	Frequently (3-4 times per week)	Most of the time (4-5 times per week)	Always (more than 5 times)	Mean score (M)
C9 Read for comprehension	8% (2)	12% (3)	24% (6)	44% (11)	12% (3)	3.40
C10 Summarize	12% (3)	16% (4)	32% (8)	32% (8)	8% (2)	3.08
C11 Make inferences	8% (2)	16% (4)	20% (5)	52% (13)	4% (1)	3.28
C12 Act and perform the text	16% (4)	24% (6)	20% (5)	36% (9)	4% (1)	2.88
C13 Reread aloud	12% (3)	12% (3)	36% (9)	28% (7)	12% (3)	3.16

C14	Read extensively	20%	20%	28%	24%	8%	2.80
		(5)	(5)	(7)	(6)	(2)	

Items C9 to C14 as tabulated in Table 7 measured the post-reading strategies used by the teachers, which indicated mixed frequencies. On reading for comprehension strategy (C9), 44% used it 4 to 5 times per week, which is higher than skimming and scanning (C8) strategy even though the mean score inverted between those 2 strategies. The findings also indicate that reading comprehension strategy is the most used in contrast to other strategies in pre-, while- and post-reading. Reading comprehension is a set of activities designed to check students' understanding of a text in terms of word identification, decoding, and phonological awareness (Perfetti et al., 2005)..

In comparison to the other strategies, the strategy to teach reading comprehension encapsulates the entire reading process. This is evident as reading comprehension encompasses mastery of a number of key skills to fully understand what one is reading. It is easy to assess students with comprehension questions because the product of reading comprehension (what is comprehended) is gauged by eliciting externalised measures (CEFR, 2016). Moreover, teachers' preference in reading comprehension strategy directly corroborates to the School Based Assessment (SBA) in Malaysia. This assessment provides teachers a way to check on students' ability to search and select, infer, visualize, organize and clarify for answers from a passage.

There is a dispersion of similar percentage value for acting and performing the text. Ranging from 24% to 36%, majority teachers used this strategy from 1 to 5 times per week. Coincidentally, the highest number of teachers also did not use this strategy in contrast to the rest of the post-reading strategies. A total of 40% of teachers have used the rereading strategy either 4 to 5 times a week or always. Lastly, regarding extensive reading, it should be noted that 20% teachers never used it as a reading strategy via WhatsApp. However, there are 28% teachers who used extensive reading strategy 3 to 4 times per week.

Overall, there are not notable differences between while- and post-reading frequencies. Some strategies are used more than the others in both stages. Nevertheless, mean score comparison noted that strategies used in while- and post-reading stages are given more importance than the pre-reading stage. Uploading document files is the most used WhatsApp feature and skimming and scanning is the most used reading strategy taught by teachers via WhatsApp.

## Conclusion

As HBL takes precedence, many challenges occur in teaching students online. Ranging from the lack of mobile devices, internet data, working parents, the synchronous mode of teaching seems to suggest its ineffective nature in some cases in Malaysia. Thus, some teachers and school authorities have considered teaching and learning asynchronously, especially with the use of WhatsApp. Reading skills among L2 learners proved to be important



as many students do not make use of their time to read and develop their knowledge schema, thus requiring teachers to help especially in this pandemic. This study aimed to identify the most used instructional reading strategy and WhatsApp feature while teaching from home. The inclusion of elements of MALL: ‘teacher wisdom’, ‘‘device features’’, language dynamics and ‘‘learner mobilities’’ strongly prevail as the basis of this study. The results of the study showed that skimming and scanning is the most used instructional reading strategy. The most used WhatsApp feature is uploading document files.

As such, this research proposes that instructional reading can be conducted via WhatsApp by primary and secondary school teachers by choosing suitable strategies for their students. Furthermore, the approach of using WhatsApp to teach is not only effective during the current pandemic, but also proves to be useful for other forms of emergency crises, such as natural disasters, political unrest, or other public health emergencies. By adopting this method, educational pedagogy remains relevant, and teachers can stay connected with their students, ensuring continuity of learning regardless of the situation.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the findings in this study, the following recommendations seem pertinent and apt for future research. Since the study is done using a small sample, the study does not generalise to all Malaysian school teachers’ reading instructional strategies. A study with a bigger sample is needed for better understanding. The use of WhatsApp as a supplementary ESL teaching and learning tool before and primary ESL teaching and learning tool during the pandemic can be studied to gauge for its effectiveness in teaching and learning. Future research should also focus on the use of WhatsApp as a primary tool to teach listening, speaking, and writing which can be further studied within the Malaysian context. Similarly, the effectiveness of WhatsApp in helping students’ reading comprehension can be explored in the future. As this research did not consider other variables such as ESL teachers’ challenges and motivations in using WhatsApp as a teaching tool during the COVID-19 outbreak, they can be researched as well. Finally, future research might also consider the correlation between the location of the school, socioeconomic status of students and the use of WhatsApp in ESL teaching and learning.

## **Implications**

This study has led to several implications to the MOE and ESL primary and secondary school teachers who are currently teaching from home. At the ministry level, this paper recommends two: one, for the policy of asynchronous teaching using WhatsApp to be further strengthened; and two: modifying reading strategies to suit HBL and allow better assessment of students’ skills. At the teachers’ level, this study encourages teachers to realise that there are many strategies that can be used to teach reading asynchronously. It is suggested for teachers to avoid using only one or two strategies only to avoid students’ oversaturation and loss of interest and motivation in learning. Teachers should also try to use all the WhatsApp features for variety and to not let the challenges of online learning hinder them from helping their students on enhancing reading skills

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## Investigating ESL Learners' Practices Via Social Media Chat Functions to Improve Speaking Skills

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**Abstract:** Studies on social media usage have indicated that the use of social media has now become a norm with many educators utilizing social media applications as an approach to teaching and learning. This is because social media affordances have made this platform a versatile medium in the acquisition of language skills such as speaking which has been acknowledged as one of the most difficult skills to master. Thus, this study was designed to investigate ESL learners' practices in using social media chat functions to improve speaking skills. A total of 30 students in a secondary school responded to a set of questionnaire using a 5-point Likert Scale and the data was analysed using SPSS Version 26. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview and a speaking log were also used to triangulate and strengthen the data from the questionnaire. The findings revealed that the ESL learners increased their self-confidence and motivation to speak in English as well as improve in their pronunciation, grammar command and range of vocabulary. Finally, further research can be conducted on secondary school ESL learners to explore different ways of using the chat function for a longer period of time. Another area of interest could focus on the challenges learners face while using the social media applications.

**Keywords:** Social media, Chat function, Teaching and learning, Speaking skill, Practices

**Citation:** John, E., & Yunus M. M. (2024). Investigating ESL Learners' Via Social Media Chat Functions to Improve Speaking Skills. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2211-2229), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

With the emergence of Education 4.0 and the evolving nature of technology, the use of social media as a medium of instruction and learning has become more prominent (Alamri et al., 2020; Rwodzi, 2020; Lambton-Howard et al., 2020). This has led to an increase in the utilization of social media applications for teaching and learning via face-to-face interaction as well as utilising instructional approaches that integrate technology (John & Yunus, 2021; Yunus et al., 2019). Consequently, the role of social media not only includes the various methods of communication but has evolved and expanded to include a variety of affordances in the way



educators teach and the way learners acquire knowledge (Devi et al., 2019). In the arena of global opportunities offered by technology, the use of social media provides additional aid to learning and helps educators bring the language lesson beyond the boundaries of the classroom where learners can communicate, engage, and collaborate via various categories of social media platforms (Faizi et al., 2013).

Another issue that is highlighted by many educators is that speaking is perceived as one of the most difficult skill to master. There are many reasons cited for the difficulty in learning speaking which included inhibition, lack of motivation in speaking English, low or very little confidence in speaking as well as not having enough practice in using the language (Azlan et al., 2019, Suchona & Shona, 2019; Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). In addition to that, speaking anxiety was also seen as one of the main factors in the inability of students to speak well (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). This was the scenario as seen in the Malaysian context in several studies (Badrasawi, et al. 2020; Hashim et al., 2019; Chin et al., 2016) which also revealed that anxiety was detrimental in learning speaking skills. According to the Cambridge Baseline Study which was conducted in Malaysia in 2013 (Cambridge English, 2014), among the four skills; students' performance in speaking skill was the weakest. Robinson et al. (2014) concurred with the findings of the baseline study, that students had difficulties in mastering the speaking skill due to lack of practice within the language class and beyond the classroom boundaries. Moreover, it was discovered that there was a decidedly higher emphasis on reading and writing skills and a lack of attention for speaking and listening skills.

With an understanding of the problems encountered by students in learning to speak in English there was an urgent need to provide students with engaging and authentic learning experiences whereby they could speak in English without the fear of repercussions in any form. This was evident in the emphasis on speaking skills in the national language policy for English language as seen in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned syllabus for Malaysia which included levels of mastery for speaking skills. Furthermore, the change in the 'Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia' (SPM) or the Malaysia Certificate of Education examination format for Malaysia in 2021 saw the inclusion of a Speaking test which carries an equal weightage of 25% of the total exam marks together with reading, writing, and listening skills (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia, 2020). Therefore, educators need to plan more activities which can provide students with speaking practices that would encourage them to practice speaking outside the language classroom.

The objective of this study is to investigate ESL learners' practices in using chat function on social media applications to improve speaking skills. This is in line with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic that culminated in the education system's move to online teaching which included the use of social media for teaching and learning (Ya, 2020). With the closing of educational institutions globally, the need for an alternative method of reaching out to students beyond the classroom walls was viewed as extremely vital and necessary. This was also evident in Malaysia where English is a second language and many learners do not use the language outside the classroom. Here, social media chat function is seen as a viable and easily available tool to utilize for the teaching and learning of speaking skills (Hashim et., 2018). As social media platforms were ubiquitous, many learners were already familiar with the use of social media albeit more for entertainment thus



making the platforms easily accessible and convenient for them to utilize for the study. As teaching and learning had moved online, learners were already involved in activities using social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Thus, it was easy to encourage learners to use chat functions as they were already using it for their communication with peers and family members.

## Literature Review

### Constructivism and Sociocultural Theory

Constructivism looks at the learners as the main entity in the process of learning and acquiring knowledge. One important aspect of constructivism is the practice of collaboration among learners as they create meaning and acquire information from experiences that are shared (Schulte, 1996). Moreover, constructivism views the teacher as a facilitator who guides rather than the person who provides all the information or answers. In addition to that, Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory looks at the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the process of scaffolding in explaining the process of knowledge acquisition by learners (Vygotsky, 1978). For this study, the participants worked in pairs to complete six speaking tasks based on themes taken from the Malaysian English language syllabus. Here, the learners collaborated with each other using the knowledge or prior experiences that they had to help them in the process of improving their speaking skills. In addition, scaffolding was also provided via Speaking Cards to guide them as they conversed in English. The teacher was also readily available to assist the learners if they faced any problems. Furthermore, the learners used social media applications which were familiar to them to complete the speaking tasks (Hashim et al., 2018).

### *Speaking Skill*

Le (2019) described speaking as a process where learners interacted with each other in order to build meaning from the information that is produced and received by them. This information can be derived from the learners themselves, their surroundings, their prior knowledge, and the reason for their speech. These descriptions of speaking highlight the fact that speaking is extremely important for learners to acquire so that they would be seen as competent users of the language. Furthermore, speaking is perceived as a difficult skill to master due to factors such as shyness, not having anything to say, lack of participation and the interference of the mother tongue (Ur, 1996). Consequently, the lack of motivation and self-confidence as well as speaking anxiety leads to an adverse effect on a learner's ability to speak well. Furthermore, in order for a learner to be able to speak confidently in a language, it is noted that it is equally important to have some background knowledge regarding a subject-matter (Hanifa, 2018). A number of studies conducted on speaking problems and speaking anxiety (Badrasawi et al., 2020; ElNaggar, 2020; Rajitha, 2020; Hashim et al., 2019; Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019) reiterates the fact that speaking is a skill that many learners struggle with, and this hinder them from being able to speak well. Another aspect of the teaching and learning of speaking skills are the practices and beliefs that learners employ in the course of mastering the language. According to Saha (2021), learner beliefs can be categorized into three aspects: person, task, and strategy. These beliefs then influence the practices that are used

to learn the language effectively. This fact is confirmed by Dincer (2017) who states that by understanding the learner's beliefs; educators were given an insight on assessing successful language practices in the classroom.

As indicated by the above studies on speaking and the difficulties encountered by learners in the process of acquiring speaking skills, educators have a major challenge ahead of them in providing adequate speaking practices which would encourage learners to speak English without feeling anxious or apprehensive of making mistakes. Hence, the Speak English Everyday (S.E.A) Quest speaking project is one practical solution that provides authentic and meaningful speaking practices for students to improve their speaking skills.

#### *Integration of social media in education*

According to Yunus et al. (2019), social media's viable nature has made teaching and learning activities more significant and interesting to learners who have been exposed to the Internet and electronic media especially with its timeless and flexible aspects. Moreover, the various social media applications can also be utilized to practice speaking and to connect to other speakers such as peers, teachers, and native speakers of the language (Kuning, 2020). The advantage that social media offers is also reaffirmed by Teoh and Yunus (2019) who explained that learners will benefit from the interactive nature of social media which assists with the language learning process. In addition to that, the use of technology is also enhanced as using this approach gives learners opportunities to practice self-paced learning as well as improve collaborative skills (Rafiq et al., 2021).

In addition to this, a review conducted by John and Yunus (2021) revealed that previous studies have been conducted on the use of social media to teach speaking via the various applications such as Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, WhatsApp, and many others. The studies conducted varied in the utilization of a variety of social media platforms as well as the approaches of using the social media platforms to teach speaking where among the highly used social media platform was YouTube; followed by WhatsApp and Instagram (John & Yunus, 2021). Moreover, some of the studies conducted on the integration of social media to teach speaking focused on a specific social media application (Carolinaliwati et al., 2021; Utomo & Bastiar, 2020) and some looked at a combination of different social media (Baron, 2020; Poramathikul et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these studies focused more on adult learners (Rahim et al., 2023; Carolinaliwati et al., 2021; Akkara et al., 2020; Abbasi & Behjat, 2018) and secondary school learners in a foreign context (Zaitun, et al., 2021; Meinawati et al., 2020).

However, studies on the use of social media chat function to teach speaking are lacking and only a few were carried out by researchers (Ainun et al., 2020; Susilawati & Salam, 2015; Tahir, 2015). In the research conducted by Ainun et al. (2020), the researchers investigated the use of WhatsApp chat function which showed the participants' positive feedback about chatting using a social media application. In the local context of Malaysia, studies were also conducted on social media integration, but the studies looked at other language areas such as reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary (Sivagnanam & Yunus, 2020; Yunus et al., 2019; Baharudin & Yunus, 2018; Yunus et al., 2012). The studies also focused on adult learners and primary school learners. This clearly indicates a need for more studies to be carried out to discover how social media can be

integrated to teach speaking skills especially for secondary school ESL learners.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The aim of this research was to discover the practices used by ESL learners in their effort to improve their speaking skills via social media chat function. Therefore, this study employed a mixed method research design which included quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was obtained from a Google Form questionnaire which looked at the learners' practices while carrying out the speaking tasks. In addition to that, qualitative data was collected using a semi-structured interview which explored in detail the learners' experiences during the speaking sessions. Moreover, a speaking log was also utilized to record the learner's personal experiences and challenges while carrying out each speaking task. The speaking log was adapted from a study conducted by Ellsworth (2017) with a group of Japanese students learning English. According to Cresswell (2011), having a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data helps in providing a better understanding of the research question. Consequently, using a mixed method design gave a better understanding of how social media chat function can be utilized to enhance speaking proficiency.

### *Participants and Research Setting*

The study was carried out in an urban national secondary school in Penang, Malaysia and consists of 30 participants who were 16 and 17 years old. Purposive sampling method was employed to choose the respondents who came from different ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese and Indian as well varying proficiency levels ranging from weak, average, and high. In addition to that, the respondents' School Based Assessment (SBA) results for speaking were also considered when choosing the sample group. These learners mainly came from a background where English is not spoken at home, and they rarely used English outside the language classroom. Another important point to note is that these students were from average to low socio-economic background with very little exposure to written materials in English.

### *Research Procedure*

The S.E.A (Speak English Always) speaking project was carried out for a period of eight weeks covering six speaking topics taken from the English language Malaysian syllabus for Form 4. Among the topics chosen were: 1) shopping, 2) sports, 3) music, 4) food, 5) movies and 6) travelling. All interactions for the speaking project took place online as face-to-face interaction was not allowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the participants were also given freedom to choose any social media chat applications to be used for the recordings and their speaking practices. For each topic, participants had to send either two or more recordings of conversations based on the topics given. In addition to this, after each recording, the participants were also required to complete a speaking log related to their speaking experiences.

### *Research Instrument*

For the purpose of getting a clearer picture of how social media chat function was used by the learners to improve their speaking ability; a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview and a speaking log were used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert Scale from ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’. The questionnaire was given to the respondents after completing all six speaking tasks at the end of the project. In addition to the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was created with a pre-determined list of open-ended questions which allowed the researcher to probe for a deeper understanding of the respondents’ experiences as well as provide new insights (Szombatová, 2016).

For the semi-structured interviews, the participants of the study would be given codes from A to F to maintain the participants’ anonymity. For the speaking logs, participants were given a link to a Google Form where they had to answer a series of questions about their experiences while completing the tasks. Questions 1 – 3 were focused on the social media application used and the content of the conversations. Question 4 looked at the new words or phrases which they learnt during their conversations. The next, Question 5 required the participants to reflect on their speaking experiences and also about their feelings throughout the process of completing the tasks. Question 6 looked at the challenges or problems faced by the participants and finally Question 7 was to enable learners to ask their teacher any questions. This question may address a problem or challenge faced by the learner or just to clarify a matter with the teacher.

### *Data collection and data analysis*

A modified questionnaire was designed to elicit the relevant data pertaining the learners’ experiences and practices while completing the speaking tasks. The items in the questionnaire consisted of 25 items, divided into two sections. Section A gave the demographic details about the respondents which included age, gender, speaking rank and other relevant information about using social media. Then, Section B was subdivided into two parts; Part 1 which looked at the learners’ speaking experience and Part 2 which investigated the use of social media chat function.

To support the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire, a group of six students or three pairs were selected to be interviewed using a semi-structured interview after completing all the speaking tasks. The interview was conducted with six respondents (3 pairs) via Telegram Voice Chat and recorded at the same time. Each respondent was given a code from A to F to maintain anonymity. The quantitative data from the questionnaire was then analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 where descriptive statistics were utilized looking at frequency, mean score, and percentages. The qualitative data from the interview were analysed by looking at common themes that emerged due to the learners’ experiences and feelings while carrying out the speaking tasks. To support the data from the questionnaire as well as the interview sessions, the speaking logs were also analysed to look for common patterns, examples of vocabulary learnt as well as the challenges or problems faced.

## Findings

### Questionnaire

The findings from the questionnaire revealed that the use of social media chat function to enhance speaking skills was viewed positively by all thirty respondents of the study. The data obtained was analysed looking at frequency, mean and standard deviation. The interpretation of the mean level was based on Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) level of mean interpretation as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean Score Level of Interpretation

Mean value	Level of interpretation
1.01 – 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Medium low
3.01 – 4.00	Medium high
4.01 – 5.00	High

The data from the questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A was a detailed description of the demographic details as related to the methodology of the study. Then, Section B was divided into two parts which focused on the analysis of the students' experience with speaking and looked at the students' experience with social media chat functions. The analysis done on the students' experience with speaking showed that a majority of the learners realized the importance of speaking skills and viewed speaking as an essential skill needed for communication.

Table 2. High Level of Mean for Speaking

No.	Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	Level
A1	I believe that speaking is an important skill in communication.	0	0	0	7 (23.3)	23 (76.7)	4.77	High
A2	I like to learn English speaking skills.	1 (3.3)	0	3 (10.0)	11 (36.7)	15 (50.0)	4.30	High
A3	I try to use new English words that I have learnt when speaking.	0	1 (3.3)	8 (26.7)	10 (33.3)	11 (36.7)	4.03	High
A4	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	0	0	5 (16.7)	14 (46.7)	11 (36.7)	4.20	High

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Table 2 gives a summary for the items with a high level of mean for speaking. For item A1 with the highest mean of 4.77, all thirty respondents ‘strongly agree’ (76.7%) or ‘agree’ (23.3%) that speaking is vital for them and they needed speaking skills in order to be viewed as competent users of the language. Following this, three other items on the questionnaire also had high mean levels. These items looked at students’ interest in learning English speaking skills (Item A2: mean = 4.30) with 15% who strongly agreed and 11% who agreed, using new English when speaking (Item A3: mean = 4.03) with 36.7% who strongly agreed and 33.3% who agreed and the last item, paying attention when someone is speaking in English (Item A4: mean = 4.20) with 36.7% who strongly agreed and 46.7% who agreed.

Table 3. Medium-high Mean Level for Speaking

No	Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	Level
A5	I like to have conversations in English with my friend to improve my speaking skill.	0	2 (6.7)	12 (40.0)	8 (26.7)	8 (26.7)	3.73	Medium high
A6	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of speaking in English.	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	5 (16.7)	14 (46.7)	8 (26.7)	3.87	Medium high
A7	I like taking part in speaking activities that encourage me to use English.	2 (6.7)	3 (10.0)	10 (33.3)	9 (30.0)	6 (20.0)	3.47	Medium high
A8	I feel more confident and excited to be able to speak in English.	0	0	9 (30.0)	13 (43.3)	8 (26.7)	3.97	Medium high
A9	I like to practice speaking English outside the classroom.	2 (6.7)	2 (6.7)	7 (23.3)	10 (33.3)	9 (30.0)	3.73	Medium high
A10	I have no problem in exchanging information on topics of interest in English.	0	2 (6.7)	9 (30.0)	11 (36.7)	8 (26.7)	3.83	Medium high

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Table 3 gives an overview of the mean score for medium-high items for speaking. The 6 items were found to be in the medium-high range with the highest mean level at a level of 3.97 for item A8 which indicated that twenty-one respondents (70%) were more confident and excited to be able to speak in English. The lowest item in the medium-high range was A7 which looked at students’ interest in taking part in speaking activities that encourage the use of English. Here only fifteen respondents (50%) indicated that they strongly agreed (n = 6, 20%) and agreed (n = 9, 30%) with taking part in speaking activities using English. The other items in the medium-high range looked at having conversations in English with a friend (Item A5: mean = 3.73), relaxing when feeling afraid of speaking in English (Item A6: mean = 3.87), practicing using English outside the class (Item A9: mean = 3.73) and not having problem in exchanging information on topics of interest in English (Item

A10: mean = 3.83).

Table 4. High-mean Level for Social Media Chat Function

No.	Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	Level
B1	I believe social media is a useful learning tool.	0	0	1 (3.3)	13 (43.3)	16 (53.3)	4.50	High
B2	I use social media chat function to communicate with my friends.	0	0	2 (6.7)	11 (36.7)	17 (56.7)	4.50	High
B3	I believe there are many social media chat functions on different applications that are easy to use.	1 (3.3)	0	2 (6.7)	11 (36.7)	16 (53.3)	4.37	High
B4	I see social media platforms as convenient tools for promoting speaking performance in general.	0	0	4 (13.3)	17 (56.7)	9 (30.0)	4.17	High
B7	I see the social media chat function as a fun and engaging way to practice speaking skills.	0	1 (3.3)	3 (10.0)	15 (50.0)	11 (36.7)	4.20	High

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Part 2 of Section B of the questionnaire focused on the use of social media chat function to improve speaking. Table 4 gives an overview of the high mean revealed by the analysis. There are five items which scored high mean levels. Items B1 and B2 scored the highest with a mean of 4.50 each. For item B1, twenty-nine respondents (96.7%) agreed and strongly agreed that social media is a useful learning tool. Meanwhile for item B2, twenty-eight respondents (93%) agreed and strongly agreed that they utilized social media to communicate with their friends. The other three items: B3, B4 and B7 also showed a high mean score with item B3 (social media chat function is easy to use) leading with a mean score of 4.37. This was followed by item B7 (social media chat function is a fun and engaging way to practice speaking) with a mean score of 4.20. Finally, item B4 (social media chat platforms as convenient tool for speaking) was the last on this list with a mean score of 4.17. All of these three items had percentages of more than 50% of the respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the items. B3 had twenty-eight respondents (90%) who agreed and strongly agreed while B4 and B7 both had twenty-six respondents (87%) who agreed and strongly agreed.

Table 5. Medium-high Mean Level for Social Media Chat Function

No.	Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	Level
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<b>B5</b>	I believe that chat function in social media provide low-pressure opportunities for students to practice speaking.	1 (3.3)	0	8 (26.7)	11 (36.7)	10 (33.3)	3.97	Medium high
<b>B6</b>	I believe that using chat functions in social media platforms reduces my anxiety in speaking.	1 (3.3)	0	11 (36.7)	10 (33.3)	8 (26.7)	3.80	Medium high
<b>B8</b>	I like using the chat functions in social media as I can have more opportunities to practice speaking with my friends.	0	1 (3.3)	6 (20.0)	15 (50.0)	8 (26.7)	4.00	Medium high
<b>B9</b>	Using the social media chat function has increased my interaction with my peers in English.	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	8 (26.7)	12 (40.0)	8 (26.7)	3.83	Medium high
<b>B10</b>	Using social media chat function has increased my confidence in speaking in English.	0	1 (3.3%)	7 (23.3)	13 (43.3)	9 (30.0)	4.00	Medium high
<b>B11</b>	Using social media chat functions has encouraged me to practice speaking English outside the classroom.	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	8 (26.7)	12 (40.0)	8 (26.7)	3.83	Medium high
<b>B12</b>	I believe that social media chat function provides an authentic speaking experience for me.	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	9 (30.0)	11 (36.7)	8 (26.7)	3.80	Medium high
<b>B13</b>	I am able to use new vocabulary and phrases after using social media chat function for speaking activities.	0	2 (6.7)	8 (26.7)	10 (33.3)	10 (33.3)	3.93	Medium high
<b>B14</b>	I am less shy and anxious about speaking in English when I interact with my peer on social media chats.	1 (3.3)	0	12 (40.0)	8 (26.7)	9 (30.0)	3.80	Medium high
<b>B15</b>	I am more interested to speak in English after using social media chat function for speaking activities.	0	3 (10.0)	9 (30.0)	8 (26.7)	10 (33.3)	3.83	Medium high

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Table 5 shows positive feedback from the respondents on the use of the social media chat function. These items were all within the range of medium high mean interpretation. Item B8 has the highest mean with a mean of 4.00 and showed that using the chat function had given the twenty-three respondents (76.7%) more

opportunities for them to speak with their friends. This is followed by item B10 with a similar mean of 4.00 where twenty-two respondents (73.3%) felt that using social media chat function had increased their confidence in speaking English. Next, B5 showed a mean of 3.97 and looked at how social media gave the learners low-pressure chances to practice speaking. A total of twenty-one respondents (70%) either agreed or strongly agreed on this point. The remainder of the six items for part two were also found to be in the medium-high range. Item B9 had the mean of 3.83 with twenty respondents giving positive feedback that their interactions with their peers improved with their use of social media chat function. This positive feedback was also seen for item B11 which also carried a mean of 3.83. Again, twenty respondents (66.7%) were more inclined to chat in English outside the class via social media chat. Next, for item B15, the mean was also 3.00. For this item, eighteen respondents (60%) agreed and strongly agreed that there was improvement in their interest to speak in English after completing all the six speaking tasks.

The final three items also showed positive results where item B6 had eighteen respondents (60%, mean = 3.80) who said that using social media reduced their anxiety in speaking. This was followed by item B14 with seventeen respondents (56.7%) who mentioned that they felt less shy and less anxious in speaking with their peers on social media chats. Lastly, item B12 which had nineteen respondents (63.4%) revealed that the respondents felt that using the chat function provided an authentic speaking experience for them. As a whole, the analysis of the questionnaire confirmed that practicing speaking via social media chat function, helped the learners in this study to improve tremendously in many areas such as self-confidence and motivation to speak, increased interactions between peers, more engagement in speaking activities, a better pronunciation skills and improved grammar knowledge as well as a wider range of vocabulary.

#### *Semi-structure interview*

The purpose of carrying out the semi-structured interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of how the practice of using the social media chat function assisted learners to improve in their speaking skills as well as to triangulate and strengthen the data analysed quantitatively. As a result of the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedure for schools, the interviews were conducted online. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed to reveal three main themes or ideas: 1) improvements in confidence and motivation, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar; 2) feelings about social media use and 3) challenges encountered during the speaking project.

The interview session revealed that as a whole, all six respondents gave positive feedback on all three themes. Respondent A said that *“it's improved my pronunciation and also being a self-motivation to speak in English”*. This was echoed by respondent B who agreed that by working with her partner she felt more confident in speaking in English and it helped to *“increase my self-motivation”*. Respondent F also mentioned that the tasks improved her motivation to speak in English and made her more confident when speaking in English. Another improvement that was revealed was in the respondents' pronunciation of words and phrases in English. For instance, the respondents explained that they have learnt how to say the words correctly either from their partners, from their siblings or even from Google. Respondent F said *“The difficulties for me is some words*

*were really difficult to pronounce for me. But then it has become better ...*". She added that she had also sought her siblings' help in learning how to say the words correctly and thus was able to use the words for the speaking tasks.

Apart from that, the respondents gave feedback that they recognized improvements in their vocabulary and grammar after practices using social media chat function. Respondent A said that she liked *"using social media chat function to carry out speaking activities because it's one of the easier ways to look up meaning for words"*. Respondent C added that by practicing speaking through the chat function, she will *"practice with other people, and then I can use the new vocabulary"*. This helped her to learn and remember the new words learnt during the conversations. Her command of grammar also improved as she learned from her mistakes and self-corrected. These results indicate that the learners accepted that using social media chat function had helped their overall command of vocabulary and grammar. Next, the interviews also showed that the respondents felt happy taking part in the speaking project and felt less anxious when speaking in English. Respondent A explained that once speaking in English had become a habit, she felt *"less stressed and nervous on speaking English"* and felt that it was a *"chance to improve, my English and speak with my friend"*. In addition to this, the learners also felt that using social media chat allowed them to practice speaking in an authentic and engaging manner with their peers.

Although the respondents were able to complete the speaking tasks successfully, they still had to face some challenges during the speaking project. Among the problems were Wi-fi issues and disturbances from notification sounds as well as speaking anxiety and pronunciation problems. Respondent D resolved her connectivity problem by changing the time for the recording from night-time to daytime, she said *"Because morning is really can work"*. The feeling of anxiousness was also reduced by respondent C who practiced before recording.

To sum up, the analysis of the semi-structured interviews reaffirmed the analysis of the questionnaire which showed that the participants' speaking skills improved as a result of speaking practices via social media chat functions. The practice of speaking with their partners via the chat function also helped to increase their confidence as well as their motivation to use the language. This clearly indicates that using social media chat is something that should be explored and utilized further for the teaching and learning of speaking skills.

### *Speaking Log*

A speaking log was also used throughout the entire study by the participants to record their individual experiences, feelings and any problems or challenges that they may have faced during their speaking sessions. The purpose of the speaking log was to ensure continuous monitoring of the participants for the duration of the study. Besides that, the speaking log also enabled the teacher to assist the learners or to clarify as well as answer any questions posed by the learners. Thus, the speaking log helped in strengthening the results of the questionnaire and the interviews. As the speaking log was shared via a Google form link, it was easy for the teacher to respond quickly once the form is submitted and address any issues faced by the participants.

The results of Speaking log revealed three major themes, similar to the semi-structured interviews which were 1) the content knowledge of the speaking tasks, 2) improvements in speaking related skills and 3) feelings about the tasks and the problems encountered. The findings showed that the learners were able to expand on the topics based on the support given through guiding questions and phrases or words shared. They were also able to use new words and phrases learnt while preparing for the tasks such as ‘luxurious’, ‘compulsive shopper’, ‘strenuous’, ‘physique’, ‘marinating’, dairy products’, ‘composition’, ‘box-office hit’, ‘domestic’ and ‘enriching experience’. At the same time, with constant practice, the learners were able to improve their pronunciation also. They were also able to increase their proficiency in grammar by learning from their mistakes while carrying out the activities and correcting their grammar mistakes. One particular area of difficulty was present and past tense usage. As the speaking activities were carried out in pairs, the participants were able to assist each other as well and help to correct errors made while speaking. Ultimately, they were more willing to speak in English.

In addition to this, the data from the speaking log also revealed that participants were very positive and motivated to use chat functions to improve their speaking skills. They were also very happy to take part in the speaking activities and felt more confident to speak in English. Some of the response from the speaking log include ‘*I feel confident about this conversation*’ and ‘*I feel good. My speaking skill is better, and I can see the difference.*’ These statements show that the response to the speaking project was very positive and many of the learners would love to take part in such activities again.

## Discussion

The overall results from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and the speaking logs showed that using social media chat function was viewed positively and was welcomed by the participants of the study. The mean score for all the items were within the mean range of medium-high to high (3.00 – 5.00). This indicated that by using the chat function in social media applications, the participants’ speaking skills had improved. The first part of the questionnaire looked at the participants’ speaking experience and how they felt about speaking in English as well as their anxiety in using English. The results revealed that the participants in this study believed speaking skills is important for them as they knew that to master the language, they also had to be viewed as competent speakers of the language. These findings were also supported in the data collected in the semi-structured interviews where the results indicated a rise in motivation and confidence to speak. This fact was emphasized by Naibaho (2019) who confirmed that it cannot be denied that speaking is an extremely vital skill to master. Goh (2017) also reaffirmed the fact that speaking is a skill which is challenging socially and that it is necessary for the learners to be able to understand the context as well as to be ready to react in suitable ways according to the discourse scenarios.

In addition to this, the results from the semi-structured interviews reiterated that the learners had incredibly

positive experiences practicing speaking via social media chat function. The participants were aware that they needed to use certain strategies to improve their speaking skills. For instance, having conversations in English with a friend to improve speaking skills, paying attention when someone is speaking in English and using new English words learnt when speaking. Another item that the participants agreed on is relaxing whenever they feel afraid to speak in English. Therefore, the students had very encouraging perceptions about social media use for learning the language. Furthermore, the use of the speaking logs gave the learners an avenue where they could express their feelings and address any doubts or pose questions to their teacher. This positive perception of using social media to improve speaking skills is also supported by previous studies (Rahim et al., 2023; Carolinawati, 2021; Zaitun, et al., 2021; Ainun et al., 2020; Poramathikul et al., 2020).

Apart from that, the results also indicated that social media integration in teaching speaking was successful as the learners felt they were more self-confident and motivated to speak in English after going through the all the speaking tasks using the chat functions. Furthermore, the analysis done for the second part of the questionnaire on social media chat function also showed a mean rating of medium high to high which confirmed that the learners found the chat functions advantageous to them. The findings indicated that all the participants agreed that social media is a useful learning tool as well as easy to use, and it is a convenient tool in helping to improve their speaking skills. These findings are supported by previous studies which showed improvements in confidence and motivation to speak in the target language (Zaitun et al., 2021; Akkara et al., 2020; Noni & Basri, 2019). In the study carried out by Noni and Basri, (2019), the findings also showed that by practicing via WhatsApp chat group using audio and video recordings helped the learners to develop confidence and motivation to speak in English.

Next, the findings of the present study also showed that using the chat function to practice speaking skills allowed the learners to collaborate with their peers or their friends outside of the classroom and thus improve their speaking skills. Here, collaboration among the participants is a form of scaffolding which is part of the socio-cultural theory which allows the learners to be more responsible for their own learning and they can assist each other to build on their knowledge (Polly et al., 2017; Solomonidou, 2009). In addition to that, as constructivism encourages student-centered learning, these learners were also able to work at their own time and pace. As such, the learners helped each other when they faced issues with pronunciation, grammar, or meaning of words and felt less intimidated, less anxious or worried about making mistakes as they were collaborating with a friend or someone they know. Furthermore, the learners agreed that their command of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation had also improved due to practicing speaking via social media chat functions. These facts are supported by previous studies which showed improvements in various aspects of speaking. One such study was conducted by Ainun et al. (2020) who showed how collaboration among learners outside the classroom for oral interactions via voice chat helped to improve learners' speaking skills. Another study which looked at improvement in vocabulary is the study conducted by Sivagnanam and Yunus (2020) which showed improvement in the command of students' vocabulary due to social media integration.

Another crucial point highlighted by the participants of the current study was that using social media chat

function gave them an authentic experience in speaking English out of the confines of the language classroom using speaking cards as a guide. This encouraged them to look for more content points for their discussion which again lent itself to more authentic interactions between participants. This helped to widen their vocabulary as they learnt new words and phrases related to the speaking topics which was recorded in the speaking logs submitted after each speaking practice. As a result of the constant practice with their speaking partners, these learners showed improvement in grammar. This result coincides with previous studies which also showed how the use of social media provided authenticity to the teaching and learning whether it is the medium, the environment or the materials used. This is emphasized in Mulyono and Suryoputro's (2020) study where the use of social media applications was believed to provide an authentic learning environment for learners. This idea of authenticity was also highlighted in Sevy-Biloon and Chroman's (2019) study which employed the use of video chat as a medium for learners to engage in authentic and meaningful discourse to improve their speaking skills.

As a whole, the findings from the questionnaire and the interviews showed that by practicing speaking using social media chat functions, the learners in this current study improved their speaking skills in various aspects including pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar as well as self-confidence and motivation to speak.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this study set out to investigate ESL learners' practices in using social media chat function to improve their speaking skills. It is evident from the study that social media chat functions can be used effectively to cater to speaking tasks in a variety of methods. The findings of the study showed that by practicing speaking via the chat functions, the learners were able to gain self-confidence and motivation to speak English. From the constant speaking practices and working with their peers, the learners were not afraid of making mistakes and learning from their mistakes. Therefore, the results revealed that the learners were able to improve their pronunciation and grammar as well as widen their vocabulary knowledge due to their speaking practices via the chat functions. Overall, this study strengthens the idea that social media chat function should be considered as a viable tool for the teaching of speaking skills. Learners are already familiar with a variety of social media platforms and needed guidance for the speaking skills.

Moreover, this study also contributes to our understanding of how chat function can be used effectively especially with secondary school students who have weak or average proficiency in speaking skills. As the learners carried out the speaking activities on their own without the teacher's presence, there was less inhibition and more willingness to make mistakes while carrying out the speaking tasks. Nevertheless, the study was limited by the time duration which was for eight weeks and the small number of participants in the study. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study suggests that further research to be conducted to explore the use of social media chat functions for younger learners especially in secondary school contexts and also on different ways chat function can be utilized for speaking activities.



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## Management of an Internal, External Resorption and Apical Infection with MTA– Case Report

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**Abstract:** Introduction. Internal and external resorption are rare conditions in permanent teeth that poses difficulties for treatment. If the resorptive process perforates the root, treatment may be more difficult and is usually performed via surgical approach. Aim of this study. To show the result of treatment of a mandibular premolar with inflammatory internal and external root resorption with MTA in a 24-year-old female patient, with a history of incorrect endodontic treatment. Non-surgical repair of a perforating internal root resorption with MTA was conducted in this case. The root canal preparation was done with hand files and was treated with calcium hydroxide paste for one week. MTA was prepared and the full root canal obturation was done with it and the crown was restored at the same time with composite resin. The symptoms and signs ceased and the result was satisfactory at 11 years follow-up visit. Conclusion. The use of mineral trioxide aggregate is effective way to arrest the resorption process.

**Keywords:** Mineral Trioxide Aggregate, Perforation, Root Resorption

**Citation:** Disha, V. (2024). Management of an Internal, External Resorption and Apical Infection with MTA – Case Report. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2230-2239), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Tooth resorption is characterized at first by loss of dentin and cementum, and later by loss of bone during the physiologic or pathologic process. (AAE 1994). It is a physiological process in temporary teeth and allows underlying permanent teeth to erupt naturally. Tooth resorption is considered pathologic in permanent teeth and may result in discomfort for the patient. In this case, early treatment is crucial for prognosis, whereas in some other cases may result in premature loss of the affected tooth. (Patel S, et al., 2022). Tooth resorption requires some specific conditions to occur, which are (1) breakdown of the natural barriers in the tissues, (2) a continuous stimulating factor, and (3) a viable blood supply for the clastic cells. (Abbott PV, et al., 2022).

Tooth resorption is classified into internal and external resorption, based on the site, nature and pattern of the process. (Benenati F. 1997). These two large groups are divided into eleven subgroups based on anatomical location and type of process (Abbott PV, et al., 2022 Aug). Both type of tooth resorption has their own specific etiologies, which are very important in the process of diagnosis and treatment plan.

Internal tooth resorption (ITR) is an inflammatory condition which begins within the pulp or root canal walls and may progress in most of cases because of a low-grade irritation of pulpal tissue. (Benenati F. 1997). Other factors which are implicated are excessive heat during restorative procedures in teeth with vital pulps and periodontal infections (Rabinowitch, B.Z. 1972), pulp amputation and calcium hydroxide capping (Cabrini, R.L. & Manfredi, E.E. 1957), (Sönmez, D. & Durutürk, L. 2008), anachoresis (Penido, R.S., et al., 1980), idiopathic dystrophic changes in healthy pulps (Ashrafi, M.H. et al., 1980), orthodontic treatment (Silveira, F.F., et al., 2009) and trauma (Andreasen, J.O. 1970). Internal resorption may occur in three forms: surface, inflammatory and replacement. (Abbott PV, et al., 2022 Aug). Clinically, in most cases it doesn't cause any discomfort and is diagnosed during the routine radiological examinations. If internal resorption isn't treated in time, it can progress and perforate the dentinal walls and communicate with around bone.

External tooth resorption occurs on the external surface of the root and progresses towards the dental pulp (Andreasen, J.O. 1981). The most common factors for external root resorption are orthodontic treatment, pressure exerted by impacted teeth, cyst or tumours (Patel S, et al., 2022), trauma, bacterial infection or incomplete sealing of the root canal (Gartner AH, et al., 1976). External tooth resorption may occur in eight forms: surface, inflammatory, replacement, invasive, pressure, orthodontic, physiologic and idiopathic. (Abbott PV, et al., 2022). An accurate diagnosis will determine the options for treatment. (Abbott PV. 2019). Patients with external tooth resorption usually do not have symptoms and clinical signs. (Abbott PV. 2022). Like internal resorption, if it is not treated in time, it can bring to a communication of the pulp with the bone around.

Sometimes both of internal and external root resorption may be found on the same tooth. On the examination process usually two-dimensional radiography are used, but in the cases of teeth resorption they may not offer the right evidence. Usually there are recommended several radiographies in different angles. Cone beam computed tomography (CBCT), can evaluate the nature of the lesion, the presence of perforation and if the treatment will or not include surgery. (Murmalla R, et al 2005), (Silveira LF, et al., 2011).

Guideline of tooth resorption treatment is different and in general depending on its etiology. There isn't a clear protocol of tooth resorption treatment yet, because evidence-based clinical trials absent. In most cases the treatment based on clinical judgement of cases and may require multidisciplinary approach.

Mineral trioxide aggregate (MTA) is a biocompatible material which is very useful in several dental procedures. It has very good bacteriostatic effects and can set in the presence of moisture and blood. (Torabinejad M, et al., 1995), (Camilleri J, et al., 2004). MTA is indicated on apexogenesis and apexification therapy. (Torabinejad M, et al., 1999). It can create a suitable environment to periodontal healing, resulting on new cement growth on its surface. (Holland R, et al., 2001). MTA is very good material for the treatment of root perforation because it can induce osteogenesis and cementogenesis. (Koh ET, et al., 1998), (Lee SJ, et al., 1993).

This paper presents a case (mandibular right second premolar) with combination of two types of resorption, internal and external resorption, treated with MTA.

### Case description

A healthy 24 years old female patient was referred to the clinic with a fistula on labial aspect at the mandibular right second premolar. According to patient tooth number 45 was treated 2 years ago, and the issue was the fistula that would activate frequently. During clinic examination the tooth number 45 has a massive restoration with composite resin in crown level. The tooth was not mobile, the probing depth was within normal limit and no pain.

A periapical radiographic examination revealed an inadequate root canal filling and a widening of the space in the middle of the root. There was noticed a radiolucent zone outside of the root that involved a considerable amount of its length, and a lesion on the periapical zone. The remaining dentinal walls on the cervical area were very thin. The tooth was diagnosed with internal resorption and perforation of the root wall. The patient was informed that endodontic retreatment of the premolar would be necessary to extend the life of the tooth.



Figure 1. Pre-operative radiograph showing mandibular second right premolar with inadequate endodontic treatment, perforating internal resorption with thin dentinal walls.

After the tooth was isolated with rubber dam, the root canal of tooth accessed, cleaned and dressed with calcium hydroxide (Figure 2). There were used manual instruments. Inside the canal there were thresholds and irregularities which made the instrumenting process difficult. The reason of using only manual instruments was because the remaining walls were thin and the root length was short. In this process, irrigation was very



important and was done gently with sodium hypochlorite 5.25%. In this visit the canal was filled with calcium hydroxide and left for a week. The crown was sealed with temporary filling (Cavit, 3M/ESPE, Seefeld, Germany).



Figure 2. Radiological examination one week after closing with calcium hydroxide



Figure 3. Radiologic examination 2 years after treatment with MTA shows arrest of root resorption and healing of lesions.



A week later, the permanent obturation was done. After irrigation with sodium hypochlorite, the canal was dried with paper point. MTA (ProRoot MTA; Dentsply Tulsa Dental, Tulsa Oklahoma, USA) was manipulated according to manufacture instructions and the root canal obturated with the help of lentulo. The tooth was restored with composite resin.



Figure 4. Radiologic examination three years after treatment.

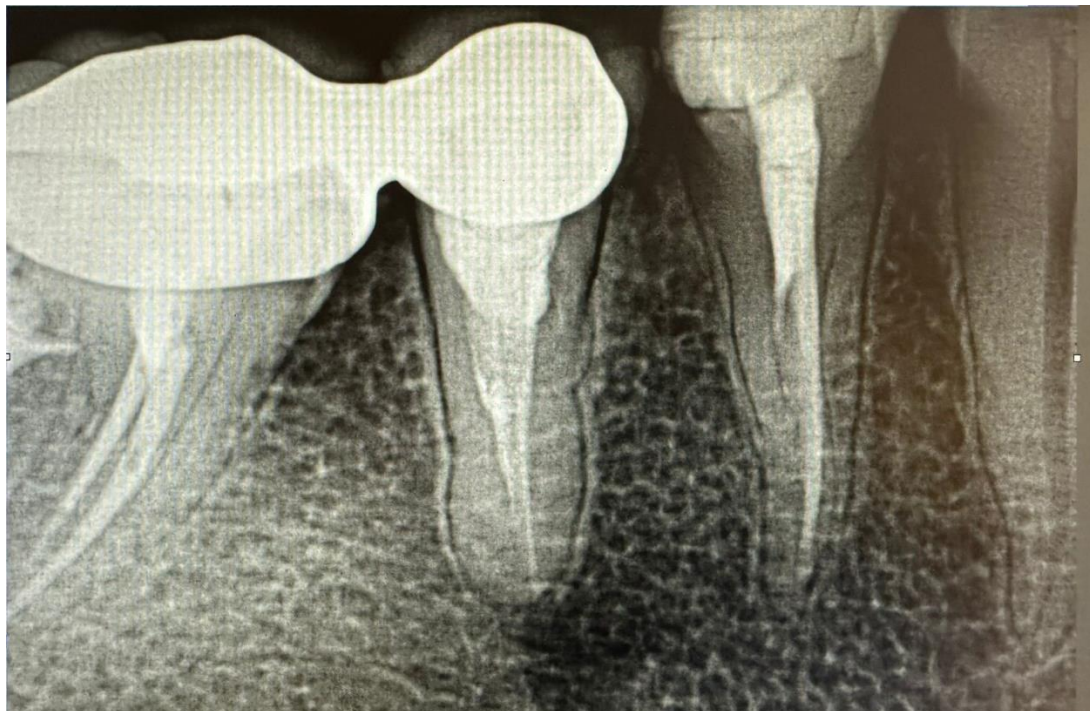


Figure 5. Radiologic examination 11 years after treatment shows total regeneration of lesion.

Two years later, the radiography showed that the resorption had stopped and there was a complete recovery of the apical and lateral lesions. (Figure 3). Three years later, the situation was the same (Figure 4). There was a full closing of the lateral perforation and elimination of radiolucent areas. After this period, the teeth 45 and 46 were covered with crowns because of massive fillings.

The patient was reviewed again eleven years after treatment. Patient was asymptomatic and the periapical radiograph appeared normal with reestablishment of bone structure around the root (Figure 5).

## Discussion

Tooth resorption despite being a rare condition, is a pathology that needs an immediate and well-planned treatment. Different points of view exist in the treatment of a tooth resorption. Root canal therapy combined with surgical correction may be the option in perforating internal resorption. (Hsien HC, et al., 2003), (Caliskan MK, et al., 1997). Whereas, the others recommend remineralization therapy with calcium hydroxide to form a hard tissue matrix. (Benenati FW. 2001), (Ashouri R, et al., 2012).

After diagnosis of ITR, the recommended treatment is root canal treatment (Esnaashari E, et al., 2015). The endodontic treatment of internal resorption is a challenge, because of the irregularities inside the canal especially if there is perforation. The presented case in this study was treated only endodontically and was regularly checked using radiography. The endodontic treatment resulted successful during a long time, a period of 11 years.

The complexity of the canal system and the defects created inside the canals because of the resorption, make endodontic treatment difficult, especially mechanic instrumentation. The persistence of bacteria in these areas can affect prognosis of endodontic treatment. (Goldberg F, et al., 2000). For these reasons chemical irrigation is very important.

Sodium hypochlorite remain the most useful irrigant in endodontics treatment. Sodium hypochlorite has very good dissolving and antibacterial properties, especially when it used in conjunction with calcium hydroxide. (Turkun M, et al., 1997). Calcium hydroxide has been show too very good antibacterial effect and eliminates bacteria that persist after chemo mechanical instrumentation (Sjgoren U, et al., 1991). In the present case there was paid attention to the sterilization of the root canal than to its instrumentation. This protocol resulted successful.

Numerous laboratory and animal studies have been confirmed in humans the biocompatibility and hard tissue inductive effect of MTA. (Holden DT, et al., 2008), (Witherspoon DE, et al., 2008). This case was complex and characterized with perforating internal resorption and apical infection. The management consisted on filling the whole canal with MTA. The short and long term follow up (after 11 years) showed amazing results in isolating

the defect and eliminating the radiolucent zones (healing of tissues). On table 1 there are shown several studies that present cases of teeth resorption treated with MTA.

Table 1. Results of several studies using MTA on tooth resorption.

Studies	General information	Results
Jacobovitz and de Lima, 2008	Resorption of incisive; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 20 months.
Silveira et al. 2009	Resorption of incisive; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 18 months.
Brito-Junior et al., 2010	Resorption of incisive; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 2 years but negativ results after 8 years.
Güzeler I, et al, 2010	Inflamatory root resorption of lateral incisor; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 2 years.
Aggarwal V, et al, 2010	External root resorption; treated with MTA	Positive results after 4 years.
Cehreli ZC, et al, 2012	Perforating root resorption of incisor; treatment with MTA	Positive results after 3 years.
Kothari HJ, 2013	Perforating internal resorption of mandibular second premolar; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 6 months.
Lempe B, et al, 2013	Tooth resorption; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 6-12 months.
Sharifi R. 2014	Inflammatory root resorption of incisor; Treatment with MTA	Positive results after 20 months.
Poonia L, et al, 2021	External root resorption of premolar; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 6 months.
Disha, V. 2024	Perforating internal resorption, apical infection of mandibular second right premolar; treatment with MTA.	Positive results after 11 years.

In this case MTA provided good sealing of the defect. More importantly, the biologic response to this material was excellent.

## Conclusion

The use of MTA in endodontic procedures is effective. MTA has been shown capable of arrest of root resorption. Using it can stop the resorption process effectively.

## Recommendations

Correct diagnosis is very important in treatment of tooth resorption. In these case irrigation remains the most important process in root canal treatment. Combination of sodium hypochlorite 5.25% as irrigant, calcium hydroxide as dressing material for one week and MTA as final root canal filling, can result successful.

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## Teacher Talk in EFL Speaking Lessons and The Implications for Learner Volunteering: A Case Study at a Vietnamese University

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**Abstract:** In Vietnamese EFL classes, teachers manage classroom interaction and use their language as the course object. Classroom language is the primary source of foreign language learning and a tool for teaching. Understanding teachers' language can improve students' learning and make better use of teacher talk, requiring theoretical and practical research. In English teaching classrooms, teacher talk plays a communicative role in helping language learners communicate effectively. Studies (Walsh, 2002; Kostadinovska-Stojchevska, 2019; Sabitaliyevna, 2023) have been carried out to investigate the essential role of teacher talk. This paper focuses on the purpose, frequency, and teacher talking time in speaking English language lessons. This study aimed at investigating features of teacher talk construction and obstructing learner speaking involvement. The results show that teacher talk plays an important role in language teaching, including giving instruction and classroom management; however, the use of language in both L1 and L2 should be taken into consideration in order to maximize student learning volunteering.

**Keywords:** Teacher talk, Learner volunteering, Speaking lessons

**Citation:** Bui, K. D. (2024). Teacher Talk in EFL Speaking Lessons and The Implications for Learner Volunteering: A Case Study at a Vietnamese University. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science (pp. 2240-2250), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

In the realm of foreign language learning, speaking serves as an interactive process where meaning is constructed through the production, reception, and processing of information, thus constituting a vital mode of communication. For effective classroom communication, it is imperative for teachers to be mindful of their Teacher Talking Time (TTT), as excessive TTT can hinder student engagement and language acquisition (Sunderland, 2000; Walsh, 2002; Li, 2023). Researchers and educators have extensively explored the roles of teacher talk in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, seeking to understand its impact on second language learners (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska, 2019; Sabitaliyevna, 2023).

Traditionally, in Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, teachers play a central role in managing interactions, with teacher language serving as the focal point of instruction. Classroom organization



and teaching objectives are often achieved through teacher talk, which not only facilitates language learning but also serves as a primary tool for language instruction. Given that a deeper understanding of teacher language usage can significantly enhance student learning outcomes, it is imperative to conduct research on teacher talk from both theoretical and practical perspectives (Irmayani, I., & Masrurroh, 2023).

This rationale underscores the importance of examining teacher talk within the context of foreign language classrooms, highlighting its crucial role in facilitating language learning and instruction. By understanding and optimizing teacher talk, educators can create more conducive learning environments that empower students to effectively acquire and utilize the target language.

## Literature Review

### Definitions of Key Terms

#### *Teacher Talk*

Numerous definitions of "teacher talk" have been offered, each from a unique angle. Teacher talk is generally regarded as the unique vocabulary that educators employ when speaking with students who are learning another language in the classroom (Ellis, 2015). Chaudron (1988) defined teacher speech in L2 (second language) as being equivalent to teacher discourse. On the other hand, teacher speak was defined by Sinclair and Brazil (1982) as the language used by teachers to explain tasks, provide directions, and assess students' understanding for a significant amount of class time. According to Krashen (1981), teacher speak is related to "the language of managing a classroom, the language of explanations in second language and some foreign language classrooms, and the language that accompanies exercises" (p. 121).

First, based on the definitions, it is assumed that teacher talk in English classes is seen as a unique kind of communication. Its objective is to foster communication among students and increase their fluency in foreign languages. Instructors use the target language to facilitate communication with students. By replying to their teacher, students get practice speaking the language in this way. In addition, educators employ language to foster self- and learner-communication. Thus, we can characterize teacher talk as a type of talk that is centered on communication.

Within the purview of this research, teacher conversation in its oral rather than written form is being examined. It alludes to the vocabulary that educators employ in language-speaking classes as opposed to other contexts.

#### *The Role of Teacher Talk in Language Class*

The language that language instructors employ in the classroom has a significant impact on how the target language is taught and acquired, according to pedagogical theory. First of all, teacher speech is the primary source of understandable target language input in the guided language learning setting; as such, it is crucial to both the classroom's structure and the acquisition processes (Nunan, 1991, p. 189). It is also a unique form of

communication. Its objective is to interact with students and advance their language skills. Sabitaliyevna, (2023) explains that teacher talk in the English classroom is one special variety of English language, so is a special communicative activity in which its goal is to communicate with students and develop students' foreign language proficiency. Teacher's talk is the language used by teachers to address language learners, which is motivated by the need to communicate. When a teacher just talks to their students and if they understand, they are not only giving the lesson about the subject but also may be giving the best language lesson. (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). In conclusion, teacher talk in language class becomes more important because it motivates and encourages students to be active in speaking and giving responses by using the target language.

Teacher speaking is excellent input for language acquisition that works. In contexts where English is being learned as a foreign language, like Vietnam, language teachers' use of the language in the classroom serves as language learners' primary source of information in most cases and their only source in others. Put differently, the primary source of target language input for language learners is teacher discourse. The significance of the language teacher and teacher-student interaction is highlighted by Stern (1983) who states that: "The teacher, like the learner, brings to language teaching certain characteristics that may have bearing on educational treatment: age, sex, previous education, and personal qualities." Above all, the language teacher brings to it a language background and experience, professional training as a linguist and teacher, previous language teaching experience, and more or less formulated theoretical presuppositions about language, language learning, and teaching" (p. 500). There is no learning without input. "If the second language is learned as a foreign language in a language class in a non-supportive environment, instruction is likely to be the major or even the only source of target language input." Stern (2006) (p. 11). Therefore, teaching language requires high-quality input, which is a necessary element for successful language learning.

### *Frequency and Talking Time*

Despite the unarguably important roles in students' learning in general and language learning in particular, the quality of teacher talk has been overlooked for a long (Walsh, 2002). The focus seems to be merely placed on the "excessive" amount of teacher talk time and the need to reduce it, an approach that is both "simplistic" and "unrealistic (Walsh, 2002, p. 3). In other words, there has been an over-criticism of the amount of time and language teacher talk takes up in the classroom for the last decades.

Kim and Suh (2004) studied teacher talk in a Korean English classroom. The results showed that teachers' talk accounted for about 60% of classroom discourse, and teachers talked about 17 times a minute, which is 4.5 times more than the students' talk. Xiao-Yan (2006) revealed that most of the class time was allocated to teacher talk—76% of the total class time.

Allwright & Bailey (1991) suggested that teachers dominate classroom speech; on average, teacher talk accounts for between one-half and three-quarters of the talking done in foreign language classrooms. Similarity: Cook (2013), LeGarrette (1977), Chaudron (1988), and Zhao Xiaohong (1998, cited in Xiao-Yan, 2016) found

that teacher talk generally made up over 70 percent of the total talk. It is obvious that teacher-initiated talk will dominate the classroom, allowing little opportunity for extended student talk. In relation to English learning classrooms, the teacher-talking time is dealing with the time that the teachers spent during the lesson explaining, elaborating, and over-viewing the materials. The duration of the teacher talk is different among the teachers.

However, thanks to the new recognition of the necessity of teacher talking time (Walsh, 2002), the shift has now been to the “quality” rather than the “quantity” of teacher talk that counts. “Good teacher talk” should be judged by how effectively it was able to facilitate learning and promote communicative interaction in the classroom.

### *Language Choice in Teacher Talk*

In the classroom, teacher discourse frequently consists of two codes: the mother tongue and the target language. Shim Jae-Hwang (2007), for instance, discovered that while English language instructors attempt to speak English to fulfill the requirements of their English class, they occasionally choose to speak Korean, their native tongue, in order to help students better understand the context. Since Van Lier (1995, cited in Makuloluwa, 2013) holds that the quality of input matters more than quantity, he suggests that using L1 can give the learner more salient input. He asserts that L1 can improve input quality and hence increase intake. In contrast, Nation (2003) indicated that in classes where learners all share the same first language or national language, teachers need to use a range of options to encourage learners to use the L2 as much as possible.

In fact, second language use in the foreign language classroom needs to be maximized wherever possible, by encouraging its use and by using it for classroom management. In other words, using too much L1 in language class can reduce the proficiency of the target language, the naturalness of using the L2 in speaking, or simply a lack of interest in learning the L2 or being shy to use it. English and the L1 are in competition with each other, and the use of English increases at the expense of the L1. Therefore, teachers need to show respect for the learners' L1 and need to avoid doing things that make the L1 seem inferior to English. At the same time, it is the English teacher's job to help learners develop their proficiency in English. Thus, a balanced approach is needed that sees a role for the L1 but also recognizes the importance of maximizing L2 use in the classroom, as it is confirmed by the Nation study (2003) that the L1 should be viewed as a useful tool and, like other tools, should be used where needed but should not be overused.

### *Teacher Talk and Learning Opportunity*

#### *The relationship between teacher talk and learner learning opportunity*

Quite a few studies have focused on the relationship between teacher talk and language learning. As Nunan (1991) points out, teacher talk is important not only for the organization of the classroom but also for the process of acquisition. It is important for the organization and management of the classroom because it is through language that teachers either succeed or fail in implementing their teaching plans. In terms of

acquisition, teacher talk is probably the major source of comprehensible target language input the learner is likely to receive.

Stern (1983) saw things similarly. "If the second language is learned as a foreign language in a language class in a non-supportive environment, instruction is likely to be the major or even the only source of target language input," the author asserted (p. 400). There is evidence to suggest that teacher speak and the language instructor have a crucial influence in the language acquisition process. But according to Walsh (2002), teacher speaking does affect students' learning in both positive and negative ways.

Similarity: Incecay (2010) has concluded that only an inadequate number of studies have discussed the relationship between teacher talk and language learning in the EFL environment. Walsh (2002), on the other hand, had a more reflective perspective on the influences of teacher talk on students' learning. He claimed that teacher talk has both constructive and obstructive impacts, which has been confirmed by Incecay (2010). The two scholars, however, have different ideas about the categories of teacher talk strategies that produce the aforementioned contrasting effects. The reasons lie in, according to Incecay's (2010) account, the different number of teachers and participants.

#### *Features of teacher talk constructing learner speaking participation*

A framework Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) was proposed by Walsh (2002) in which using term mode, typical pedagogical goals together with interactional features. Interactional features refer to specific interactional features of classroom discourse that may help or hinder communication. Things like wait time, confirmation check, display question, etc are examples of interactional features. In his study of teacher talk, Walsh (2002) found that certain interactional features facilitated learning opportunity, while others appeared to hinder opportunities for learning. That is, depending on a teacher's pedagogical goal, choice of language could either construct or obstruct learning opportunity. Five features which teachers through the use of language can construct learning opportunities through their use of language have been identified. These include *direct error correction, content feedback, checking for confirmation, extended wait-time and scaffolding*.

In another research, Incecay (2010) investigated the role of teacher talk in young learners' language learning. The results of the study revealed that some of the features of teacher talk could facilitate learners' language process while other features restricted the learning process. More specifically, 'direct error correction', 'prompting', 'extended wait time' and 'repairing' facilitated students' learning process and 'turn competition', 'teacher echo' and 'extended use of turn taking' obstructed learners' acquisition.

#### *Features of teacher talk obstructing learner speaking participation*

Walsh (2002) has stated that "maximizing learner involvement is conducive to second language acquisition"

(p.3). He considered how a teacher through their choice of language, construct or obstruct learner participation in face to face classroom interaction. From his research emerged a number of ways in which teachers can improve their teacher talk to facilitate and optimize learner contribution. Due to the limited evidence had by learner-learner interaction in increasing the participation in the classroom, it is very suggested to gain more of negotiation for meaning between learner and teacher (Foster, 1998, cited in Walsh, 2002).

When no negotiation for meaning happens between teacher and students, it becomes very possible for the teachers to take control the whole interaction in the classroom by themselves without giving any opportunities for students to learn. In order to keep the intertwining of teacher talk and learning goals, teacher should avoid that thing to happen in the classroom. Those two possibilities of how the relationship between teacher talk and learning making some strategies to enhance students' participation in the learning conversation for the improvement of cognitive ability and develop personal connection serves as the indication for social ability.

On the other hand, *turn completion*, *teacher echo* and *teacher interruptions* have been identified as features of teach talk that can afflict space for learning (Walsh, 2002). In the classroom, such communication settings limit the frequency and quality of student contributions, and minimize learning opportunities.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The study involved five experienced EFL teachers from a University in Can Tho City who were recruited through a two-round recruitment process. The participants were asked to record two 30-minute lessons, and a total of 5 hours of recordings were analyzed using a Conversation Analysis protocol. The study involved up to 89 Vietnamese learners aged 19-22, who had studied English for 7 years in secondary and high schools and one year and two years as university students.

### *Data collection instruments*

This study used two main instruments to help the researcher in collecting the data. They were collected through two sources: classroom observations and audio-recordings. First, classes were observed and teacher talk was audio-taped to build up a database for describing the teacher talk and examine its effect on student learning. Each teacher was observed for two 30-minute lessons. The observer took notes during the observation to see how teacher talk influenced students' speaking involvement.

## **Findings**

### **The Role of Teacher Talk in Language Class**

Four English teachers used teacher talk in their speaking English lessons, playing various roles in classroom

management and instruction. In Extract 1, the teacher-controlled activities and created a learning environment by asking questions and explaining game rules. Teacher talk can be motivating or demotivating depending on its complexity and language competence. The language used in Extract 1 was not too complex for students to understand. The teacher spent time giving instructions and supporting student participation, praising and encouraging their participation.

#### *Frequency and Talking Time*

Studies show that teacher talk dominates between half and three quarters of class talking time, controlling all activities and requiring little student participation. Teachers spend more time in teaching-learning processes, asking questions and lecturing. However, students are often shy and need more encouragement from the teacher. To eliminate teacher-centered classrooms and replace them with student-centered ones, it is crucial to address this issue and ensure students participate well in interaction for successful speaking lessons.

#### *Language Choice in Teacher Talk*

Teachers used English and Vietnamese in classrooms, with Class 1 and 3 using mostly L2 to foster student interaction and maintain language flow. Class 2 and 4 used L1 for classroom management, translation, and grammar. Students in these classrooms received less input from teachers, using L1 for interaction. L1 should be used when needed but not overused, as it can negatively influence target language acquisition. In Extract 4, the teacher used English to motivate students, correcting phrases and encouraging them to speak English.

Students used both languages in speaking activities, including Vietnamese and English. However, teachers switched between codes, resulting in less participation in purpose language. In Class 2, Vietnamese was overused in English speaking, resulting in little interaction. Overall, learners were active enough to possess the target language.

#### *Teacher Talk and Learning Opportunity*

##### *Features of teacher talk constructing learner speaking participation*

Five features which teachers through the use of language can construct learning opportunities through their use of language have been identified. These include *Direct error correction*, *Content feedback*, *Checking for confirmation*, *Extended wait-time* and *Scaffolding*.

Studies suggest teachers should avoid excessive direct error correction in speaking performances to minimize interruption and encourage student involvement. Four teachers observed always giving direct error correction when students made errors, which is time-saving, less intrusive, and preferred by learners. This method helps maintain oral fluency and helps learners develop good grounding in English grammatical points. This approach is favored by learners.

A conversational atmosphere was created in the classroom by the teacher's use of language that was relatable to everyday situations, as Extract 6 shows. This promoted a balance between the teacher's language and the instructional goal.

According to prior research, it is advisable to promote confirmation checks and clarification questions between educators and students as well as between educators and students. According to this study, teachers were successful in achieving this by letting students participate as much as possible in oral activities. The primary indicator of the students' engagement was their answer rotation in the Initiation-answer-Follow-up sequence. Students engaged in confident conversation about activities and comparisons in Extract 6, and the teacher was more inclined to validate their answers. This method preserves the flow while optimizing speech learning.

Extended wait-time, which allows teachers to answer questions, not only increases the number of learner responses but also results in more complex answers and increases learner/learner interaction. This allows students to formulate more comprehensive answers without the teacher's intervention. In a communicative classroom, teachers should allow students to process longer, leading to better outcomes. For example, a teacher could allow a student to think and wait for several seconds before answering a question, resulting in a longer response. This approach not only increases the number of students responding but also increases the average length of their responses and the proportion of student-initiated questioning.

Scaffolding is a teaching method that involves providing students with missing words to help them express their ideas. This process, known as "filling the gaps," helps students find the right language to express their ideas. In some cases, teachers may intervene too much or too early, but it encourages students to actively participate in classroom discourse. Scaffolding helps maintain the flow of interaction between the teacher and students, allowing them to contribute appropriately. However, teachers should be able to listen carefully and provide language support when necessary.

#### *Features of teacher talk obstructing learner speaking participation*

Depending on the quality of teacher talk, obstruction may happen which subsequently hinders learning opportunity. Turn completion, teacher echo and teacher interruptions have been identified as features of teach talk that can afflict space for learning (Walsh, 2002). However, two of the features could be found in the study which were turn completion and teacher interruptions.

Walsh (2002) argues that completing student turns in the classroom is not the same as scaffolding, where learners are given linguistic support. Instead, it limits the frequency and quality of student contributions, as they are not given time to clarify and reformulate their contributions. For example, in an example, one turn is immediately followed by another without allowing time for students to formulate their responses. This can lead to a lack of learning opportunities and a lack of time for students to engage in speaking interaction.



Teachers can interrupt students, leading to forgetfulness and a breakdown in language learning. Walsh (2002) found that mid-flow interruptions can hinder long-term contributions to speaking performances. Establishing awareness of teachers' language choice can enhance learning opportunities, but obstructive features may hinder long-term contributions.

## Discussions

This study highlights the benefits of teacher talk in fostering learner involvement in foreign language classrooms. Teachers' use of language and pedagogic goals align, promoting reformulation and clarification, leading to greater language proficiency. The research focuses on four aspects related to language learning: frequency, talking time, code, and purpose. Classroom observation and audio-recordings show that teacher talk influences students' English-speaking learning both obstructively and constructively. However, teachers should raise awareness of the importance of teacher talk in EFL classrooms to maximize learner participation. The findings provide insights into current English-speaking lessons and suggest that teachers can improve their teaching quality through conscious language use.

## Conclusion

This study investigates the role of teacher talk in English-speaking classrooms in Vietnam. It focuses on the communication-based nature of teacher talk and its role in instruction giving and classroom management. Teacher talk is more dominant than student reaction in teacher fronted activities, such as presenting new vocabulary and lesson information. It also occurs in other stages of the classroom, such as correcting errors, checking for confirmation, questioning, and providing feedback.

The study found that teacher talk performs seven interactional features in classroom interaction, divided into constructing features and obstructing features. Constructing features include direct error correction, content feedback, checking for confirmation, extended wait-time, and scaffolding. Obstructing features, such as turn completion and teacher interruption, allow less time for students to engage in speaking interaction.

Data from classroom observation and audio-recording indicate that teacher talk influences student learning in both obstructively and constructively. However, the frequent use, talking time, purpose, and language choice of teacher talk can sometimes hinder student learning. The most notable suggestion from teachers for improvements in teacher talk is flexibility and timely adjustment.

The study also found that scaffolding is the most frequent type of teacher talk, allowing teachers to maintain the flow of classroom interaction and create learning opportunities for students. By combining constructive teacher talk, classroom management, and supportive relationships, teachers and students can create a good learning environment, leading to better learning outcomes.

## Recommendations

This study aims to expand research in applied linguistics, particularly educational linguistics. Two suggestions are to explore the impact of teacher talk on students' performance, interaction, and attitudes in speaking English language classes, as well as in listening, reading, and writing classes. Further research could be conducted in different classroom settings or using data instruments like interviews or videotapes. The findings contribute to investigating speaking foreign language teaching classrooms.

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## **Internet Gaming Disorder and Self-Control as Sequential Mediators between Sensation Seeking and Life Satisfaction in Malaysian MOBA Players**

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**Abstract:** To date, insufficient attention has been directed toward Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) in the Malaysian context. The present study aims to examine the predictive roles of (1) sensation seeking on Internet gaming disorder (IGD), (2) self-control on IGD, and (3) IGD on life satisfaction among MOBA players in the Malaysian context. Two mediation models were also created: (1) self-control as a mediator for sensation seeking and IGD, and (2) self-control and IGD were sequential mediators for sensation seeking and life satisfaction. In the present study, 920 MOBA players were recruited through MOBA online groups on social media. The results showed that sensation seeking is a significant positive predictor of IGD; self-control is a significant negative predictor of IGD; and IGD is a significant negative predictor of life satisfaction. As for the mediating effects, self-control significantly mediates the relationship between sensation seeking and IGD. Additionally, self-control and IGD are also significant sequential mediators for sensation seeking and life satisfaction. This study offers initial insights into the understudied MOBA context, emphasizing the need for future research to broaden the scope and contribute more robust evidence for the development of preventive, intervention, and treatment measures.

**Keywords:** MOBA players, sensation seeking, self-control, life satisfaction, Internet gaming disorder

**Citation:** T'ng, S.T., Ho., K.H., Leong, W.S., Siah, P.C., & Abdul Jalil, N.I. (2024). Internet gaming disorder and self-control as sequential mediators between sensation seeking and life satisfaction in Malaysian MOBA

players. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2251-2264), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The unique combination of 4G Internet access (Naknawa & Ibrahim, 2021) and the proliferation of smartphones (Gao & Shih, 2018) have contributed to the rise of mobile gaming. In Southeast Asia, an increasing number of players are actively involved in multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games. Players are gradually transitioning from traditional MOBA games like *Defense of the Ancients (DOTA) 2* and *Counter Strike Global Offensive (CSGO)* to mobile MOBA games such as *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* (Tan et al., 2022). To date, *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* ( a popular MOBA game) is ranked as the top-grossing gaming app in Malaysia (Similarweb, 2024).

MOBA is a sub-genre of Real-Time Strategy (RTS) games in which two opposing teams are pitted on a symmetric map, aiming to annihilate the opposing team (Cannizzo & Ramirez, 2015). Mobile gaming has also emerged as a dominant segment, specifically constituting 49% of the total global market (Newzoo, 2023). The online gaming industry has significant contributions to digital culture and the economy. However, it is important to note that excessive gameplay can result in technology-related addiction.

Internet gaming disorder (IGD), which is also known as gaming addiction, has become a growing concern over the past decade (Feng et al., 2017). IGD has been introduced and documented in Section III of the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) and also the latest edition of DSM-5-TR (American Psychiatric Association, APA, 2013, 2022), which highlighted “significant impairment or distress” in several domains of life of individuals with IGD. Other specific criteria for diagnosing IGD include preoccupation with gaming, experience of withdrawal symptoms, higher tolerance, unsuccessful at reducing or withdrawing from gaming, giving up other activities, continued gaming despite adverse consequences, deceiving significant others about the amount of time in gaming, using gaming as a method of mood regulation, and risk jeopardizing job or relationship due to gaming. IGD is known to be associated with adverse health impacts, including musculoskeletal problems such as neck pain and back pain (Tholl et al., 2022), obesity (Tsitsika et al., 2016), disturbed sleeping patterns and disrupted circadian rhythms (Dworak et al., 2007).

Despite the growing recognition of IGD and its implications for well-being, there remains a significant gap in understanding the interplay between these key variables (i.e., sensation seeking, self-control, IGD, and life-satisfaction), particularly within the context of MOBA players. Several studies examined sensation seeking and problematic gaming behaviours (e.g., Hu et al., 2017; Mehroof & Griffiths, 2010; Tian et al., 2019). However, very limited studies have investigated the sequential mediation model involving self-control. Self-control plays a pivotal role in regulating gaming behaviours and mitigating the negative consequences of excessive gaming. Understanding these sequential mediation processes is crucial for developing targeted interventions that

eventually enhance the overall well-being of this population.

The dual-process model of addiction suggests that addictive behaviours emerge from the combined influence of two distinct cognitive processes: impulsive and reflective systems (Diederich & Trueblood, 2018; Stacy & Wiers, 2010). The progression of addiction is characterised by an imbalance between these systems, specifically in that the impulsive system becomes stronger but the reflective system weakens. In the present study, sensation seeking activates the impulsive system, leading individuals to seek out stimulating and rewarding experiences such as gaming. IGD reflects dysregulation in the impulsive system, wherein individuals struggle to control their excessive gaming behaviour despite experiencing negative outcomes. Self-control serves as one of the sequential mediators, representing the capacity of the control system to regulate the override impulsive urges of gaming behaviour. Consequently, high life satisfaction results from a balance between both systems, with strong self-control in managing leisure activity (i.e., gaming) and important life aspects contributing to overall well-being. However, an imbalance that develops between these two systems is viewed as a function of addiction progression, making an individual engage in addictive behaviour continuously (Lindgren et al. 2019). To the best knowledge, limited studies (e.g., Liao et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020) applied this dual-process model of addiction in the gaming context, particularly MOBA genre among young adults. Therefore, the application of this dual-process model of addiction is still underexplored, warranting more empirical evidence to support the usefulness of the selected theoretical model.

## Literature Review

The pursuit of novel and intense experiences, known as sensation seeking, has consistently been associated with the prevalence of IGD (Hu et al., 2017; Mehroof & Griffiths, 2010; Tian et al., 2019). Conversely, having strong self-control appears to act as a potential safeguard against the development of IGD (Yu et al., 2021). Individuals with heightened sensation seeking are more likely to develop a biological sensitivity to pleasurable sensations, contributing to greater susceptibility to substance and behavioural addictions. In general, high sensation seeking traits make individuals more vulnerable to some activities, driven by a relentless pursuit of novel and stimulating experiences (Çelik et al., 2022; Hu et al., 2017; Pokhrel et al., 2013).

Mills and Allen (2020) reported a negative association between self-control and the severity of IGD symptoms among university students. The findings suggest that video game players with lower self-control are found to have stronger amotivation towards video gaming, which is then further correlated positively with IGD. Additionally, having greater self-control suggests having more mastery over internal impulses. As a result, greater self-control might diminish the intensity of “unsanctioned” internal pressures individuals impose on themselves, thus reducing players’ introjected regulation over gameplay. Therefore, heightened self-control signifies that individuals act with intentionality. Consequently, strong self-control suggests that the decision to participate in or abstain from video games is more purposeful, and individuals are more conscious of their motivations for actions.

Life satisfaction is regarded as a crucial gauge of an individual's ability to adjust to the changes stemming from their living circumstances (Diener et al., 1999). It also refers to a cognitive assessment an individual makes of their own life (Pavot, 1991). Empirical evidence proposes the addictive nature of video games, as players frequently report increased gaming duration, a perceived loss of control over usage, experiences of withdrawal symptoms, and strong urges when not engaged in gaming (Gentile et al., 2011; Rehbein et al., 2013; van Holst et al., 2012). Moreover, the time spent on gaming has been positively linked with psychosocial impairments, such as low mood or depression, anxiety, stress, and lower life satisfaction. The presence of problem gaming has been linked with impaired response inhibitions, particularly in the presence of game-related cues. This suggests that attentional biases are typically observed in individuals with clinically addictive disorders, explaining the persistent pattern of problematic gaming via heightened risk of relapse (van Holst et al., 2012).

### **The Present Study**

The primary aim of the present study was to examine the interaction between the key variables (sensation seeking, self-control, IGD, and life satisfaction) among youth MOBA players in Malaysia. The study was driven by these research objectives. Firstly, it aimed to understand the (1) predictive roles of sensation seeking and self-control on IGD, and (2) IGD on life satisfaction. Secondly, it sought to investigate (3) the mediating role of self-control on sensation seeking and IGD, and (4) the sequential mediating effect of both self-control and IGD on sensation seeking and life satisfaction. The hypotheses of the present study are as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Sensation seeking positively predicts IGD among MOBA players.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Self-control negatively predicts IGD among MOBA players.
- H<sub>3</sub>: IGD negatively predicts life satisfaction among MOBA players.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Self-control mediates sensation seeking and IGD among MOBA players.
- H<sub>5</sub>: The indirect effect between sensation seeking and life satisfaction through the sequential mediators (i.e., self-control and IGD) is significant.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

The present study utilised a cross-sectional research design, primarily due to the absence of a sampling frame. Consequently, a non-probability judgmental sampling method was adopted. The dispersed nature of players across private residential areas would make online survey the most practical means of data collection. The data collection procedure adhered to the ethical standards outlined in the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2005. Ethical approval was granted by the Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (Ref No: U/SERC/263/2022).



Potential participants were invited to take part in a Qualtrics online survey. The survey link was distributed within the randomly selected Malaysian MOBA Facebook groups through the use of keywords such as “*Mobile Legends Malaysia*”, “*DOTA 2 Malaysia*”, “*League of Legends Malaysia*”, and “*Honor of Kings Malaysia*” in the search engine. Each identified group was provided a random number, and 28 Facebook groups were included.

Three inclusion criteria were set to ensure that participants fulfilled specific characteristics: (1) being a MOBA player, (2) aged between 18 and 35 (to be consistent with the youth age definition by the Malaysian Youth Council (2019), and (3) have at least 12-month MOBA gaming experience. A total of 920 MOBA players were recruited, and electronic consent was obtained from all participants. To main data integrity, cases with significant missing values ( $n = 87$ ), disqualified age ( $n = 23$ ), inadequate gaming experience ( $n = 38$ ), completion of the survey in less than five minutes ( $n = 42$ ), and straight-lining data for all items ( $n = 16$ ) were excluded from final analyses. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 714 participants. As for the participants’ demographical profile, most of the participants were males ( $n = 465$ , 65.1%) with mean age = 25.42 years old ( $SD = 4.07$ ). More than half of the participants were single ( $n = 460$ , 64.40%) and employed ( $n = 353$ , 49.4%). The largest group of gaming experience (in years) was 10 years and above ( $n = 281$ , 39.4%). A significant portion of the players engaged in gaming sessions ranging from 2 to 8 times per week ( $n = 452$ , 63.3%).

### *Measures*

#### *Internet Gaming Disorder Scale – Short Form (IGDS9-SF)*

Pontes and Griffiths (2015) created this scale to measure the intensity of Internet gaming disorder. It comprises nine items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1(*never*) to 5(*very often*). Hence, the overall score range is from 9 to 45. A higher score suggests a greater manifestation of IGD symptoms. The scale was found with satisfactory reliability with Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .867$ .

#### *Modified Version of Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS-V)*

The modified version of this scale was introduced by Steinberg et al. (2008) which was originally from Zuckerman et al. (1978). This scale consists of six items which are administered on a 6-point Likert scale 1(*almost always untrue of me*) to 6(*almost always true of you*). The total scores ranged from 6 to 36. The higher the scores, the stronger the sensation seeking level. This scale displayed a good reliability score with Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .811$ .

#### *Brief Self-Control Scale – Refined Version (BSCS-R)*

This scale was created by Maloney et al. (2012) to measure self-control. It has eight items and they are administered on a 5-Likert point from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 5(*very much like me*). The scoring pattern of the scale signifies a higher score corresponds to lower self-control. The scale was found with a satisfactory

reliability,  $\alpha = .852$ .

### *Satisfaction with Life Scale*

This scale was constructed by Diener et al. (1985). It measures life satisfaction with five items which were administered on a 7-point scale, specifically from 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*). The higher the score, the greater one's life satisfaction. The scale exhibited a high reliability score,  $\alpha = .883$ .

### *Data Analytic Plan*

Data cleaning was conducted by SPSS version 26 while hypothesis testing was carried out using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.2. SmartPLS is a leading software for Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). According to Hair et al. (2017), PLS-SEM is well-suited for addressing modeling issues, such as non-normal data, which is commonly found in social science studies. Henseler et al. (2009) also described that PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for exploring and validating exploratory models. The research in the MOBA game genre, particularly in the local context is still understudied, reflecting the exploratory nature of the research. The present study first examined the multivariate normality using Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis, as recommended by Hair et al. (2017). Subsequently, a measurement model was created to examine the psychometric properties (i.e., construct validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliabilities). Upon this examination, a structural model was applied for hypothesis testing, specifically examining the direct and indirect effects. The significance of the path coefficients and outer loadings was evaluated using the bootstrapping method (5000 resamples, Hair et al., 2017).

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

Multivariate outliers were identified using Mahalanobis distance. Four cases were eliminated due to their low probability of  $D^2$ , leaving 710 cases for hypothesis testing. Multivariate normality was evaluated using Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis, the results were created at <https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/kurtosis/results.php?url=eDeca7f419f2ed300d456e9380969489>. A violation of multivariate normality was observed as the  $p$ -values for both skewness and kurtosis were statistically significant. As such, SmartPLS was chosen for hypothesis testing.

### *The Measurement Model*

The psychometric properties (i.e., construct validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliabilities) of the measurement model were examined. In Table 1, the outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) for construct validity, and composite reliabilities of each latent construct are shown. In general, the outer loadings ranged from .527 to .896 and are statistically significant at  $p < .001$ . Two of the constructs (i.e., IGD and self-

control) are found with AVEs slightly below the .50 threshold. However, the composite reliabilities of these constructs are at highly satisfactory levels (greater than .80). Hair et al. (2019) emphasised that the constructs are acceptable if they are theoretically supported by existing literature. As for discriminant validity, each latent construct displays HTMT value below the .90 cut-off as suggested by Henseler et al. (2015).

*The Structural Model*

Figure 1 shows that sensation seeking ( $\beta = .196, p < .001$ ) is a significant positive predictor of IGD, and H<sub>1</sub> is supported. Self-control is a negative predictor of IGD ( $\beta = -.484, p < .001$ ), H<sub>2</sub> is supported. It is important to take note that Maloney et al. (2012) interpreted the total scores of BSCS-R in a way that higher scores indicate a lower level of self-control. IGD also negatively predicts life satisfaction among MOBA players ( $\beta = -.352, p < .001$ ), and H<sub>3</sub> is supported. Additionally, self-control functions as a significant mediator for sensation seeking and IGD with indirect effect ( $\beta = .175, p < .001$ ), and H<sub>4</sub> is supported. As for the sequential mediating effect, both self-control and IGD significantly mediate sensation seeking and life satisfaction negatively ( $\beta = -.062, p < .001$ ), H<sub>5</sub> is supported. A total of 33.9% variances in IGD and 12.3% variances in life satisfaction are explained by the key variables in the present study.

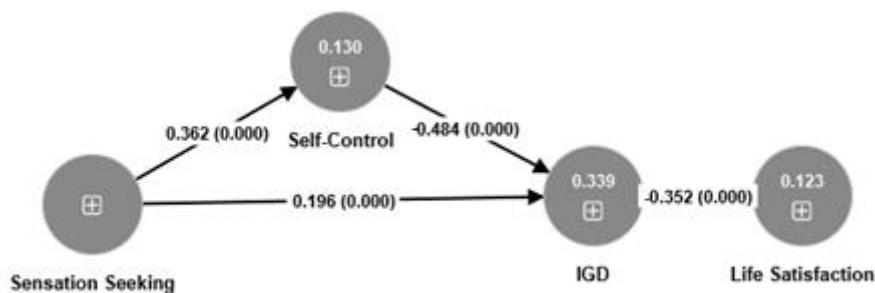


Figure 1. The Structural Model

Table 1. Outer Loadings, AVEs, and Composite Reliabilities

	Internet Gaming Disorder	Sensation Seeking	Self- Control	Life Satisfaction	AVE	Composite Reliability
IGD_1	.639				.491	.896
IGD_2	.769					
IGD_3	.664					
IGD_4	.775					
IGD_5	.728					
IGD_6	.707					
IGD_7	.527					
IGD_8	.729					
IGD_9						

SS_1	.609		.517	.864
SS_2	.752			
SS_3	.768			
SS_4	.640			
SS_5	.798			
SC_1		.709	.491	.885
SC_2		.726		
SC_3		.743		
SC_4		.729		
SC_5		.548		
SC_6		.643		
SC_7		.739		
SC_8		.747		
LS_1		.824	.693	.918
LS_2		.896		
LS_3		.895		
LS_4		.852		
LS_5		.674		

## Discussion

Understanding the interaction between game genres and IGD development is crucial, as different types of games may impact IGD development differently. The empirical findings are also fundamental for constructing evidence-based interventions that elucidate the underlying mechanisms of IGD. MOBA genre is a subgenre of strategy video games. Empirical findings revealed that this game genre is likely to increase the vulnerability of IGD development (Liao et al., 2023). Strategy games from the MOBA genre are specifically crafted to captivate players through lifelike visuals and narratives. These characteristics can significantly contribute to an extended period of gameplay, reflecting its addictive nature (Elliott et al., 2012). The present study discovered that sensation seeking is a significant positive predictor of IGD. Sensation-seeking refers to a strong desire for novel, varied, and intricate sensations and experiences, coupled with a high willingness to undertake physical and social risks in pursuit of such experiences (Zuckerman, 1979). MOBA players with stronger sensation-seeking are more likely to seek out stimulating experiences. The appealing features (i.e., immersive storylines, vivid graphics, and sound effects) offer a constant stream of novel stimuli. Over time, it is believed that the constant sensory overload associated with prolonged gaming can induce high desensitisation, leading to more intense experiences to achieve the desirable level of satisfaction, perpetuating the cycle of gaming addiction. Consequently, sensation-seeking predisposes MOBA players to seek out more intense and novel experiences, making them more susceptible to the addictive nature of online gaming.

Low self-control can be characterised by spontaneous and unplanned reactions to external stimuli (Potenza & de Wit, 2010). Past studies (Brand et al., 2019; Gentile et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2017) suggested that low self-control functions as a risk factor for gaming problems. Self-control is important for players to regulate their impulses, behaviours, and emotions while pursuing long-term goals. Players with low self-control may struggle to resist the immediate gratification offered by gaming, triggering conflicts in other life responsibilities. Sensation seekers are expected to be more willing to take risks within gaming environments, such as engaging in competitive gameplay and attaining high-risk strategies. This high sensation-seeking need, combined with low self-control can exacerbate the development of gaming addiction.

In the present study, low life satisfaction is found as a negative impact of excessive gaming. One potential rationale may lie in the stress-buffering effects of life satisfaction. Lin et al. (2020) suggested that vulnerability to stress is a risk factor for addictive disorder. It is believed that elevated life satisfaction corresponds to optimised biopsychological functioning (Ryff et al., 2004). More specifically, higher life satisfaction is associated with improved social functioning, such as better quality of significant social relationships. Players with gaming addiction are more likely to experience deficiencies in social skills and jeopardize their important life activities. The challenges in social contexts are always viewed as perpetuating factors for IGD, which can be also supported by Interaction of Person-Affect-Cognition-Execution Model (I-PACE, Brand et al., 2019). The complex interplay specifically the sequential mediating effects of self-control and IGD on sensation seeking and life satisfaction was examined. High sensation seekers are more likely to exhibit low self-control, and it is difficult to regulate their gaming behaviour. They struggle to resist the immediate gratification and excitement offered by MOBA gaming, leading to IGD development. Consequently, low life satisfaction serves as the outcome of these interactions. The examination of sequential mediating effects illustrates an interconnected pathway that underscores the importance of addressing both individual characteristics and gaming behaviours.

## Implications

The present study contributes significantly to the understanding of IGD among MOBA players. The findings of the present study shed light on the intricate interplay of sensation seeking, self-control, IGD, and life satisfaction with the dual-process model of addiction. In general, the findings align with the philosophy of the model, specifically sensation seeking first influences self-control, which then leads to the development of IGD, ultimately impacting life satisfaction among MOBA players. Additionally, practical implications are crucial to provide insights into interventions and policy considerations based on empirical evidence.

The identification of sensation seeking as a risk factor in the development of IGD suggests that intervention strategies should emphasise raising awareness about the potential risks associated with high sensation seeking behaviour and excessive gaming. It is also important to promote engagement in alternative, non-risky activities that promote excitement and novelty to fulfill the high need for sensation seeking in more adaptive ways. Self-control is also a risk factor for IGD. Implementations for improving self-control, specifically integrating digital

literacy education into school curricula to help individuals in developing more responsible online behaviour and self-control in managing their screen time. Some life skills training programs can be introduced by targeting individuals with IGD. It is crucial to enhance their ability to cope with stress and build stronger social connections. Policymakers are also encouraged to collaborate with community organisations, schools, and healthcare providers to create a more supportive environment that promotes balanced lifestyles and resilience of youth with excessive gaming. It is also encouraged for early intervention through screening and assessment tools, and to provide more longitudinal monitoring and follow-up to track changes in sensation seeking, self-control, IGD, and life satisfaction over time.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

The present study adopted a purposive sampling method with a correlational research design. Purposive sampling may introduce bias into the sample selection process, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Future studies are encouraged to implement stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation of different demographic groups and gaming preferences. The use of correlational research design does not imply any causations. Longitudinal studies for tracking changes in the key variables over time or experimental studies to understand the causality more conclusively are recommended. This study focused only on MOBA players. Future studies are recommended to expand the scope of the study by comparing different game genres to capture a more comprehensive understanding. Finally, the conceptual framework used in the study may influence the interpretation of results. Future studies are encouraged to revisit the conceptual framework and consider alternative models that may better explain the interactions between key variables and also enrich the interpretation of results.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, it is not feasible to completely abstain high-risk gamers from online gameplay. Instead, it is more realistic and effective to foster greater self-control which can assist individuals to better regulate their gaming behaviour and mitigate the negative impact of excessive gaming on life satisfaction. Additionally, promoting activities that fulfill the need for sensation seeking in healthier ways can help reduce reliance on online gameplay as the only source of excitement and novelty. This holistic approach empowers individuals to cultivate stronger inner strength to develop a healthier and more sustainable relationship with online gaming while enhancing overall life satisfaction.

### **Acknowledgments**

The research was supported by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2022/SS09/UTAR/02/3).

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# Enhancing Saptarini, Suasnawa, And Ciptayani's Modified Distributed Genetic Algorithm for Optimized Faculty Workload and Course Assignment

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**Abstract:** This paper presents an improved Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) that surpasses the classic genetic algorithm (GA) in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness when it comes to optimizing faculty scheduling systems. The proposed Differential Evolution Genetic Algorithm (DGA) combines DE with chaotic mapping and asynchronous communication to effectively preserve genetic diversity and accelerate convergence towards optimal solutions. The results demonstrate a significant decrease of over in computational time, while simultaneously enhancing the quality of the solution. The findings highlight the potential of the suggested model to be applied in real-world situations, providing a fast and strong scheduling tool for academic institutions. The study suggests that further research should be conducted to determine if the method can be applied to new areas. It also highlights the need to consider the trade-off between speed and accuracy in various computational situations.

**Keywords:** Distributed Genetic Algorithm, Faculty Workload Optimization, Course Assignment, Adaptive Mutation, Chaotic Mapping, Asynchronous Communication

**Citation:** Bumanlag, J. & Abelarde, A.A. (2024). Enhancing Saptarini, Suasnawa, And Ciptayani's Modified Distributed Genetic Algorithm for Optimized Faculty Workload and Course Assignment. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2265-2280) Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The academic environment is a complex ecosystem with numerous variables and constraints that need to be managed effectively. One of the critical aspects of this management is the optimization of faculty workload and course assignment. The task involves assigning courses to faculty members in a way that maximizes the utilization of resources, ensures the quality of education, and satisfies the preferences of the faculty. However, this is a challenging task due to the dynamic nature of the academic environment, the diversity of courses, and the varying preferences and capabilities of faculty members.

Traditional methods of faculty workload and course assignment often fall short in effectively addressing these challenges. They struggle to handle the complexity and dynamism of the academic environment, leading to suboptimal assignments that can impact the quality of education and faculty satisfaction.

The institution the University of the City of Manila located in Manila Philippines uses a similar approach in handling faculty workload and course assignment particularly with the Computer Science Faculty under the College of Engineering. Usually, the program chair consults the faculty about their time and concerns to have a seamless flow in the upcoming semester. Just like the traditional methods the faculty uses the manual delegation of faculty.

Researchers have found that genetic algorithms show promise as a viable approach to tackle intricate scheduling problems, along with other algorithmic techniques. Genetic algorithms, inspired by the process of natural selection, have shown promise in solving complex optimization problems. They work by generating a population of possible solutions and then iteratively selecting, crossing, and mutating these solutions to find the optimal (Goldberg, 2018). However, the performance of genetic algorithms can be influenced by various factors, such as the selection method, crossover rate, mutation rate, and population size (Whitley, 2018).

Distributed Genetic Algorithms (DGAs) have emerged as a sophisticated alternative to genetic algorithms, addressing some fundamental shortcomings of GAs. Contrary to Genetic Algorithms (GAs), Distributed Genetic Algorithms (DGAs) work on numerous subpopulations or demes simultaneously, enabling a wider and more varied exploration of the search area. The purpose of this parallelism is to address problems like premature convergence by encouraging genetic variation among subpopulations, hence improving the algorithm's capacity to discover the global optimum. Nevertheless, DGAs present specific difficulties: preserving consistency among dispersed populations, guaranteeing efficient integration of subpopulations without excessive computational burden, and striking a balance between variety and convergence. These problems highlight the necessity for advanced coordination and communication mechanisms within the DGA framework to enhance the efficiency of intricate tasks such as faculty workload management and course assignment.

In enhancing the Distributed Genetic Algorithm for faculty workload optimization, the research builds upon the foundation laid by Saptarini, Suasnawa, and Ciptayani. It will explore different strategies and parameters to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the genetic algorithm. Such as Differential Evolution (DE), Chaotic Mapping, Asynchronous Communication and Selective Migration. These theories have shown promising results in previous studies and have the potential to address the limitations of traditional genetic algorithms. Additionally, the study will also consider the specific requirements and constraints of faculty workload and course assignment in academia, which will further contribute to the optimization process. Overall, by incorporating these advanced techniques and tailored approaches, the study aims to overcome the limitations and provide a more robust and accurate version of genetic algorithm.

The goal is to develop a robust and flexible solution that can adapt to the changing needs and constraints of the

academic environment, leading to optimized faculty workload and course assignment (Goldberg, 2018). This could potentially improve the quality of education, increase faculty satisfaction, and contribute to the overall efficiency of academic institutions.

## Method

### Overview of Modified Distributed Genetic Algorithm

The study by Saptarini, Suasnawa, and Ciptayani introduces modifications to the Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) with the goal of enhancing the optimization of the high school scheduling process. The main modification is found in the distributed methodology, where the population is divided among multiple groups. By dividing into subpopulations, the method promotes parallel evolution, which increases genetic variety and decreases the risk of premature convergence to unsatisfactory solutions. Migration between these subpopulations is crucial because it allows for the exchange of genetic material, which has the ability to enhance the exploration of the solution space and prevent getting stuck in local optima. The study investigated several migration rates to assess their efficacy in mitigating early convergence, hence enhancing the construction of a more resilient and efficient scheduling procedure.

#### *Differential Evolution Inspired Adaptive Mutation*

Integrating Differential Evolution (DE) into Distributed Genetic methods (DGAs) is a significant improvement in optimization methods. DE uses an innovative mutation technique that involves real-valued vectors, enhancing the algorithm's effectiveness in addressing continuous optimization issues. This progress is particularly advantageous for intricate scheduling dilemmas marked by a wide range of variables and limitations. The method produces a higher level of genetic variety by utilizing enhanced mutation and crossover mechanisms of Differential Evolution (DE). This enables a thorough examination of the solution space, guaranteeing a highly flexible and responsive optimization process that can efficiently handle the changing demands of scheduling activities.

The mutation mechanism in DGAs is revised to include an adaptive mutation strategy influenced by Differential Evolution. This technique aims to improve the algorithm's convergence rate by adaptively modifying the mutation rate based on the evolving population conditions such that there is a 20% increase from the generic model. An adaptive strategy enhances the balance between exploration and exploitation in the solution space, leading to a more efficient development towards optimal scheduling results. By incorporating these Differential Evolution-inspired characteristics into the DGA framework, it not only resolves the constraints of conventional optimization techniques but also presents a more resilient and adaptable strategy for tackling the complex issues of faculty scheduling optimization.

The adaptive mutation is governed by the following dynamic mutation rate equation:

$$m_{DE}(P_t, t) = m_0 + (m_{max} - m_0) \times F(P_t)$$

Where  $m_0$  is the initial mutation rate.  $m_{max}$ , is the maximum allowable mutation rate.  $F(P_t, t)$  is the function that elevates the current state of the population  $P_t$  at time  $t$  and returns a value between 0 and 1. The function  $F(P_t, t)$  has the capability to integrate multiple heuristics or measurements. For example, the mutation rate can be intentionally adjusted to promote genetic variety within a population when it is shown to be low, or when there is a lack of significant improvement in the greatest fitness score throughout multiple generations. On the contrary, the mutation rate may decrease as the population progressively converges towards a solution.

One possible implementation of  $F$  could be based on the diversity of the population:

$$F(P_t, t) = 1 - \frac{Var(f(P_t))}{Var_{max}}$$

Where  $Var(f(P_t))$  is the variance in fitness scores of the current population.  $Var_{max}$ , is the maximum observed variance (set during initial generations). This implementation increases the mutation rate when the variance in fitness scores (i.e., diversity) is low, suggesting that the population is converging and might get stuck in a local optimum. The mutation rate decreases as the variance increases, suggesting a more exploratory phase.

Thus, this approach  $P_{t+1} = Mutate(m_{DE}(P_{t+1}, m))$  enables the algorithm to adapt its mutation rate according to the evolving conditions of the search space, theoretically enhancing its ability to efficiently navigate towards the optimal solution.

#### *Chaotic Mapping for Initial Sub-Population Generation*

Using chaotic mapping to create initial sub-populations for Distributed Genetic Algorithms (DGAs) greatly enhances the variety and unpredictability of potential solutions. This method leverages the sensitivity of chaotic systems to initial conditions, known as the butterfly effect, to ensure a thorough exploration of the solution space from the beginning. Chaotic mapping guarantees a diverse range of potential scheduling solutions is explored to avoid early convergence. Exploring a wide range of possibilities is crucial for the algorithm to discover new and effective scheduling setups, ultimately improving the optimization process.

In a standard GA, the initial population is typically generated randomly within the feasible search space. This process can be represented as:

$$P_0 = \{x_1, x_2 \dots x_n\}$$

Where each  $x_i$  is a potential solution in the population and  $x_i$  is generated randomly within the search space. This random generation provides a starting point for the GA to begin its search process.



Chaotic maps are a type of mathematical function that demonstrates dynamic and intricate behavior, characterized by a significant level of sensitivity to initial conditions. When employed in the context of genetic algorithm population initialization, they generate a varied collection of initial solutions, hence augmenting the GA's capacity for exploration.

A common example of a chaotic map is the Logistic Map, which can be represented as:

$$x_{n+1} = r \times x_n \times (1 - x_n)$$

Where  $x_n$  is a value between 0 and 1, representing the current state of the system and  $r$  is a parameter that determines the behavior of the map (often set between 3.5 and 4 for chaotic behavior). In the context of initializing the GA population:

$$P_0^{chaotic} = \{x_1^{chaotic}, x_2^{chaotic}, \dots, x_n^{chaotic}\}$$

$$x_i^{chaotic} = \text{LogisticMap}(seed_i, r, iterations)$$

Where  $x_i^{chaotic}$  is generated using Logistics Map, the function LogisticsMaps iteratively applies the logistic map equation starting with an initial seed value  $seed_i$ . The number of iterations and the parameter  $r$  are chosen to ensure chaotic behavior.

The use of Chaotic Maps for population initialization in the proposed genetic algorithm model significantly boosts diversity. This is due to the ability of these maps to generate a broad spectrum of diverse values, even when starting from tightly spaced initial points. As a result, the initial population exhibits greater diversity compared to the conventional random generation observed in ordinary Genetic Algorithms (GAs). The complex dynamics exhibited by chaotic maps provide a more complex and less predictable exploration of the search space, hence potentially revealing outstanding solutions inside intricate landscapes. Furthermore, the increased variety and enhanced exploration capacity provided by these advancements contribute to the avoidance of premature convergence to local optima, a significant drawback commonly observed in conventional Genetic Algorithms (GAs).

#### *Asynchronous Communication and Selective Migration*

The methodology uses asynchronous communication and selective migration tactics to enhance the effectiveness of Distributed Genetic Algorithms (DGAs) in optimizing teacher scheduling. The method enables a smooth and effective transfer of information and genetic material among dispersed sub-populations through asynchronous communication. This method greatly reduces the usual delays linked to synchronous migrations, making the search process more efficient and enabling a more flexible investigation of the solution possibilities. The selective migration process is based on individual fitness levels and includes a threshold criterion to allow

only individuals above a certain fitness percentile to migrate. This criterion ensures that superior solutions are disseminated only within specific subgroups, hence improving the genetic variety and effectiveness of the algorithm in finding the best scheduling setups.

In the Standard DGA, migration happens every 5 generations, leading to a synchronization delay (0.5 units per migration event). This can cause inefficiencies as all subpopulations pause for migration. Assume a fixed interval of 5 generations for migration. Migration happens in generations 5, 10, 15, etc. If the total computational time per generation is 1 unit, the idle time due to synchronization every 5 generations is, say, 0.5 units.

*Migrate(i)*

This represents periodic, synchronized migration, potentially causing idle time across subpopulations. In the Enhanced DGA with Asynchronous Communication and Selective Migration, migration is not tied to fixed intervals. Instead, it occurs based on individual fitness, with only those above 80% of the best fitness (e.g., 80 out of 100) being eligible. This approach reduces idle times and focuses on sharing high-quality solutions, potentially leading to faster convergence and better overall solution quality. The enhanced DGA's adaptability and efficiency in processing make it more effective for complex optimization tasks.

*AsynchronousMigrate(i)*

This represents migration happening independently in each subpopulation, reducing synchronization wait times and improving overall efficiency. Idle time is reduced or eliminated, as subpopulations don't wait for a synchronized migration event.

*Migrate(i) if fitness(i) >  $\alpha \times f_{best}$*

Where  $Migrate(i)$  is function determines whether the individual  $i$  will be selected for migration between subpopulations. Migration is a mechanism to share genetic material across different subpopulations, enhancing diversity and preventing premature convergence,  $fitness(i)$  represents the fitness value of individual  $i$ . In DGAs, fitness is a measure of how well an individual solves the optimization problem. Higher fitness values usually indicate better solutions.  $\alpha$  is the predefined threshold, typically a fraction less than 1. It's used to determine the quality of individuals eligible for migration and lastly  $f_{best}$  is the best fitness value found in the current subpopulation or across the entire population.

Only individuals with fitness > 80% of the best fitness are migrated. If the best fitness is 100, only individuals with fitness > 80 are considered for migration.

The incorporation of asynchronous communication and selective migration into the DGA architecture enhances the efficiency of information sharing and guides the exploration and exploitation efforts in the algorithm. The

algorithm facilitates the strategic movement of high-quality solutions to achieve a well-rounded investigation of the solution space, successfully leveraging both exploration to discover new options and exploitation to enhance promising solutions and to achieve such a 50% increase from the generic model based from the researcher’s performance metrics. This balanced approach greatly enhances the creation of more efficient and effective scheduling solutions, demonstrating the potential of sophisticated DGA techniques in tackling the intricacies of faculty scheduling optimization.

## Results

The results section of the study provides a thorough analysis of the performance of both traditional and newly proposed genetic algorithm models in optimizing faculty scheduling tasks. An essential component of this assessment is the focus on quantifying the algorithm's efficacy by considering the diversity within its subgroups, often referred to as islands. The emphasis on diversity in genetic algorithms is not random, but rather based on its acknowledged significance. Diversity serves as a protective measure against the algorithm's early convergence to suboptimal solutions, which is a common trap that can greatly restrict the exploration of the solution space. By preserving a diverse range of genetic material in the populations of the algorithm, there is a significantly increased likelihood of uncovering novel and more efficient scheduling solutions.

The findings of this investigation are significant. The authors effectively demonstrate that the suggested improvements to the Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) are not just theoretical advancements, but actually have practical effectiveness in preserving a significant amount of diversity throughout subsequent generations. Retaining diversity is crucial for the algorithm to effectively and comprehensively search for potential solutions. It guarantees that the search process is not restricted to a small number of options, but rather allows for a comprehensive exploration that can reveal a diverse range of feasible scheduling arrangements. An approach like this is crucial for effectively managing the intricate optimization challenges of faculty scheduling. The wide range of requirements and constraints in this task demands a solution strategy that is both adaptable and flexible.

### Differential Evolution Inspired Adaptive Mutation

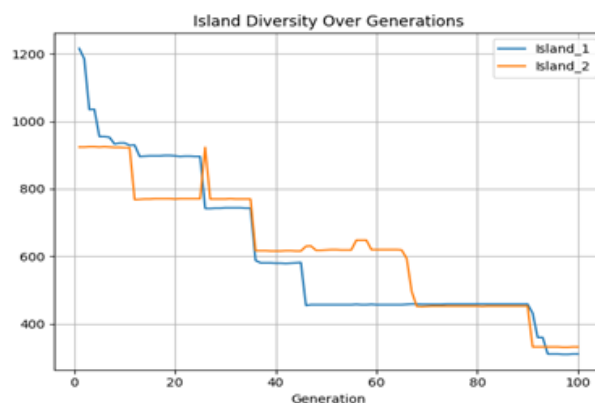


Figure 1. The generic model only

The generic genetic algorithm exhibited a consistent decline in diversity, indicating a reduction in the exploration of the search space across successive generations. This frequently results in a stagnation of solutions, causing the algorithm to converge prematurely on poor answers. The proposed DGA model, with its new methodologies, not only stopped the decrease in diversity but also sustained it at a greater level over generations.

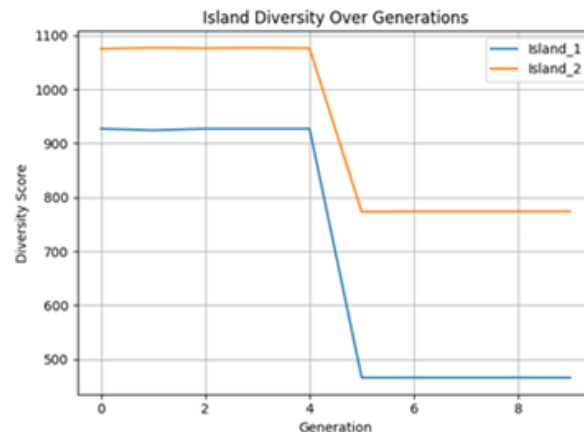


Figure 2. The generic model with Differential Evolution

The study's results demonstrate that the proposed model is more effective in achieving convergence efficiency compared to the conventional approach. While the search results do not provide a specific numerical measure of the improvement in convergence efficiency, the graphical data clearly shows a significant difference in performance between the two models. The increased effectiveness in the suggested model can be primarily attributed to its capacity to maintain a substantial level of diversity within the search space for potential solutions. The preservation of diversity is crucial for conducting a thorough exploration of all possible solutions, significantly increasing the likelihood of quickly identifying an optimal or nearly optimal solution.

The proficiency of this model in preserving diversity and its resulting beneficial effect on convergence efficiency highlights the significance of a thorough exploration strategy in optimization algorithms. The capacity to examine a wide range of possible solutions without prematurely restricting the search scope guarantees that the optimization process is not only fast but also successful in pinpointing the most feasible solutions. The model utilizes its diverse genetic pool to thoroughly explore the solution space, improving the overall quality of the search process. This increases the chances of achieving optimal outcomes in less time.

The proposed model's exceptional convergence efficiency underscores its potential as a potent tool in optimization tasks, especially in situations where the prompt discovery of high-quality solutions is of utmost importance. The fundamental mechanisms that allow for the preservation of variety and promote an extensive exploration of the range of possible solutions are crucial for the model's effectiveness. This approach enhances both the efficiency of the search process and the quality of the identified solutions. It demonstrates the

robustness of the model and its potential applicability in various optimization scenarios.

*Chaotic Mapping for Initial Sub-Population Generation*

For the second modification of the study, the results depicted in the graphs compare the performance of the generic and proposed Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) models with respect to island diversity and fitness scores over generations.

The island diversity outcomes of the generic Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) model pls refer to the first figure earlier (see Figure 1) demonstrate a common evolutionary path in which diversity diminishes among the subpopulations as time progresses. The decrease in genetic diversity is observed in both Island\_1 and Island\_2, indicating that as the genetic algorithm advances through each generation, the range of solutions becomes more limited. This trend can be troublesome since it might result in early convergence, when the algorithm ends up with poor solutions because there is not enough new genetic material input into the population.

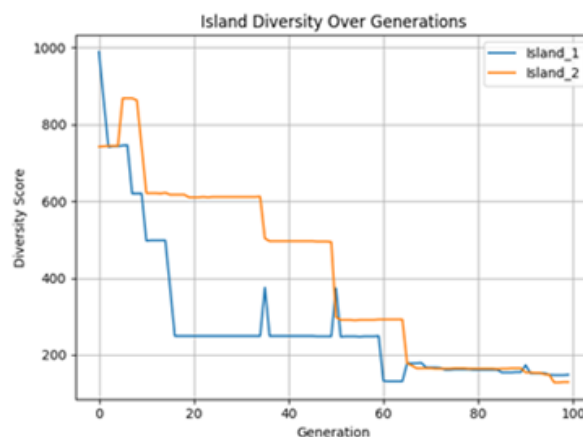


Figure 3. Generic Model Island Diversity with Chaotic Mapping

The island diversity results for the proposed DGA model show an initial significant decrease in diversity, followed by stabilization. The diversity in Island\_1 and Island\_2 stabilizes early in evolution, resulting in a higher diversity than the standard model. The pattern suggests an efficient technique in the proposed DGA to maintain genetic diversity, ensuring a diverse range of solutions and minimizing the chance of premature convergence. The suggested model seems to enhance the ability to explore the solution space, crucial for identifying the most efficient scheduling setups.

The generic model demonstrates a steady increase in fitness throughout generations for both islands. The fitness score, which reflects how well the scheduling solutions align with the established restrictions and objectives, gradually rises. The improvement's trajectory is inconsistent, showing variations indicating periods of standstill or regression in solution quality. The discrepancy may indicate that the algorithm is having difficulty efficiently

exploring the solution space and improving the optimization of the scheduling system.

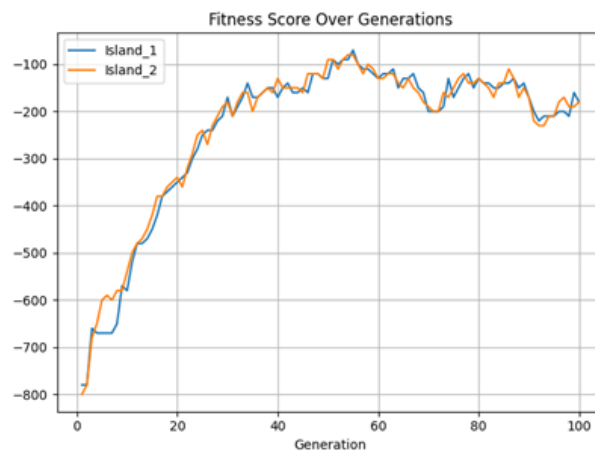


Figure 4. The Generic Model Only of Fitness Score

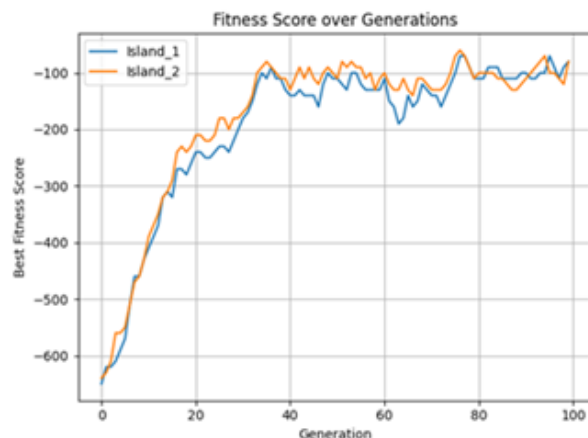


Figure 5. Generic Model Fitness Score with Chaotic Mapping

The proposed Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) model demonstrates significant gains in fitness scores over successive generations, setting it apart significantly from other models. The enhancement is clearly demonstrated by the swift advancement and alignment of fitness scores on two separate islands, highlighting the algorithm's improved ability to efficiently guide the search process towards high-quality scheduling solutions. The rapid improvement not only emphasizes the algorithm's optimized performance but also its skill in navigating through the intricate landscape of scheduling difficulties, efficiently identifying the best solutions at a faster rate.

Furthermore, the fact that fitness scores remain consistent across generations highlights the strength and resilience of the enhancements incorporated into the DGA model. The consistent nature of this uniformity indicates a reliable and efficient optimization process, free from the variability that frequently hinders the effectiveness of typical models. The proposed model showcases its capacity to overcome the inherent limitations

of traditional algorithms by consistently making progress towards optimizing faculty scheduling. The consistent progress demonstrates the model's improved algorithmic strategies, which are specifically tailored to ensure a more seamless and dependable approach to achieving optimal scheduling configurations.

The alignment of fitness scores and the uniformity observed across generations indicate the strategic improvements incorporated within the proposed DGA model. The results highlight the model's exceptional efficiency in enhancing the search for optimal solutions, demonstrating the algorithm's ability to continuously adapt and improve. The proposed DGA (Dynamic Genetic Algorithm) overcomes the limitations commonly found in traditional models, allowing for a continuous and determined effort to achieve excellence in faculty scheduling. The model's continuous improvement and adaptability demonstrate its potential as a valuable tool for academic institutions, ensuring that scheduling challenges are addressed with precision, efficiency, and reliability in the future.

*Asynchronous Communication and Selective Migration*

The last modification involves comparing the computing speed of the proposed modified Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) with the generic modified DGA. The bar chart shows a notable enhancement in the speed of the suggested method.

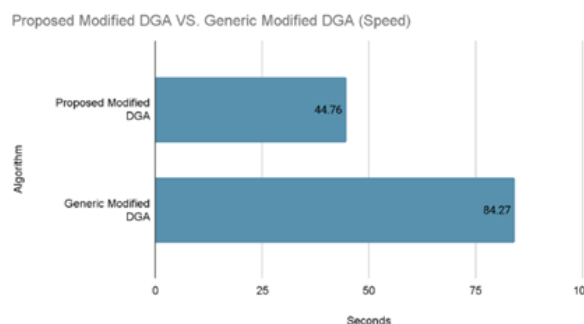


Figure 6. Result of Speed for Generic and Modified

The Revised Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) has demonstrated remarkable progress in computational efficiency, with a completion time of 44.76 seconds, significantly surpassing the time of 84.27 seconds achieved by the Generic Modified DGA. This decrease, equivalent to a 47% reduction in computing time, marks the beginning of a new era of effectiveness that has the potential to completely transform the approach to scheduling tasks, especially in time-sensitive environments.

The implications of this speed enhancement are significant in scenarios such as dynamic scheduling for academic institutions, where the ability to quickly adapt schedules is of utmost importance. By reducing the time needed to complete optimization tasks by almost 50%, institutions can enhance their operational efficiency and be more responsive to changing scheduling requirements.



The significant boost in processing speed can be credited to strategic improvements in algorithms, specifically the integration of Asynchronous Communication and Selective Migration mechanisms in the Revised DGA. Asynchronous Communication enables a smooth and uninterrupted exchange of information between different groups, without the need for synchronization points that often cause delays in traditional models. This implies that updates and optimizations can happen instantaneously, without requiring the entire system to halt and synchronize, thereby accelerating the overall process. The process of Selective Migration enhances the algorithm's exploration by exclusively sharing high-potential solutions among subpopulations. This approach concentrates on the most promising regions of the solution space and prevents the decrease in quality that can impede convergence.

Initially, a single evaluation of the Revised Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) revealed a 47% improvement in processing performance compared to the Generic Modified DGA. This figure was obtained using particular test circumstances and parameters that may have been more advantageous or less intricate, and hence may not have fully reflect more diverse or real-world situations.

In order to verify the reliability and strength of the DGA's performance, it was necessary to conduct a more extensive range of studies. Therefore, a thorough series of 10 further runs was conducted, resulting in the following enhancements in performance:

Run #1 showed a 72% improvement.

Run #2 showed a 64% improvement.

Run #3 showed a 52% improvement.

Run #4 showed a 54% improvement.

Run #5 showed a 58% improvement.

Run #6 showed a 63% improvement.

Run #7 showed a 67% improvement.

Run #8 showed a 51% improvement.

Run #9 showed a 59% improvement.

Run #10 showed a 60% improvement.

By taking the average of these results, the DGA showed an approximate 60% increase in processing efficiency, exceeding the original 47% gain that was recorded. The first 47% was an outlier, meaning it was significantly different from the rest of the data. However, it was a cautious estimate. The 47% result may be attributed to several causes, such as the unique nature of the optimization job, the beginning circumstances of the algorithm's execution, or constraints in computer resources during that specific test.

The repeated iterations demonstrate the DGA's ability to enhance computing speed in many situations and highlight the need of thorough testing to fully understand an algorithm's performance capabilities. Additionally, they propose that while the 47% enhancement was an exceptional occurrence, it nevertheless showcases the

algorithm's efficacy, motivating future investigation into fine-tuning the DGA's setup to get more reliable outcomes in various computing contexts.

The combination of Asynchronous Communication and Selective Migration results in a highly efficient and dynamic optimization environment. These enhancements optimize the flow of information and concentrate efforts on the most feasible solutions, resulting in a reduction of computational inefficiency and improved effectiveness of the algorithm. This not only speeds up the process of reaching the best possible solutions, but also ensures that there is a wide range of genetic variations, which is important for preventing early convergence on less than ideal solutions. The outcome is a Dynamic Genetic Algorithm (DGA) that exhibits not only increased speed but also enhanced proficiency in traversing intricate optimization terrains. This provides a potent instrument for institutions aiming to augment their scheduling efficiency with accuracy and swiftness.

*Modified Distributed Genetic Algorithm*

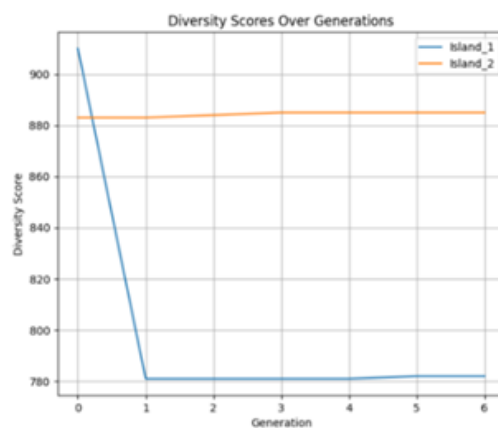


Figure 7. Results of Proposed Model for Diversity

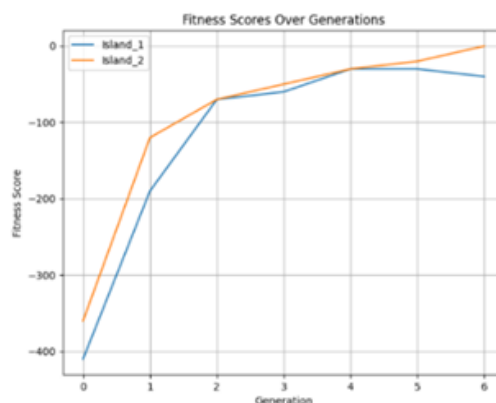


Figure 8. Results of Proposed Model for Fitness Score

The methods introduced an improved version of the Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) that aims to optimize

faculty scheduling systems. Early investigations into traditional genetic algorithms (GAs) uncovered challenges such as high computing complexity and premature convergence. The proposed Differential Evolution (DE) and chaotic mapping integrated in the DGA enhance genetic diversity and solution quality to a great extent. Efficient information exchange among subpopulations was facilitated by the use of asynchronous communication and selective migration mechanisms.

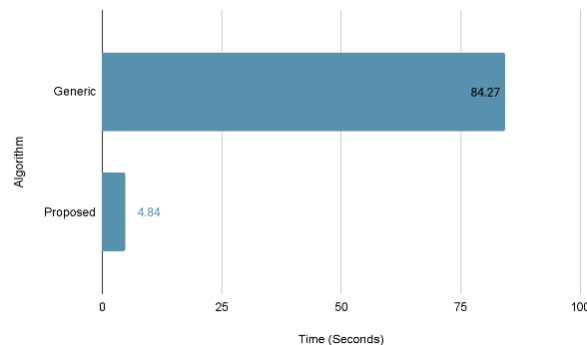


Figure 9. Results of Proposed Model for Speed

The results clearly showed that the proposed DGA performed better than other alternatives. The preservation of genetic diversity effectively prevented premature convergence, whereas the fitness scores quickly converged towards high-quality solutions. The processing time was significantly lowered by more than 94%, demonstrating improved efficiency.

The methods concludes that the suggested Dynamic Genetic Algorithm (DGA) provides an efficient balance between exploration and exploitation, which is crucial for effectively solving intricate optimization issues. It demonstrates superior performance in terms of speed compared to conventional approaches, while maintaining the same level of solution quality. This indicates that it can be applied in a wide range of situations where both speed and solution quality are important. Further investigation could be conducted in order to determine the extent to which the DGA can be applied to various domains, as well as to examine the relationship between the time required for computing and the quality of the solutions obtained in diverse environments.

## Discussion

The proposed Distributed Genetic Algorithm (DGA) has shown considerable advancements in optimizing faculty scheduling, indicating its potential to greatly increase operational efficiency in academic environments. The study highlights the algorithm's skillful handling of genetic diversity and its quick progress towards the best solutions, demonstrating an efficient balance between exploring several options and using the most promising ones in complex optimization scenarios. Although the DGA's capacity to speed up the optimization process is clear, the specific mechanisms that contribute to this improved performance, especially the roles of

asynchronous communication and selective migration, still need to be completely understood. This discrepancy highlights a sophisticated comprehension of the DGA's operational dynamics, underscoring the intricacy of optimizing scheduling operations.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on faculty scheduling as a singular domain of application highlights the wider potential of the suggested DGA. The notable progress noticed raises the need for additional investigation into how these improvements might be utilized in other scheduling difficulties and fields. This factor is vital for extending the algorithm's usefulness beyond academic scheduling, perhaps providing a versatile tool for other optimization settings. The findings of this study imply that there is potential for further research on the ability of the DGA to meet various scheduling requirements.

## Conclusion

This study provides a convincing argument for the suggested Dynamic Genetic Algorithm (DGA) as a more effective option than conventional genetic algorithms for optimizing faculty scheduling. The DGA utilizes advanced approaches such as Differential Evolution and chaotic mapping to achieve both a high level of genetic variety and an efficient path towards optimal solutions. The large decrease in computing time, along with enhanced solution quality, is a significant advancement in optimization technology. These findings support the idea that the DGA has the potential to be a realistic and successful solution for scheduling difficulties. It is likely to improve efficiency in academic and possibly other institutional contexts.

## Recommendations

Further research is advised to analyze the detailed operational complexities of the proposed DGA, with a specific emphasis on comprehending how specific improvements contribute to its overall effectiveness. Examining the algorithm's usage in a broader range of scheduling problems will also be extremely valuable in evaluating its ability to be applied to different situations and its potential for wider influence. Furthermore, examining the compromises between computational speed and solution accuracy in different computational environments will provide essential insights for the future advancement of the DGA. This research will not only improve the algorithm but also broaden its applicability to a broader range of practical optimization problems.

## Acknowledgements

The advancement that has been achieved in this study is largely attributed to the collaborative endeavors of the academic community and the backing from institutional resources. The author expresses gratitude to colleagues and mentors whose valuable insights and critiques have greatly influenced the research. We would like to express our gratitude to those individuals who directly or indirectly contributed to the conceptualization, execution, and analysis of the study. This research represents a significant advancement in the field of


optimization algorithms, demonstrating the commitment of the academic community to achieving excellence and operational efficiency. Subsequent investigations motivated by this research will unquestionably expand upon the groundwork established here, pushing the limits of what can be accomplished in the field of optimization science.

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## Structural Capital for University Internationalization


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**Abstract:** The university organization is the place where knowledge is created, exchanged, transferred and used, and bases the execution of its functions on structural capital with the purpose of achieving internationalization. The Theory of Resources and Capabilities of the Organization (TRC) is used to analyze structural capital as a promoter of internationalization results of universities and polytechnics. The research question: How do the elements of structural capital generate the internationalization of public universities and polytechnic (UEP) in Ecuador? The analysis is documentary, transversal, qualitative, comparative, between the years 2020 - 2021 and 2022, a census of 30 public UEP of Ecuador is carried out. The results show that structural capital includes the dimensions of organizational capital and technological capital. As part of the organizational capital, the indicators of budget, organizational level in which the area that promotes interinstitutional relations is located, distribution of functions involving, on the one hand, managers and administrative staff; and, on the other hand, functions at academic management levels such as deanship, career directors, and promotes the implementation of processes at the operational level, depends largely on the results of internationalization of universities and polytechnic.

**Keywords:** structural capital, intellectual capital, university, internationalization.

**Citation:** Cuadrado-Barreto, G., Paguay-Chávez, F., & Villarreal, F. (2024). Structural capital for university internationalization. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2281-2300), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The organization is a collectivity with a normative order, levels of authority, systems of communications and coordination of memberships, exists in an environment, executes activities related to goals and obtains results (Hall, 1982, p. 33).

Thus, the university as a complex organization fulfills the functions of teaching, research and linkage with the environment, relates to industry, government, culture, civil society and natural environments (Carayannis, Barth, & Campbell, 2012; Lara, 2015, p. 19). In turn, the university organization bases the execution of its functions on structural capital with the purpose of achieving internationalization.

The inquiry takes up the Organizational Resources and Capabilities Theory (ORT) with the objective of analyzing structural capital as a promoter of internationalization results of universities and polytechnics. The research question How do the elements of structural capital generate the internationalization of public universities and polytechnic schools (UPS) in Ecuador? Thus, in section two the structural capital of the university organization is presented, in section three the internationalization of universities and polytechnic schools, in section 4 the internationalization of universities and polytechnic schools in Ecuador is shown. Next, the methodology used to analyze the set of public universities and polytechnic schools in Ecuador is presented, the results and discussion are shown. At the end, the conclusions of the study and recommendations are presented.

### **Structural capital of the university organization**

From the theory of organizational resources and capabilities (TRC) the structural capital is specified as the set of assets unique to the organization, it is composed of organizational capital and technological capital (Ramirez, Manzanque & Priego, 2017; Barney, 1991; Grant, 2006, 1991). Based on the postulates of Cuadrado (2020), the university is specified as the organization where knowledge is created, exchanged, transferred and used, it is influenced by the historical, social and cultural context that surrounds it and bases the execution of its functions on structural capital.

Organizational capital refers to the operating infrastructure, organizational culture and structure, and intellectual property. The operational infrastructure includes the physical and technological environments in which people interact, whose boundaries are open for knowledge exchange with the environment (Nonaka, Takeuchi & Konno, 2000; Konno & Schillaci, 2021). Organizational culture integrates mission, vision, policies, rules and regulations (Ochoa, Matos & Garza, 2022).

Organizational structure includes a) division of labor, responsibilities and procedures, rules; b) power centers that control efforts, direct toward their ends, review actions, and reshape the structure; c) the incumbent possesses the authority to perform functions; and d) external forces - laws, regulations, stakeholders, and regulations - that are the basis of organizational culture. (Weber, 1947, p. 352; Etzioni, 1997, p. 75; Mintzberg, 1979).

Structural characteristics include complexity, size, formalization, and intra-organizational structural differences -job design, decision-making system- (Mintzberg, 1979; Lawrence & Lorsch; 1967; Hall, 1982; Contreras & De la Rosa, 2018; Burns & Stalker; 1961). Technological capital includes communication systems such as web



page (Ramírez, Manzanque & Priego, 2017).

The university organizational capital is composed of the decision structure classified into levels from the bottom-up perspective are 1) operational unit, teachers who teach their professorship in career; 2) operational units that include various institutional functions, called faculties; 3) middle structure level, academic managers; 4) collegiate bodies, called regent council (Clark, 1983, p. 109).

The requirements of the external environment promote changes in the organizational structure of the university, the regulations determine the activities and decision-making at each level. Thus, the composition, size, hierarchical structure of the university; support structure at the managerial level, capacity for analysis and evaluation of information; centralization or decentralization of decision-making in the office that promotes internationalization affects the results achieved by the organization. (Frølich, Christensen & Stensaker, 2019; Sebastián y Barrere, 2018; Beneitone, 2019).

To sum up, university technological capital for internationalization purposes includes organizational visibility, management systems; and inter-institutional information technology for access to shared telecommunications networks (Castañeda, 2018; Secundo, Massaro, Dumay & Bagnoli, 2018; Secundo, Lombardi, & Dumay, 2018).

#### *Internationalization of universities and polytechnics.*

Carlos Tünnerman (2018, p. 20) defines the internationalization of higher education as reflecting the global nature of learning and research. Sebastian and Barrere (2018) specify internationalization as an intrinsic characteristic of research resulting from scientific policies, structural organization of research, multiple actors, activities, results and impacts associated with it. For their part, Deardorff and van Gaalen (2022) suggest considering the internationalization of the university organization from an administrative perspective, through the study of resources, activities, components, products, effects of the internationalization process in the short term and the long-term impact.

The CRT recognizes resources as inputs in the service production process (Penrose, 1962), the results are evidenced in the effective planning and execution of processes, adaptability to changing conditions (Senge, 2012; Barceló et al., 2001; Davenport, 2000; Gupta & Misra, 2000). Thus, the internationalization of the university is defined as the organizational process that intertwines the institutional functions -teaching, research and linkage with the environment- with the elements of structural capital -organizational capital and technological capital- to obtain international knowledge results.

In this sense, the university with the purpose of achieving internationalization makes its structures more flexible, improves processes and mechanisms, establishes organizational models, delegates to a higher-level management, organizational unit or special instance, complies with regulations and legislation, possesses

funding levels; plans, designs and implements of institutional strategies (Juho & Turcan, 2018; Gacel & Rodriguez, 2018; Brooks, Erdoğan & Bulut, 2021).

As a consequence, the Latin American university presents the need to analyze internationalization from planning, interculturality and going abroad (Abba & Streck, 2021; Sabzalieva, 2021); international mobility of students and teachers (Sabzalieva, Mutize & Yerovi, 2022); visibility of the office or area that promotes internationalization (Brandenburg, 2020); institutional policies to promote foreign languages or languages (Didou, 2017); international teaching from the curriculum (Romani, 2018); international research (de Wit, 2020); information and communication technologies (ICT) applied to internationalization (Castañeda, 2018); networks, partnerships and international cooperation (Knight, 2017); international scholars (Leask & de Gayardon, 2021); economic resources or goods coming from abroad (de Wit & Altbach, 2021).

*The internationalization of universities and polytechnic schools in Ecuador.*

From the regulations directed to the UEPs, the functions of the universities and polytechnic schools of Ecuador are established as teaching, research and linkage with the environment (LOES, 2018). In this context, the internationalization of the university organization is defined as an institutional condition criterion (CACES, 2023), which is coordinated by a higher-level instance in the university organization, presents a planning and obtains results around the functions of the UEPs. Ecuadorian regulations include a) Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (2008); b) Organic Law on Higher Education (2018); c) Regulations to the Organic Law on Higher Education (2019); d) Regulations for the creation and suspension of UEP (2017); e) Law on Human Mobility (2023); f) Regulations for the Teaching Career and Teaching Scale (2021); g) Regulations for the Academic Regime (2023); h) Career Evaluation Model (2021); i) Methodological Guide for the presentation of careers and programs (2022); j) Doctorate Regulations (2019); k) Self-evaluation reference guide (2022); l) Regulations for foreign accreditation recognition (2023); m) Model for the evaluation of the learning environment of Postgraduate Programs (2023); n) Model of external evaluation for accreditation purposes for the quality assurance of universities and polytechnic schools (UPS) (2023).

In this way, activities are established for the executor level of processes in the areas of undergraduate and graduate education and, also, functions of the office that promotes inter-institutional relations (see Table 1).

Table 1. Internationalization activities in the UPSs of Ecuador

<b>International Office</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Investigation</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>
Agreements are executed and or letter of intent or cooperation.	Students Mobility	<b>Planning</b> Multicentric projects Design, manage and participate in networks and	Projects and specialized services.

Formal agreements are subscribed.	Credits Recognitions	investigation programs. Scholarships and financial support.	Mentorings Consultorías
Planning, internal organization of the internationalization	Recognition: Subjects, Credits, Courses.	Teachers and Investigators Staff mobility. Proyectos multicéntricos	Continuous Education
Relationships among higher educational institutions	Arts Activities	<b>Execution</b> Applied Investigation/Formative	To conform and participate in personal networking, and local, national, and international community bondage programs.
Manage processes	Academic Exchange	Science Production, technology, culture, and Art	
Advertisement of the internationalization activities.	Networking academic projects	<b>Results</b> Publications Discussion Paper	Cooperation and Development
To enhance international relationships	Cotutor	Congresses Seminars Lectures	Community Service Projects
	International Announcements	International Licenses	Art Collectives

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the regulations mentioned in the section.

## Methods

The inquiry relates the Resources and Capabilities Theory (TRC) and the Complex Systems Theory with the purpose of analyzing the structural capital as a promoter of internationalization results of public universities and polytechnic schools (UPS) in Ecuador.

The university organization defined as a complex adaptive system of social character is composed of interrelated subsystems and has basic elementary components (Lara, 2015, p. 19). From the ADI methodology it is considered that the external contingent elements influence the way the organization works (Ostrom, 2015), the internationalization of the UPSs is specified as an external contingent element, the structural capital and its dimensions-organizational capital and technological capital-as internal contingent elements that produce organizational results of internationalization.

The analysis is documentary, transversal, qualitative, and comparative between 2020, 2021 and 2022, a census of the 30 public UPSs in Ecuador is carried out.

The study at the organizational level includes as sources of information a) Institutional Statute, b) Annual Accountability Report, c) Institutional Development Strategic Plan (PEDI), d) Annual Operating Plan (POA), e) Processes Manual. The systematization and analysis of the information was carried out using the technological tool Atlas Ti, from the categories of organizational capital, technological capital and internationalization results (see tables 2, 3 and 4).

Table 2. Category Organizational capital

<b>Operative Infrastructure</b>	<b>Organizational structure</b>	<b>Organizational Culture of internationalization</b>	<b>Intellectual Property</b>
# Professors # Students # Graduates # Budgets	# Levels # Activities	Mission, vision that manifests internationalization. Policies, rules, and norms Position Specialization Grouping of units Planning and Control Systems # Deliverables	# Publications of the area staff.

Source: own elaboration

Table 3. Category Technological capital

<b>Organizational visibility</b>	<b>Management Systems</b>
Informal Communication systems: Webpage	Purchasing system

Source: own elaboration

Table 4. Category Internationalization results

<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Investigation</b>	<b>Policies of Investigation</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>Office</b>
Students Outgoing Teachers	Students are part of clubs	Coedition of publication	Pre-professional practices	Training
Internacionalization curriculumm Academic Touring	Lectures Congresses. Simposiums Seminars Workshop Contests Webinars	Mobility Program	Community Engagement Projects.	Congresses
Internacionalization at home	International Reviewers of Discussion papers.	Teachers Recognition	Cultural Week	Invited experts to congresses
Students Teachers Administrative visitors	Coordination Doctorate International-National	Acreditación internacional Ranking	Community Engagement Networking	Student Scholarships Master programs
Graduate foreigners	Exhibitions	Scientific Journals		Agreements
Pregrade in Collaboration	Salida Estudiantes	Student mobility		Networking Engament

	Docentes investigación	regulation		
Certifications-Awards	To which networking belongs to	Teachers in Networking meetings		Letter of Support-Bailment
E-Learning Strategy	Networking projects with academic areas.	Tools for international accreditation		Donations Settlement Acts
Institutional policy of language learning and bilingualism	Cedia and International Projects Multilateral Organisms			
Specialized language centers	Projects with enterprises			
Online Mobility Students Teachers Administrative Personnel Directives	Papers Discussion papers			

Source: own elaboration

The research question: How do the elements of structural capital generate the internationalization of public universities and polytechnic schools (UEP) in Ecuador? It is answered after the application of the Atlas ti v. 23 tool for the analysis of the structural capital and internationalization variables of 30 public UEPs in Ecuador in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

## Results

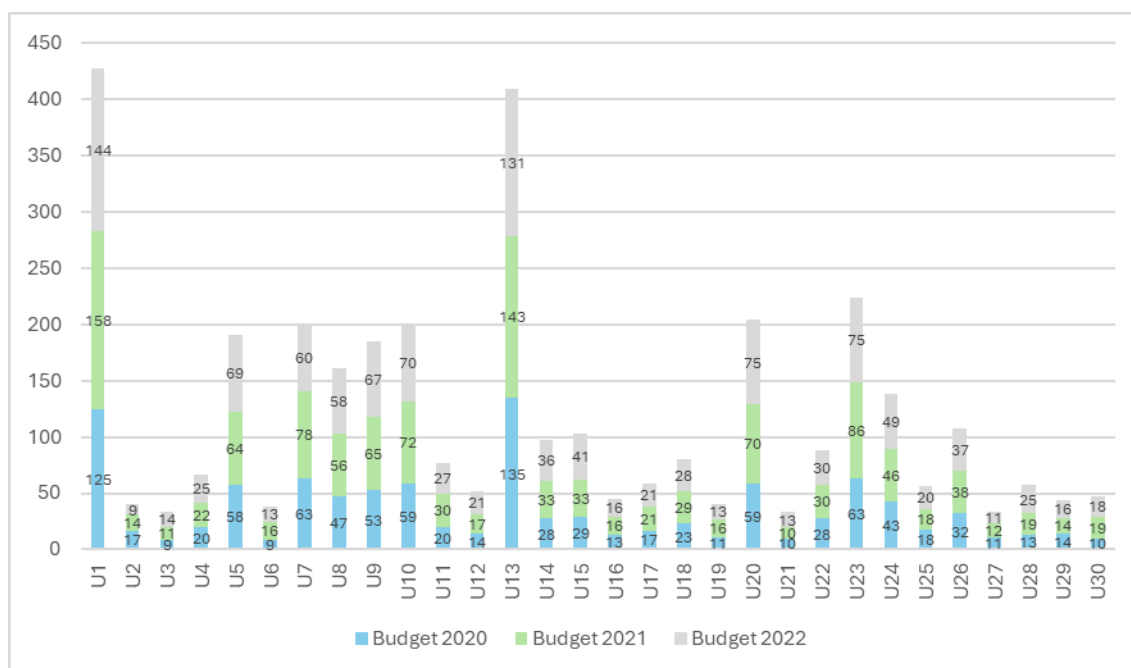
### Structural capital of Ecuador's public UPSs.

From the Theory of Resources and Capabilities (TRC), structural capital is defined as a basic resource that integrates organizational elements and, through the interaction between the elements, produces results of internationalization.

The study of the organizational capital category includes the criteria operational infrastructure, organizational structure, organizational culture. The university technological capital dimension includes the criteria of organizational visibility, management systems, and inter-institutional information technology for access to shared telecommunications networks.

The criterion operational infrastructure of the 30 public universities of Ecuador includes the indicators of budget, number (#) of teachers, number (#) of students, number (#) of graduates. It is found necessary to expose that these organizations are financed through allocations from the General State Budget; own resources generated by tuition, fees and tariffs, by productive activities of goods and services; resources from inheritances, legacies and donations; income from intellectual property; by contributions from international cooperation (LOES, 2018, article 20).

Graph 3 UEP budget for the years 2020 - 2021 and 2022



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the accountability documents of the UPSs studied.

Note: values are presented in millions of dollars (USD).

Next, as part of the operational infrastructure, the number of teachers, students, and graduates for the years 2020 - 2021 - 2022 is shown. It is worth noting the increase in the number of professors in the following UPSs: U3 with 96%, U10 with 284%, U17 with 147%, U29 with 96%. The student indicator shows an increase in U6 with 212.59%, U20 with 114.20%, U24 with 65.96%. Likewise, the graduate's indicator shows an increase in U2 of 107%, U3 of 635%, U8 of 461%, U11 of 245%, U12 of 182%, U19 of 125%, U24 of 350%, U25 of 106% (see Table 4).

Table 4. Operational infrastructure of Ecuador's public UPSs

	Teachers year 2020	Students Year 2020	Graduates Year 2020	Teachers Year 2021	Students Year 2021	Graduates Year 2021	Teachers Year 2022	Students Year 2022	Graduates Year 2022
<b>U1</b>	2000	42379	258	2665	42899	66	2622	42873	18
<b>U2</b>	112	1559	No Data	125	1763	43	520	1812	89
<b>U3</b>	140	3524	213	155	2867	82	304	2742	603
<b>U4</b>	38	9608	1823	459	10749	1348	651	5030	1334
<b>U5</b>	814	11599	49	834	9678	1516	976	10469	2090
<b>U6</b>	80	4236	615	169	1303	615	157	4073	1018
<b>U7</b>	936	37987	2082	1197	38499	2790	1068	42.623	2.339
<b>U8</b>	834	19757	59	804	18152	342	698	13949	1917
<b>U9</b>	1129	22747	2054	No Data	23165	2728	1304	21707	4748

U10	748	21658	129	325	22215	2293	1249	17.838	1459
U11	291	79482	1359	1112	65.763	1345	1656	54.865	4644
U12	285	7944	737	295	8854	626	304	9061	1764
U13	2163	58441	6798	2.468	69.165	499	2.382	61.474	12.244
U14	742	15182	172	814	14302	438	754	11663	747
U15	463	10506	886	658	12.603	No Data	611	14.316	2.153
U16	195	5077	8	166	10682	No Data	283	10.698	1539
U17	414	10715	40	112	12.325	1988	277	12.007	0
U18	369	2520	522	369	12.423	1426	434	10.435	854
U19	101	1.818	164	190	1.635	64	206	2.001	144
U20	621	8259	540	570	8.000	992	325	17.136	1.448
U21	173	6000	100	161	4709	No Data	186	4.166	0
U22	494	11426	31	1.014	11.800	No Data	605	10.702	0
U23	1061	16193	2386	1152	15833	2386	1082	15.315	2728
U24	903	25350	940	1.475	9.462	153	1.116	15.703	689
U25	470	11624	119	382	9556	494	422	10.441	1019
U26	738	12.687	1154	738	13.826	1944	692	13.978	2.684
U27	127	1391	194	124	1.486	151	175	1.699	0
U28	295	5946	124	228	6.720	2061	196	6415	607
U29	281	7494	1130	291	8523	988	569	9.249	1690
U30	237	5255	708	281	6904	1084	No Data	4.513	No Data

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the accountability reports of each UEP for the periods 2020 - 2021 - 2022.

The study of the *organizational structure* criterion of the university and polytechnic school of Ecuador and the indicators levels, activities, division of labor, takes up the postulates of Clark (1983) to define the university as an organization that is composed of a decision-making structure, from the planning documents of the UEP such as a) Institutional Statute, b) Strategic Plan for Institutional Development (PEDI), c) Processes Manual.

In this sense, from the button-up perspective, to determine the *organizational level indicator* in which the area that promotes inter-institutional relationships is located, it is classified as a) Level 1 responds to a unit, with no decision-making; b) Level 2 corresponds to the Directorate of Community Engagement, with little decision making; c) Level 3 corresponds to the Vice Rectorate, with indifferent decision making; d) Level 4 corresponds to the Rectorate, with medium decision making; e) Level 5 corresponds to the Polytechnic University Superior Council, with high decision making.

Thus, the area that promotes inter-institutional relations in 19 UEP is located at level 4, it depends on the Rectorate; in 4 UEP it is located at level 3, it responds to the Vice Rectorate; in 7 UEP it is located at level 2, it



responds to the Directorate of Community Engagement.

By considering that the internal policies of organizations determine their structural form (Child, 1972), the *activities indicator* makes it possible to specify the actions carried out by the area that promotes national and international relations. The study takes up the activities stated in the institutional Statute; thus, the UEP that declares the lowest number of activities is U2, which has 4 activities; while U13 has 24 activities; U30 does not present activities to promote the internationalization of the university's functions (see graph 4).

In order to define the *indicators of concentration of authority or centralization*, Mintzberg (1979, pp. 223) proposes the principle of decentralization, which refers to the dispersion of formal power as one moves down the scale of linear authority through the delegation of power. In this way, the study establishes the division of work in the area as an indicator, identifies in the institutional Statute in force in 2023 a) the superior organ to which the area belongs, b) the division of work in the area into units, responsible persons, c) the number of people working in the area is taken from the institutional Directory.

The results in relation to the superior organ to which the area belongs to show that U29 and U30 do not present the area of interinstitutional relations in the Statute. The PEUs that present a very high degree of decentralization are U9 and U24; followed at a high level by U1 and U15; U13 is presented with a medium grade, while U3 and U28 express a medium-low grade. Finally, 21 PEUs exhibit a low level of decentralization (see graph 4).

Furthermore, what was suggested by Mintzberg (1979) for the analysis of activities within an area is considered part of the number of people who work in the area. In this way, the UPS position regulations are resumed, and it is determined that the U1 grants responsibilities for international cooperation activities, strategic management, academic mobility, and communication and dissemination. The UEP, U3 and U20 designate assignments for units, both for national cooperation and international cooperation. Meanwhile, 17 UEP grant activities by position of director, assistant, analyst, specialist (see graph 4).

The analysis of the Organizational Capital Dimension includes the *Organizational Culture Criterion*, with the indicators a) internationalization mentioned, b) internationalization policies, regulations and standards, c) specialization of the position, d) size of the area, e) standardization of the content of the work.

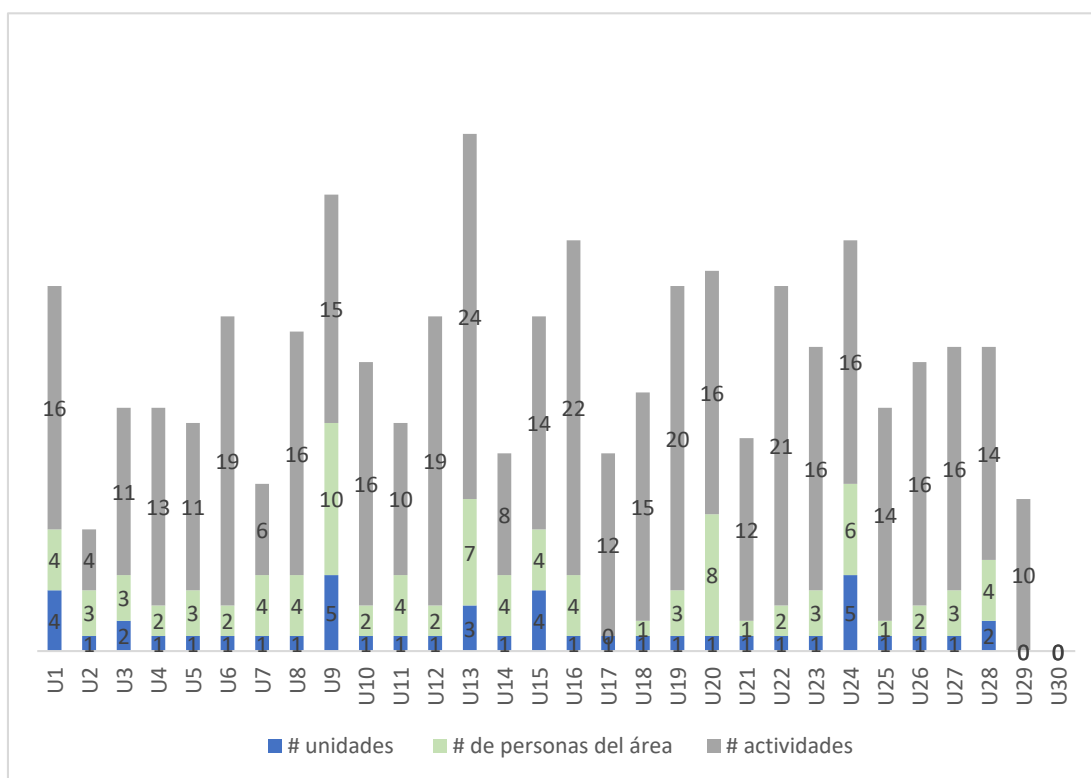
When considering the importance of mentioning the internationalization of the university in the institutional mission and vision (Gacel and Rodríguez, 2018), it is stated that 93% of the public UPSs in Ecuador present the international element in their purposes. Furthermore, 33% of the UPSs studied have policies, 20% have objectives in the Inter-institutional Development Plan, 20% have regulations, 13% have a strategic internationalization plan; and 13% have a model for the development of inter-institutional relations.

In relation to the specialization of the position of Director of the area that promotes inter-institutional

relationships, 33% of the UPS present the requirement to fulfill the assignment to be delegated by the Rector; 7% express as a basic requirement having a third-level degree related to the field of their competence; Only U14 states the need to have a master's degree related to the field of performance knowledge; 37% declare the requirement of having achieved a doctorate or PhD degree; Finally, 20% include additional requirements such as belonging to the field of dentistry or medicine, reaching the rank of Colonel or Major, being a full professor, and having at least five years of experience as a full academic.

The size of the area is established by the number of people who work in the area that manages inter-institutional relationships, the UPS U9, U20, U13 and U24 are determined as large, six (6) UPS integrate between 4 and 5 people in the area; while 18 UPS designate between 1 and 3 people to work in that space. The normalization of the work content shows the maximum number of activities as 24 (U13); while the smallest number of established activities is four (U2) (see graph 4).

Graph 4. Activities and size of the area that promotes inter-institutional relationships.



Source: own elaboration based on the Statute, Organic Regulation of organizational management by processes in force of each UPS.

The main activity carried out by the area that promotes inter-institutional relations of the public UPSs of Ecuador corresponds to “agreements” (coincidence 36 times), includes signing of national and international agreements, bilateral or multilateral agreements, technical-scientific and financial cooperation, reimbursable, commitments, alliances, specific agreements with public and private entities, teacher-student exchange (11

times) and technical-administrative staff (1 time), affiliation to international and national networks.

The UPS express (29 times) that the planning of the area includes a manual of procedures for applications, processing of agreements that express the technical - legal process before and after subscription, monitoring, resources and financing, reports on compliance. and settlement, becomes a base tool for the execution of activities. Furthermore, universities, and polytechnic schools exhibit (15 times) the importance of the institution's internationalization plan, including the annual tactical, operational, purchasing, and national and international relations plan. Likewise, the internationalization “policies” include dissemination of calls and management of own scholarships (12 times).

“Mobility” (27 times) and “management” (21 times) are defined in the institutional statutes as, mobility is the national and international process, aimed at academic and student staff, which is carried out for the purpose of internships. , research and academic activities.

The actions carried out by the area include management of calls, execution of programs, advice for raising external funds (1 time), information and means for access to exchanges (1 time), trips abroad (1 time), logistical processes and technicians to obtain international scholarships and training and training opportunities (1 time). Also, the area develops institutional and inter-institutional activities with embassies and consulates (1 time), promotion of academic and intellectual events on knowledge management (1 time).

As a result, the statutes of the universities and polytechnic schools (UEP) of Ecuador express the “substantive functions” (3 times), in this sense they refer to “research” (9 times), includes research and innovation centers, the dimension international, national and international networks.

The category of university technological capital for internationalization purposes includes the criteria of a) organizational visibility, through web page communication systems; b) management systems that incorporate public purchases in the area; and, c) interinstitutional information technology for access to shared telecommunications networks. In this way, 87% of the UPSs in Ecuador have web page technological systems for the dissemination of activities; The only UEP that has management systems that incorporate public purchases in the area is U8; and, 90% implement inter-institutional information technology for access to shared telecommunications networks.

#### *Internationalization results category*

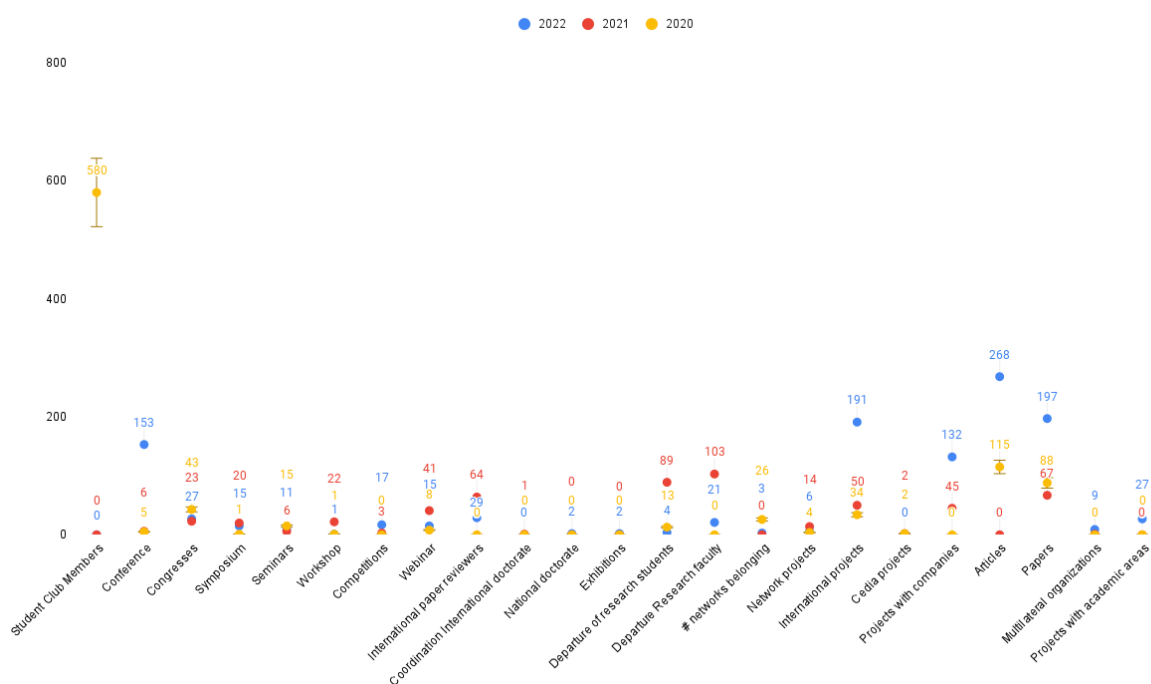
The internationalization policies of public UPSs in 2022 include a) internationalization at home through virtual subjects with a total of 567; b) 14 teachers participated in network meetings; c) 8 careers in the process of internationalization; d) creation of 3 scientific journals; e) 1 international accreditation with Audit Model; f) 1 UEP with E-Learning Strategy.

In 2021, the generation of a) 11 international scientific journals stands out; b) 1 UPS internationalizes the curriculum of the subjects of the careers of social communication, nursing, dentistry, architecture and civil engineering; c) 2 GIZ Germany Program; 2 PINE-EDUCAR mobility program; 1 Student mobility regulations; 1 Internationalization at home; 2 Recognitions for teachers; 1 Criscos Mobility Program.

In 2020, among the policies promoted are the generation of Erasmus + Programs (3); Publication Co-edition (1); Entrepreneurship Innovation, Transfer, Technology Unit (1).

The results of internationalization of research in 2022 include an increase of 233% in international scientific articles, 382% in international projects, and 294% in presentations. Followed by projects generated between different academic areas, financed by international organizations, joint projects with companies, among others (see graph 5).

Graph 5. Research internationalization results.



Source: Own elaboration based on the UEP Accountability Report.

The results of internationalization of teaching show that in 2020 the segment of students visiting public UEPs in Ecuador is quite notable in relation to other items; while, in 2021, virtual mobility of students and teachers predominates; and, in 2022, the components of outgoing teachers and students, international teachers, are predominant. Also, the insertion of the PEUs studied in international rankings and the development of specialized language centers is evident (see Table 5).

Table 5. Results of internationalization of teaching

Indicators	Teaching	2022	2021	2020
# of students, investigator teachers who left to other universities because of teaching purposes.	Outgoing students	226	10	<b>316</b>
	Outgoing Teachers	<b>257</b>	22	22
# of students, investigator teacher who visited the university with teaching purposes.	Visitor students	31	0	<b>529</b>
	Visitor Teachers	1	37	<b>106</b>
	Visitor Administratives	9	0	0
	International Teachers	102	<b>109</b>	0
# Teaching activities in collaboration	Pregrade in Collaboration	0	0	1
# International Teaching Certifications	Green Metric	1	1	1
	Hultprize	2	0	1
	THE Rankings	0	1	0
	QS Rankings	1	1	0
	Ranking revista América Economía	1	0	0
	International Awards	Gold Award	1	0
	TELESCOPI Networking	1	0	0
	Student Awards	2	0	0
Language and Bilingualism institutional policies	Languages recognition	0	0	<b>20</b>
Specialized language centers	Confucius Institute	1	0	0
# International certifications	B2 CertificationMRE	0	<b>46</b>	0
	Cambridge Certification	0	1	
	C1 Certification MRE	11	0	0
Teacher and Administrative Staff Statistics with certifications (mentions # per area)	English and French Teachers	0	0	26
Online mobility with associated university (mentions #teachers, students, which subjects, faculties, majors)	Online mobility Students	384	<b>1346</b>	205
	Online Mobility Teachers	0	135	<b>163</b>
	Online Mobility Administratives	4	10	0
	Online Mobility Directives	0	8	0

Source: Own elaboration based on the UPS Accountability Report.

The results of internationalization of the community engagement show that in 2022 the activities with the greatest participation of students were international pre-professional internships, as well as the training events carried out (see table 6). Considering that the institutional statute of the UPS establishes that the area that promotes inter-institutional relations obtains results in a certain period, Graph 6 shows that the main activity

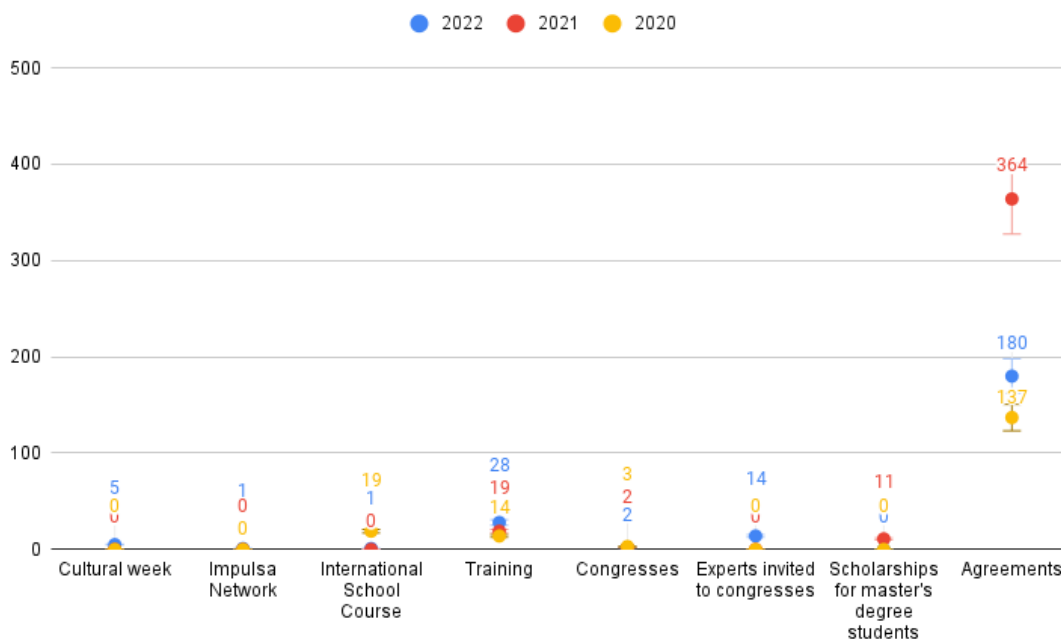
carried out by the area that promotes inter-institutional relations in the year 2022 is the generation of agreements framework, followed by memorandums of understanding, insertion of the institution into academic and research networking as well as development of training events.

Table 6. Results of internationalization of the connection with the environment.

Indicators	Linkage with the community	2022	2021	2020
Results of international preprofessional practices (# students)	International Pre-professional practices	12	0	6
Results of international community practices (# agreements)	Projects community engagement	0	0	7
	(# projects) Cultural week	5	0	0
	Impulsa Networking	1	0	0
	(# projects year 2022, # students year 2020) School	1	0	19
Institutional Events (# events)	Training	28	19	14
	Congresses	2	2	3
(# experts)	Invited experts to congresses	14	0	0
	(# scholarships provided)	Students scholarships		
Master programs		0	11	0

Source: Own elaboration based on the UPS Accountability Report

Graph 6. Results of the area that promotes inter-institutional relations in the UPS.



Source: Own elaboration based on the UPS Accountability Report.

The networking to which the public UPSs of Ecuador belong in 2022 are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Networking to which the public UEPs of Ecuador belong in 2022

Red Internacional de Investigación de Instituciones de Educación Superior (RIIES)	Red del Consorcio Latinoamericano y del Caribe de Instituciones de Ingeniería (LACCEI)
Red de Campus Sustentable	Red Investigadores y Comunicación del Ecuador (Rice)
Red Universitaria Iberoamericana sobre la creación de Empresas y Emprendimiento- Motiva	Red del Consejo Latinoamericano de Escuelas de Administración - CLADEA
Red de Organización Universitaria Interamericana (OUI)	Red Ecuatoriana de Universidades y Escuelas Politécnicas para la Investigación y Posgrados (REDU)
Asociación Interamericana de Empresas de telecomunicaciones/ centro de estudios de telecomunicaciones de américa latina	International Goat Association
Red de innovación y emprendimiento de las IES del centro del país	Red Nacional de Centro de Apoyo a la Innovación y Tecnología
Red de Aprendizaje Inmersivo (RAIN)	Red Internacional de Universidades y Centros de Investigación relacionadas con el Bambú (RIUCI-BAMBÚ)
RIPA	WAITRO
REIES	REDIA
Red Asociación Universitaria Iberoamericana de Posgrado (AUIP)	Organización Mundial de Propiedad Intelectual
Red de Asociación Internacional de Economía Aplicada (ASEPELT)	ACS
Red Grupo de Universidades Iberoamericanas la Rábida	ANSO
Red de Asociación para la Formación, Investigación y desarrollo del Emprendimiento - AFIDE	Fulbright Ambassador
Consejo de Rectores por la Integración de la Subregión Centro Oeste de Sudamérica (C.R.I.S.C.O.S) /2017	

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the UPS Accountability Report.

The agreements in 2022 made by these higher education institutions are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Agreements of Ecuador's public UEPs in 2022.

Universidad internacional de Andalucía Zamorano	Universidad federal de Matto Grosso UNIR
Universidad Popular del Cesar	Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos
Universidad De Artes Aplicadas De Viena	Universidad De Guadalajara
Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (Brasil)	Corporación Universitaria Iberoamericana
Organización Childfund International USA	Universidad de Almería
Universidad Estatal de Medicina de la Orden de la Amistad de los Pueblos de Vitebsk.	Centro de Estudios sobre América Latina del Departamento de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad de Bolonia
UNESCO Ecuador.	Rochelle Université.
Universidad de Barcelona.	Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos
Facultad de Filosofía de Letras y Ciencias Humanas de la Universidad de Sao Paulo de la República de Brasil	Asociación de Regiones Fronterizas Europeas (ARFE)



Universidad de Valencia (España)	Univ. Europea del Atlántico (Unatlántico)
Universidad Complutense Madrid	Universidad de Sevilla (España)
Universitario do Norte Paulista	Universidad de Malaga
Freie Universität Berlín	Universidad de la Republica de Uruguay
Universidad de Florence	Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena
Universidad de los Andes	Universidad de Missiuri
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	Consejo Superior de investigación Científica
Centro de investigación en materiales avanzados S.C	Universidad de Atacama
Universidad Madero	Universidad Federal de Itajubá
Bergische Universitat Wuppertal	Universidad Estatal Agraria de Rusia Timiryazev
Intituid de ciencias Fotoniques ICFO	Universidad Agraria de La Habana
Universidad Central de Costa Rica	Catholic University Of New Spain.
AUIP	Red Internacional RELVIMA
Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador	Universidad de Palermo.
Genexus Academic Partner	Internacional Iberoamericana (UNIB y UNINI)
Fachhochschul E Dresden Universidad De Ciencias Aplicadas	Universidad de Coruña (España)
Universidad de Salamanca	
Università degli Studi della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"	Universidad Nacional de Colombia
Universidad Laval	Universidad Palacky
US Department of State Federal Assistance Award	Michigan Technological University
Universidad de Piura	Universidad Mayor Real y Pontificia de San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca

## Discussion

The university organization is the place where knowledge is created, exchanged, transferred, and used, it is influenced by the historical, social, and cultural context that surrounds it, it bases the execution of its functions on its structural capital, it includes dimensions of organizational capital and technological capital.

According to Gacel and Rodriguez (2018), Frølich, Christensen & Stensaker (2019), as part of the structural capital, the criteria a) technological capital, b) organizational culture; and, c) operational infrastructural, generate results of internationalization of the UPSs.

The generation of agreements is the main activity of the area that promotes inter-institutional relations. Therefore, the implementation of management systems, mechanisms for the evaluation, monitoring, and follow-up of the execution of the agreements is presented as essential to obtain results (Knight, 2017).

## Conclusions

Relating the theory of resources and capabilities (TRC) and the theory of complex systems (TSC) allows the study of university structural capital by recognizing the internal and external contingent elements of the organization to explain the results obtained in internationalization.

By incorporating technological capital related to management systems for public procurement is presented as a good practice that promotes the achievement of the objectives of the area of interinstitutional relationships.

The decentralization of public procurement activities to the area that promotes inter-institutional relationships promotes effectiveness in budget execution.

## Recommendations

The public UPSs in Ecuador need to implement organizational structures and distribution of functions that promote academics to carry out internationalization activities of the university's functions.

The accountability reports of the UEP, as official documents that inform society of the activities carried out in a specific period, must implement open data indicators to display the results of the teaching, research and outreach functions adequately and completely.

## Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi for funding the research project related to the intellectual capital of universities.

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# Importance of Self-Regulated Learning, Cognitive Function, and Stress Levels in Fostering Academic Integrity Behavior in Undergraduate Medical Students

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**Abstract:** Objective: Violations of academic integrity are still common, and their incidence tends to increase in line with the rise of publications on professionalism. This study aims to investigate the relationship between self-regulated learning, cognitive function, and stress levels on the academic integrity of medical students. Methods: Using proportional stratified random sampling, the research was conducted using quantitative analysis with a cross-sectional design on 188 preclinical medical students from the Faculty of Medicine, UPN "Veteran" Jakarta. Data were collected through previously validated instruments, including a questionnaire on self-regulated learning, a cognitive function test, a stress assessment scale, and the Academic Integrity Questionnaire from the Roff questionnaire. Data analysis included the Chi-Square test, One-Way ANOVA, and Logistic Regression. Result: The test results showed that most respondents had moderate academic integrity, moderate self-regulated learning, an average cognitive function score of 50, and no stress. The Chi-Square test yielded a p-value of 0.018 for self-regulated learning and academic integrity and  $p = 0.000$  for stress level and academic integrity. The One-Way ANOVA results indicated a significant difference in the DSST score between low and high academic integrity. Logistic Regression analysis revealed that self-regulated learning, cognitive function, and stress levels were significantly associated with academic integrity, with self-regulated learning having a 5.024-fold impact, cognitive function having a 1.068-fold impact, and stress level having a 0.158 impact on academic integrity. Conclusion: These findings highlight the importance of self-regulated learning, cognitive function, and stress levels in fostering academic integrity behavior in medical education. Further research is needed to identify additional factors that can influence academic integrity behavior.

**Keywords:** Academic\_integrity; Cognitive\_function; Medical\_Students; Self-regulated\_learning; Stress\_levels

**Citation:** Zaki, F., A., Makiyah, F., A., Dewi, S., Y. & Muktamiroh, H. (2024). Importance of Self-Regulated Learning, Cognitive Function, and Stress Levels in Fostering Academic Integrity Behavior in Undergraduate Medical Students. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2301-2311), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Academic integrity among medical students has not shown a significant improvement amidst the increasing number of publications on professionalism in academia (Guraya, 2018). Academic misconduct in medical universities is increasing globally, including cheating and plagiarism. In a study conducted by (Abdulrahman et al., 2017) at three United Arab Emirates (UAE) medical universities, it was found that the majority of medical students admitted to engaging in acts of academic dishonesty. Furthermore, a study conducted at six universities in Malaysia with 141 respondents revealed that approximately half of the medical students reported experiencing academic dishonesty with their peers (Tiong et al., 2018). Academic integrity is influenced by extrinsic and intrinsic factors, including the learning environment, peer influence, and lack of supervision. Intrinsic factors include self-regulation, cognitive function, academic stress, and moral and religious development (Purnamasari, 2013).

Research has shown that self-regulated learning (SRL) plays a role in reducing academic dishonesty behaviors (Sagita & Mahmud, 2019). SRL is crucial for academic integrity, as high SRL levels improve learning objectives, strategies, time management, and abilities, while low SRL results in inconsistent learning, anxiety, and insecurity, potentially leading to academic fraud (Kusuma, 2022). As evidenced by a study conducted at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta with a sample of 410 diploma and bachelor students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta in 2022, it was found that self-regulated learning is associated with academic integrity by reducing academic dishonesty among students (Kusuma, 2022).

Another intrinsic factor that contributes to academic integrity violations is cognitive function. Having a solid comprehension of the lessons can prevent academic dishonesty and improve academic achievement. A well-functioning cognitive ability is crucial for students' ability to receive feedback, reinforcement the materials, and vocabulary development, which enhance academic performance and reduce the likelihood of academic dishonesty (Apriliyanti et al., 2021). Based on Purnamasari's study in 2013, conducted at Semarang State University with a sample of 250 sixth semester students, it was found that academic dishonesty among students is influenced by their cognitive aspects (Purnamasari, 2013).

Academic ability, peer pressure, time management, and workload are all elements that might contribute to stress in students and lead to the possibility of academic integrity violations (Emmertson et al., 2013). According to Aamir (2017), medical students in Karachi, Pakistan, experience higher stress levels compared to non-medical students. A study of 600 students found 54.6% of medical students experience high stress, while 20.6%

of engineering, arts, and commerce students do not (Aamir, 2017). According to Herdian (2021), stress can affect students' academic integrity because students experiencing academic stress may struggle to think clearly, which can impact how they approach assignments and exams (Herdian & Mildaeni, 2021).

Several studies have been conducted on investigating elements impacting academic integrity, with some of the most notable ones being those by Muktamiroh (2015) on the correlation between fundamental personality and mental ability. The other studies by Ajnah (2021) discussed about correlation between coping mechanism and academic integrity (Ajnah et al., 2021; Muktamiroh et al., 2015). Up to now, according to researcher's knowledge, no studies have been conducted to analyze other factors, particularly among Indonesian medical students, such as SRL, cognitive function, and stress levels, affect academic integrity. Therefore, further research is needed to investigate the association between SRL, cognitive function, and stress levels on academic integrity, in the hope of gaining insights to enhance academic integrity behaviors among medical students.

## **Materials and Methods**

The research obtained ethical approval from the Clinical Study Ethics Committee at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jakarta, Indonesia (278/VI/2023/KEPK). The respondents provided informed consent to participate in this research.

### **Study design and participants**

This study utilized an analytic method with a cross-sectional approach. This research was conducted at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jakarta from March 2023 to June 2023. The population used in the study consisted of preclinical students from the 2020 and 2021 batches of the Faculty of Medicine at UPN "Veteran" Jakarta, with a total population of 296 students.

The inclusion criteria for the research sample were active preclinical students from the 2020 and 2021 batches of the Faculty of Medicine at UPN "Veteran" Jakarta. The exclusion criteria for the sample in this study were respondents who were in an unhealthy physical or psychological condition and those undergoing therapy with a psychiatrist. Furthermore, respondents who experienced certain events that could introduce bias to the study were excluded, such as the death of one or more immediate family members within the past 6 months, family conflicts such as parental divorce, or having a chronic illness that impairs daily activities such as cancer, chronic pain or other health issues. Because this can cause physical stress that will contribute to academic stress.

The study used Slovin formula for sample size and stratified purposive sampling method. In this study, the population was divided into two layers based on the student batch, namely the batch of 2020 and 2021. The



required sample size was calculated as 94 for students in the batch of 2020 and 2021. Hence, the total sample size for the study was 188 students. A 5% margin of error was set by the authors.

The authors administered questionnaires to all currently enrolled students in the 2020 and 2021 batches of the 2022/2023 academic year at UPNVJ Medical Faculty until the minimum required sample size for the study was achieved. This study utilized the Respondents' Characteristics Questionnaire, the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), the Digit Symbol Substitution Test, the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale 42 Questionnaire, and the Academic Integrity Questionnaire for data collection (Figure 1).

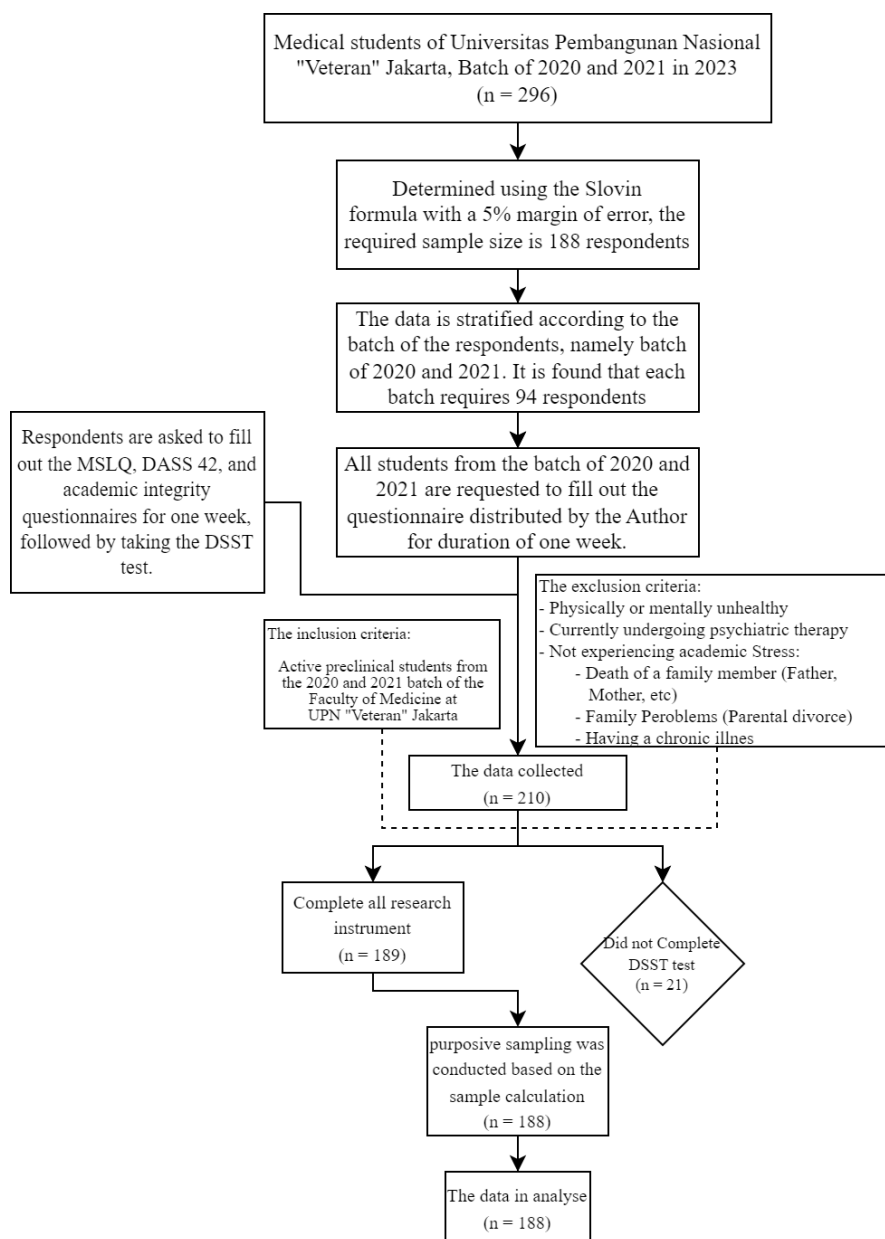


Figure 14. Schematic Diagram of Data Collection in Relationship between Self-Regulated Learning, Cognitive Function, and Stress Levels on Academic Integrity of Medical Students

### *Outcome measures*

#### *Assesment of Self-Regulated Learning*

In assessing Self-Regulated Learning, the researchers used a questionnaire instrument called The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). The questionnaire has undergone translation into Indonesian by a language expert and its validity and reliability have been assessed by Khan (Khan, 2022). The Cronbach's alpha score obtained was 0.963, indicating that all items in the questionnaire are valid and reliable.

#### *Assesment of Cognitive function*

Evaluating cognitive function in this study involved utilizing the Digit Symbol Substitution Test instrument. This test is a written test conducted using paper and pencil, which is a subtest of the intelligence test introduced by Wechsler (1958) (Gilmour et al., 2019). The DSST has been subjected to validity and reliability testing by Zubaidi. The reliability testing results indicated a high correlation on the Wechsler scale, with a reliability coefficient of 0.97 for the Full Scale IQ.

#### *Assesment of Stress Levels*

Measurement of stress levels was conducted using a questionnaire instrument, namely the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale 42 (DASS 42). This questionnaire is a standardized instrument with three measurement dimensions: depression, anxiety, and stress. The validity and reliability of the DASS 42 questionnaire have been tested by Marsidi, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.951 (Marsidi, 2021).

#### *Assesment of Academic Integrity*

The assessment of respondents' academic integrity was conducted using the Roff questionnaire, which was adapted by Musharyanti, Rahayu, and Prabandari in 2016 and Maharani in 2016 (Ajnah et al., 2021). The questionnaire has undergone rigorous testing and has been confirmed to be valid and reliable. The validity and reliability testing of this questionnaire was conducted by Maharani, with a result of cronbach's alpha score of 0.945 (Maharani et al., 2018).

#### *Statistical analysis*

Data analysis in our study was conducted using computerized methods. Univariate analysis will yield data in the form of counts and percentages of respondents. Analysis of the independent variables was utilized by the chi-square test, independent t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The statistical significance was established at  $p < 0.05$ . Then, the data was analyzed using logistic regression to determine the risk of each variable on academic integrity.

## Results

Among the total 296 respondents of medical students of UPN “Veteran” Jakarta Medical Faculty batch 2020 and 2021, the majority of respondents, with 89 (47.3%), are 20 years old. Women with 121 (64.4%) were the most respondents in this study. The proportion of respondents based on batches 2020 and 2021 is the same, with 94 (50%) respondents. The majority of respondents, as many as 128 (68.1%) students had an moderate self-regulated learning rate, including a total of 57 (64%) respondents aged 20, a majority from 42 men (62.7%) and 86 women (71.1%) as well as the majority batch 2020 total 54 (57.4%) respondents and batch 2021 total 74 (78.7%).

Table 32. Characteristic of Respondents

Characteristics	n (%)	Variable												
		Self-Regulated Learning			Cognitive Function (Mean±SD)	Stress Level					Academic Integrity			
		Low	Mod	High		Normal	Mild	Mod	Severe	Extreme	Poor	Mod	Good	
<b>Age</b>														
18	3 (1,6)	0 (0)	3 (100)	0 (0)	(56,67±8,32)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (66,7)	1 (33,3)	
19	41 (21,8)	4 (9,8)	32 (78)	5 (12,2)	(49,71±8,43)	15 (36,6)	4 (9,8)	12 (29,3)	7 (17,1)	3 (7,3)	5 (12,5)	25 (61,0)	11 (26,8)	
20	89 (47,3)	13 (14,6)	57 (64)	19 (21,3)	(50,36±8,47)	28 (31,5)	17 (19,1)	25 (28,1)	14 (15,7)	5 (5,6)	10 (11,2)	66 (74,2)	13 (14,6)	
21	44 (23,4)	8 (18,2)	31 (70,5)	5 (11,4)	(53±8)	18 (40,9)	10 (22,7)	8 (18,2)	6 (13,6)	2 (4,5)	8 (18,2)	25 (29,3)	11 (25)	
22	8 (4,3)	3 (37,5)	3 (37,5)	2 (25)	(50,63±7,61)	2 (25)	1 (12,5)	2 (25)	2 (25)	1 (12,5)	3 (37,5)	5 (62,5)	0 (0)	
23	3 (1,6)	0 (0)	2 (66,7)	1 (33,3)	(40,33±2,30)	2 (66,7)	1 (33,3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (66,7)	1 (33,3)	
<b>P value</b>			0.359		0.371			0.634				0.299		
<b>Gender</b>														
Male	67 (35,6)	12 (17,9)	42 (62,7)	13 (19,4)	(50,25±8,56)	25 (37,3)	9 (13,4)	21 (31,3)	7 (10,4)	5 (7,5)	9 (13,4)	39 (58,2)	19 (28,4)	
Female	121 (64,4)	16 (13,2)	86 (71,1)	19 (15,7)	(51,08±8,31)	40 (33,1)	24 (19,8)	29 (24)	22 (18,2)	6 (5)	17 (14)	86 (71,1)	18 (14,9)	
<b>P value</b>			0.490		0.518			0.373				0.079		
<b>Batch</b>														
2020	94 (50)	15 (16)	54 (57,4)	25 (26,6)	(50,34±8,59)	33 (35,1)	19 (20,2)	23 (24,5)	12 (12,8)	7 (7,4)	12 (12,8)	73 (77,7)	9 (9,6)	
2021	94 (50)	13 (13,8)	74 (78,7)	7 (7,4)	(51,23±8,20)	32 (34)	14 (14,9)	27 (28,7)	17 (18,1)	4 (4,3)	14 (14,9)	52 (55,3)	28 (29,8)	
<b>P value</b>			0.001*		0.467			0.596				0.001*		
<b>Total</b>	188 (100)	28 (14,9)	128 (68,1)	32 (17)	(50,79 ± 8,39)	65 (34,6)	33 (17,6)	50 (26,6)	29 (15,4)	11 (5,9)	26 (13,8)	125 (66,5)	37 (19,7)	

The average overall cognitive function score of the respondents was 50.79 with a standard deviation of 8.39. Respondents aged 20 (47.3%), had an average cognitive function score of 50.36 with a standard deviation of 8.47. Some 65 (34.6%) of respondents did not experience stress, of which 28 (31.5%) were respondents aged 20. Overall, respondents had a moderate level of academic integrity behavior with 125 (66,5%) respondents of whom were 20 years of age a total of 66 (74.2%), a majority of 39 men (58.2%) and 86 women (71.1%) as well as the majority batch of 2020 a number of 73 (77.7%) and batch 2021 a total 52 (55.3%) respondents.

Respondents with poor academic integrity were 26 (13.8%) and respondents with good academic Integrity were 37 (19.7%) (Table 1).

Based on the analysis, there is a significant relationship between batch of respondents ( $p=0,001$ ) towards self-regulated learning and academic integrity. The respondents age ( $p=0,299$ ) and gender ( $p =0,079$ ) had no significant relationship to the academic integrity (Table 1). In bivariate analysis, self-regulated learning ( $p=0,018$ ), cognitive function ( $p =0,003$ ), and stress levels ( $P=0,000$ ) had significant relationships with academic integrity (Table 2).

Table 33. Correlation Test between academic integrity and other factors

Variable	Academic Integrity						Quantity		P
	Poor		Moderate		Good		n	%	
	n	%	n	%	n	%			
<b>SRL</b>									
Moderate	26	13,8	103	54,8	27	14,4	156	83	0,018*
High	0	0	22	11,7	10	5,3	32	17	
Total	26	13,8	125	66,5	37	19,7	188	100	
<b>Cognitive Function</b>									
Post Hoc									
Bonferroni*									0,003*
Poor	-		0,074		0,003*				
Moderate	0,074		-		0,132				
Good	0,003*		0,132		-				
<b>Stress Level</b>									
Normal	4	2,1	43	22,9	18	9,6	65	34,6	0,000*
moderate	1	0,5	65	34,6	17	9,0	83	44,1	
severe	21	11,2	17	9,0	2	1,1	40	21,3	
Total	26	13,8	125	66,5	37	19,7	188	100	

Self-regulated learning, cognitive function, and stress levels all had significant relationships with academic integrity according to multivariate analysis, with the following significance: self-regulated learning ( $p=0.002$ ; Odds Ratio [OR], 5.024; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.781-14.174), cognitive function ( $p=0.040$ ; OR, 1.069; 95% CI, 1.003-1.139), and stress level ( $p=0.000$ ; OR; 0.378; 95% IC, 0.230-0.621) (Table 3).

Table 34. Logistic Regression Test

Variable	P-value	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval
Self-Regulated Learning	0.002*	5.024	(1.781-14.174)

Cognitive Function	0.040*	1.069	(1.003-1.139)
Stress Levels	0.000*	0.378	(0.230-0.621)

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\* $p < 0.05$

OR : Odds Ratio, CI : confidence interval

## Discussion

Our study shows that the percentage of men who have poor academic integrity is higher than women. This is in line with other studies that explain that men are more likely to commit violations of academic integrity (Liu & Alias, 2022; Özcan et al., 2019). This can be explained that female students prioritize social ethics self-images, increasing fear of cheating compared to men, affecting their academic performance (Liu & Alias, 2022). On the other hand, there is a significant relationship between the batch of students towards academic integrity. Data suggests that older students who have poor academic integrity have a higher percentage compared to lower students. This may be because end-level students have more in-depth experience working on tasks and exams as long as they dare to cheat (Liu & Alias, 2022).

In line with previous studies, our study shows that self-regulated learning had a significant impact on academic integrity. Hidayat et al. (Hidayat et al., 2020) It found that self-regulated learning has a significant link to academic integrity. Other studies show that self-regulated learning had a significant negative correlation to academic fraud (Kusuma, 2022). This was because high self-regulated learning students focused on learning goals, found suitable strategies, and evaluated their understanding. This helped them build confidence and improve academic access. Meanwhile, low SRL students experienced irregular learning processes, causing anxiety and potential academic fraud (Kusuma, 2022).

Furthermore, in line with the study by Eshet (2022), our study shows that there is a significant correlation between cognitive function and academic integrity. This is because students with good cognitive function will tend to take moral and ethical priorities so they seek to avoid actions that violate academic integrity (Eshet & Margaliot, 2022). Paulhus and Dubois (2015) suggest that based on systematic surveys that have been conducted, there is a negative correlation between cognitive function and academic fraud. The experience of failure experienced by students with poor cognitive function is associated with anxiety over such failure so compensate by committing academic fraud, especially on less-controlled learning materials (Paulhus & Dubois, 2015).

According to the findings of this study, that the stress levels had a significant correlation on academic integrity. Tindall (2021) study shows a significant positive correlation between stress and academic dishonesty. Negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and depression are predictors of academic integrity violations such as plagiarism and cheating (Tindall et al., 2021). Wahyuni's study (2021) also reveals a significant positive correlation between stress levels and plagiarism (Wahyuni, 2021). High academic demands can have negative

effects on students' mental well-being and lead to conditions of stress, anxiety, and depression. It is these negative emotions that ultimately drive students to engage in acts of academic integrity violations such as cheating and plagiarism.

After all, our study had some limitations that covered some of the following aspects. First, in completing the questionnaire, the duration of the time given was relatively short (in between their tedious study time), allowing some respondents to fill it out not in accordance with the actual circumstances. Second, the Digit Symbol Substitution Test only measured cognitive function in general and still had many unmeasured cognitive aspects, such attention aspect, languages aspect, executive function, and orientation, that could have affected academic integrity. However, the Digit Symbol Substitution Test was able to measure important aspects of cognitive function that affected student understanding in learning.

## Conclusion

The majority of students at FK UPN "Veteran" Jakarta have a moderate level of academic integrity. SRL, cognitive function, and stress levels have a significant relationship with academic integrity. Furthermore, SRL has the most significant influence on academic integrity.

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## Automatic Identification of Non-compliant Information in Chinese Text Based on BERT-TextCNN Algorithm

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**Abstract:** With the rapid global expansion and popularity of short video platforms, the identification and filtering of non-compliant content have become crucial tasks to ensure the health of the online environment. Traditional manual review methods face challenges of low efficiency and poor consistency, urgently requiring an efficient, automated solution. This study proposes a deep learning model based on BERT and TextCNN, aimed at automatically identifying non-compliant information within Chinese text content. By integrating the deep semantic understanding capabilities of the BERT model with the local feature extraction advantages of TextCNN, we designed and implemented an effective model for non-compliant information identification. This research first conducted a detailed preprocessing and analysis of the dataset, including exploring word length distribution, analyzing the proportion of compliant and non-compliant information, and visualizing key vocabulary through word cloud graphics. Subsequently, we trained and tested the model, which achieved an accuracy of 93.61% on the identification task, demonstrating good balance across precision, recall, and F1 score metrics, with an AUC value of 0.96. This indicates the model's high accuracy and reliability in distinguishing between compliant and non-compliant information. The outcomes of this study not only provide an effective automatic identification tool for short video platforms but also offer a new research perspective and practical evidence for the application of deep learning in text analysis.

**Keywords:** Non-compliant information identification, BERT-TextCNN, deep learning, natural language processing, text analysis

**Citation:** Gao, Y., Wang, C., & Xie, Y.. (2024). Automatic Identification of Non-compliant Information in Chinese Text Based on BERT-TextCNN Algorithm. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2312-2325), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

In the swiftly evolving landscape of digital communication, short video platforms have ascended to become pivotal conduits for the dissemination of information and entertainment, capturing the attention of a global audience. This meteoric rise has not only catalyzed the proliferation of cultural diversity across digital spaces but also carved out expansive arenas for content creators to broadcast their creativity and prowess. Amidst this digital renaissance, however, there lurks a shadowy underbelly of illegal and non-compliant information that encompasses a spectrum of content from pornography and violence to fraud and politically sensitive materials. Such content poses profound threats to the moral fabric of online communities and the overarching security of digital networks, challenging the integrity and health of the online ecosystem.

Traditionally, the task of content moderation has been anchored in manual review processes, reliant on the discernment and decision-making of human reviewers. However, in the face of the deluge of content generated on these platforms, manual moderation has increasingly shown its limitations. Not only is it marked by inefficiency, unable to keep pace with the sheer volume of content, but it is also fraught with the risk of subjective bias, leading to inconsistencies and potential oversights in content moderation. In this context, the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly through the innovations in deep learning and natural language processing (NLP), heralds a new epoch of content moderation. These cutting-edge technologies offer the promise of automating the understanding and analysis of text content, thereby unlocking the potential for more efficient and objective identification of non-compliant information.

This research endeavors to harness these technological advancements through the development of a novel deep learning model that synergizes the strengths of the BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) and TextCNN algorithms. BERT, renowned for its profound capabilities in grasping the nuanced complexities of language, has established itself as a cornerstone in the domain of NLP, enabling models to delve deep into the contextual meanings of text. Complementarily, TextCNN stands out for its proficiency in distilling essential local features within texts, providing a mechanism to capture the intricate patterns that signify non-compliant content. The amalgamation of BERT's deep linguistic understanding with TextCNN's sharp feature extraction presents a powerful approach to revolutionizing content moderation on Chinese short video platforms.

By embarking on this ambitious project, the study aims to craft a model that not only deciphers the deep semantic layers of text but also pinpoints critical local indicators of non-compliance with unparalleled accuracy and efficiency. The envisioned model seeks to transcend the traditional pitfalls of manual content moderation, offering a beacon of hope for upholding the sanctity of digital spaces. Through an exhaustive exploration and meticulous performance evaluation of this composite model, the study aspires to contribute an effective and reliable tool for automatic content moderation, while simultaneously broadening the horizons for applying deep learning techniques in the intricate realm of text analysis. This journey not only underscores the transformative

potential of AI in enhancing digital safety and integrity but also paves the way for future innovations in the stewardship of digital content.

## Related Work

Text sentiment classification, as an important branch of the field of natural language processing, has gone through several stages of development. Early research was primarily based on rules and sentiment lexicons, such as SentiWordNet, which determined sentiment orientation through the matching of sentiment words. This method was straightforward and intuitive but limited in application scope and accuracy due to a lack of deep understanding of context.

With the advancement of machine learning technology, statistical methods began to be widely applied to sentiment classification tasks. Pang et al. (2002) were among the pioneers in applying machine learning methods to the field of sentiment classification. They utilized algorithms such as Naïve Bayes and Support Vector Machines (SVM), extracting text features through feature engineering, achieving significant progress over rule-based matching. However, these methods still relied heavily on manual feature extraction, limiting the models' generalization capabilities.

The rise of deep learning brought new breakthroughs to text sentiment classification. Socher et al. (2013), through the introduction of Recursive Neural Tensor Networks (RNTN) for sentiment analysis, demonstrated the potential of deep learning in capturing the complex structure of text. Following this, Kim (2014) proposed the TextCNN model, which used convolutional neural networks for sentence-level sentiment classification, further proving the effectiveness of deep learning methods in text sentiment analysis. Additionally, Long Short-Term Memory networks (LSTM), proposed by Hochreiter & Schmidhuber (1997), became a common architecture in sentiment classification due to their advantage in processing long-term dependencies.

In recent years, models based on the Transformer architecture, especially BERT (Devlin et al., 2019), with their pre-trained deep bidirectional representations, have brought revolutionary improvements to text sentiment classification and other NLP tasks. The success of the BERT model has encouraged researchers to explore its combination with other models. For instance, Sun et al. (2019) significantly enhanced sentiment classification performance by integrating BERT with attention mechanisms. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2020) explored combining BERT with Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) to better capture sentiment information in text, showing the potential of hybrid models in complex sentiment analysis tasks.

Recently, Liang et al. (2019) presented a combination model based on BERT and TextCNN that achieved excellent results in aspect-level sentiment classification, proving the effectiveness of combining pre-trained models with traditional deep learning structures in specific sentiment analysis tasks. These studies not only showcase the application prospects of deep learning methods in sentiment classification but also provide rich

technical reserves and insights for subsequent research.

Through the introduction of these empirical studies, we can observe the evolution of text sentiment classification technology from initial rule-based matching to statistical machine learning methods, and then to complex sentiment analysis using deep learning. These advancements have not only driven the development of sentiment classification technology but also provided more precise and in-depth tools for understanding and analyzing human emotions.

*Data Preprocessing*

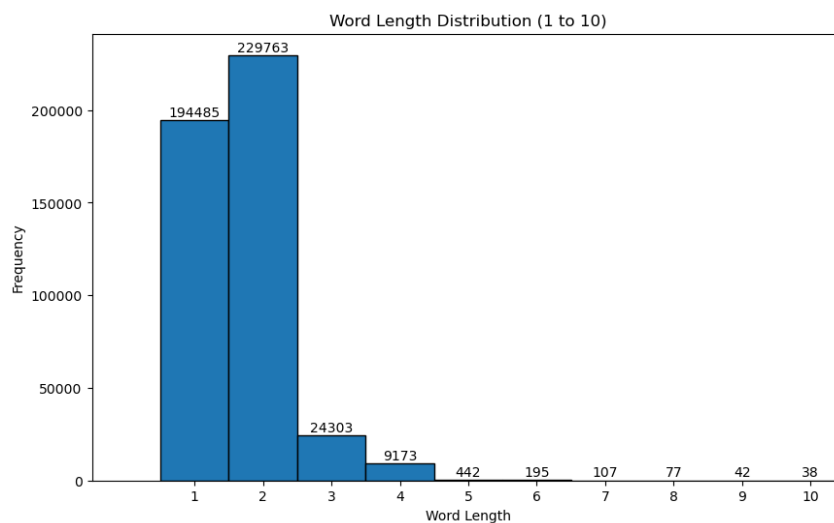


Figure 15 Word Length Distribution Graph

In the context of this study, an extensive dataset comprising text data extracted from various Chinese short video platforms was meticulously curated for analytical purposes. This selection process was guided by the objective to encompass a diverse range of linguistic expressions and thematic content, thereby ensuring a comprehensive representation of the digital discourse prevalent on these platforms.

The initial phase of data preparation involved an elaborate cleaning process aimed at refining the raw dataset. This procedure was essential to eliminate extraneous elements that could potentially obfuscate the underlying semantic structures of interest. Specifically, URLs, user identifiers, and special symbols were systematically removed. The exclusion of URLs and user identifiers was pivotal in ensuring the anonymity of the data sources and focusing the analysis on textual content rather than metadata. Similarly, the removal of special symbols was crucial for standardizing the text, facilitating a more uniform dataset conducive to subsequent processing steps.

Following the cleansing of the dataset, the next step entailed the segmentation of the text into its constituent lexical units. For this task, the jieba word segmentation tool was employed, a decision motivated by its proven efficiency and accuracy in handling the intricacies of the Chinese language. Jieba's algorithm is adept at parsing

Chinese text into words, a non-trivial task given the absence of explicit word boundaries in Chinese script. This segmentation process was instrumental in transforming the continuous stream of characters into a discrete sequence of words, thereby enabling the detailed linguistic analysis required for this study.

In conjunction with word segmentation, a predefined list of stop words was utilized to further refine the dataset. This list encompassed common words that, while frequent in the language, contribute minimally to the semantic payload of the text. By filtering out these stop words, the study aimed to diminish the impact of noise data on the model's training process. This step was critical in enhancing the model's ability to discern and learn from the meaningful patterns in the data, rather than being sidetracked by ubiquitous but semantically sparse terms.

The culmination of these preparatory activities was the conversion of the segmented text data into a format amenable to processing by the model. This transformation was not merely a technical procedure but a critical bridge between the raw linguistic data and its computational analysis. It involved encoding the text into numerical representations that could be ingested by the model, thus setting the stage for the ensuing phases of model training and testing. Through these meticulously executed preparatory steps, the study laid a solid foundation for exploring the potential of the proposed BERT+TextCNN model in understanding and classifying the multifaceted content characteristic of Chinese short video platforms.

## Methodology

### Model Architecture

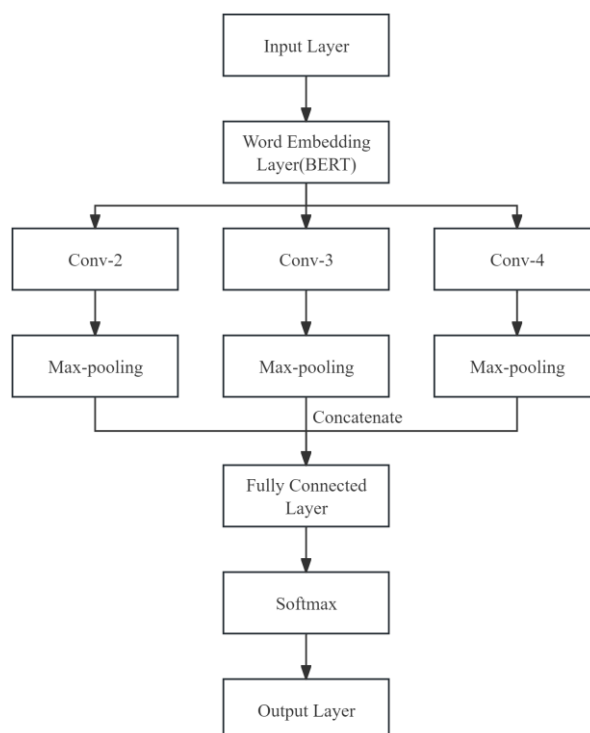


Figure 16 BERT-TextCNN Model Architecture

The BERT+TextCNN model established in this document focuses on leveraging the combination of the BERT pre-trained model and the one-dimensional Convolutional Neural Network (TextCNN) to efficiently process text classification tasks. The design philosophy of the model is based on the understanding that deep semantic comprehension and the precise capture of textual local structures are crucial for improving the accuracy of text classification.

The input layer of the model accepts text sequences processed by the BERT Tokenizer, including `input_ids` and `attention_mask`. These sequences are first transformed through the pre-trained BERT model, generating feature vectors rich in semantic information, laying a solid foundation for subsequent deep learning tasks. Following this, the model utilizes a set of one-dimensional convolutional layers (the TextCNN part), capturing features of different length n-grams in the text through convolutional kernels of various sizes. This process introduces non-linearity with the ReLU activation function and extracts the most important features through a max-pooling operation, enabling the model to understand the text content from multiple dimensions.

In the subsequent stages of the model, a Dropout layer (set with a dropout rate of 0.5) is employed to reduce the risk of overfitting, thereby enhancing the model's generalization ability on new data. After processing by the TextCNN layer, the feature vectors are fed into a fully connected layer, which is responsible for mapping the extracted features to the final classification space. The number of neurons in the output layer equals the number of categories, using the Softmax activation function to calculate the probability distribution of each category, thus completing the classification task.

In summary, the BERT+TextCNN model, by combining the advantages of the pre-trained deep language model and the convolutional neural network, not only delves deeply into the semantic information of the text but also precisely captures the local features of the text, providing an effective solution for text classification tasks.

### *Training Process*

The training process of the model entailed a meticulously structured procedure, underscored by the division of the dataset, selection of optimizer and loss function, learning rate scheduling, and the iterative execution of training cycles, all orchestrated to optimize the model's performance for text classification tasks.

Initially, the dataset was systematically segregated into training and testing sets, adhering to a 9:1 ratio. This division was strategically implemented to ensure that the model could undergo rigorous training while retaining a substantial independent dataset for effective evaluation. The aim was to ascertain that the model's efficacy was not solely confined to the data it was trained on but extended to previously unseen data, thereby enhancing the model's generalizability and reliability in practical applications.

In the pursuit of optimizing the training process, AdamW was selected as the optimizer. This choice was predicated on AdamW's proven efficacy in handling deep learning models, particularly within the ambit of



Natural Language Processing (NLP) tasks. The optimizer is renowned for its adaptive learning rate capabilities, which significantly contribute to the fine-tuning of model parameters, thereby facilitating improved model training outcomes. Complementarily, the Cross-Entropy Loss function was employed to cater to the multi-classification nature of the task at hand. This loss function is particularly adept at managing scenarios where each instance may belong to one of several classes, making it an ideal fit for this model's objectives.

A nuanced learning rate scheduling approach was adopted, characterized by an initial warm-up phase followed by a gradual decay. This strategy is instrumental in mitigating the risk of premature convergence to suboptimal minima, thereby enabling the model to explore the parameter space more thoroughly. The warm-up phase gently increases the learning rate, allowing the model to adjust to the complexity of the task gradually, while the subsequent decay ensures that the learning rate diminishes in a controlled manner, fostering better convergence.

The model was subjected to multiple training cycles on the training set, with each cycle meticulously monitored to gauge the model's performance against the validation set. This iterative evaluation played a pivotal role in the implementation of an Early Stopping strategy, which was instrumental in curtailing the training process upon detecting signs of overfitting. Such a strategy ensures that the model maintains its capacity to generalize to new data, thereby obviating the pitfalls of excessive training that could otherwise lead to diminished performance on unseen data.

Through this comprehensive training regimen, the model was adeptly honed to capture the nuanced semantic and structural characteristics of the text, ensuring its preparedness to tackle the challenges of text classification with heightened accuracy and efficiency.

### *Performance Evaluation*

In the performance evaluation phase of the study, a rigorous assessment framework was adopted to quantify the efficacy of the proposed BERT+TextCNN model in executing the text sentiment classification task. This evaluation was predicated on the model's ability to accurately classify the sentiment of texts from the independent testing set, a dataset not encountered during the training phase. The objective was to ascertain the model's proficiency in generalizing its learned patterns to new, unseen data, a critical indicator of its practical utility.

The evaluation metrics selected for this assessment were chosen for their capacity to provide a holistic view of the model's performance across various dimensions of accuracy and reliability. Specifically:

Accuracy was employed as a primary metric to gauge the overall proportion of correct predictions made by the model out of the total predictions. This metric offers a straightforward indication of the model's effectiveness but is complemented by more nuanced metrics to understand its performance fully.

Precision and Recall were utilized to provide insights into the model's predictive performance concerning individual classes. Precision (the proportion of true positive results in all positive predictions) assesses the model's ability to minimize false positives, while Recall (the proportion of true positive results in all actual positives) evaluates the model's capability to capture as many positives as possible. These metrics are particularly informative in scenarios where class imbalances might skew overall accuracy metrics.

The F1 Score, a harmonic mean of Precision and Recall, was calculated to balance the trade-offs between Precision and Recall, offering a single metric that encapsulates both aspects of the model's performance. This metric is invaluable for comparing models, especially in cases where one model may excel in Precision and another in Recall.

To complement these metrics, the Confusion Matrix was utilized to visually represent the model's predictions across the various classes, allowing for an intuitive understanding of its performance, including the types and magnitudes of any misclassifications. This matrix helps identify patterns of errors, offering insights into the model's strengths and weaknesses in classifying different sentiment categories.

Additionally, the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) Curve and the area under the ROC curve (AUC) were employed as tools to assess the model's classification effectiveness and its generalization ability. The ROC Curve plots the true positive rate against the false positive rate at various threshold settings, providing a measure of the model's ability to discriminate between classes. The AUC provides a single value summarizing the ROC curve, with higher values indicating better model performance and a greater ability to differentiate between sentiment classes.

This comprehensive performance evaluation methodology, incorporating a blend of metrics and analytical tools, was meticulously planned to ensure the transparency and reproducibility of the research. Each step, from data preprocessing through model training to performance evaluation, was documented in detail, aiming to provide a clear roadmap for future research endeavors in the domain of text sentiment classification. This approach not only validates the current study's findings but also contributes to the broader academic dialogue on effective methodologies for sentiment analysis and text classification.

## **Experimental Results**

### **Performance Metrics**

Upon the completion of the training phase, the BERT+TextCNN model underwent a rigorous evaluation on the independent testing set, a pivotal step designed to scrutinize its capability in the nuanced task of text sentiment classification. This evaluation was meticulously structured to assess not only the model's overall accuracy but also its performance across a spectrum of key indicators that collectively offer a more granular view of its effectiveness and reliability.

The model achieved an impressive **accuracy rate of 93.61%**, a testament to its efficiency and precision in categorizing text sentiments. This high level of accuracy signifies the model's robustness and its adeptness at understanding and interpreting the complex nuances of language that define sentiment. Such a result underscores the model's potential utility in real-world applications where accurate sentiment classification is crucial, ranging from market research to monitoring public sentiment on social media platforms.

In addition to its commendable accuracy, the model exhibited commendable performance across other critical metrics, providing a multi-dimensional perspective on its capabilities. Specifically, the model achieved a **Precision of 89.51%**, reflecting its high degree of specificity in identifying positive instances of sentiment without being overly inclusive of negative cases. This level of precision indicates that when the model predicts a particular sentiment, there is a high likelihood that such a prediction is correct, thus minimizing the risk of false positives that could skew analyses and decision-making processes based on the model's outputs.

The model's **Recall rate of 86.22%** further complements its precision, illustrating its ability to capture a substantial proportion of actual positive sentiments. This metric highlights the model's sensitivity in detecting relevant instances, ensuring that few genuine expressions of sentiment are overlooked. High recall is particularly valuable in contexts where missing out on significant sentiment expressions could lead to incomplete or biased interpretations of the data.

Furthermore, the **F1 Score of 87.84%** achieved by the model serves as a harmonized measure of its precision and recall, indicating a balanced performance between these two aspects. An F1 Score nearing 90% exemplifies a model that does not overly favor either precision or recall but instead maintains a commendable equilibrium, ensuring that it is both accurate and comprehensive in its sentiment classification endeavors.

These results collectively illustrate that the composite model, leveraging the synergistic capabilities of BERT and TextCNN, stands as an effective tool for identifying text sentiment. Its robust performance across accuracy, precision, recall, and the F1 Score demonstrates a well-rounded and comprehensive ability to tackle the complexities of sentiment analysis. Such a model not only enriches the academic discourse on sentiment analysis methodologies but also offers tangible benefits for practical applications where nuanced understanding and classification of text sentiment are required.

### *Confusion Matrix Analysis*

In the subsequent phase of the performance evaluation, a detailed analysis leveraging the confusion matrix offered deeper insights into the model's predictive capabilities across different sentiment categories. This analysis was instrumental in deciphering the nuanced dynamics of the model's classification accuracy, identifying not only its strengths but also delineating areas where optimization could further enhance its performance.

The confusion matrix, a vital tool in the evaluation of classification models, elucidated the model's ability to

discern between the sentiment classes accurately. According to the matrix, the model demonstrated commendable proficiency in identifying the positive class, correctly classifying such instances as True Positives a total of 378 times. This high number of True Positives underscores the model's effectiveness in recognizing expressions of positive sentiment, a crucial aspect of sentiment analysis, particularly in applications aimed at capturing customer satisfaction or public opinion trends.

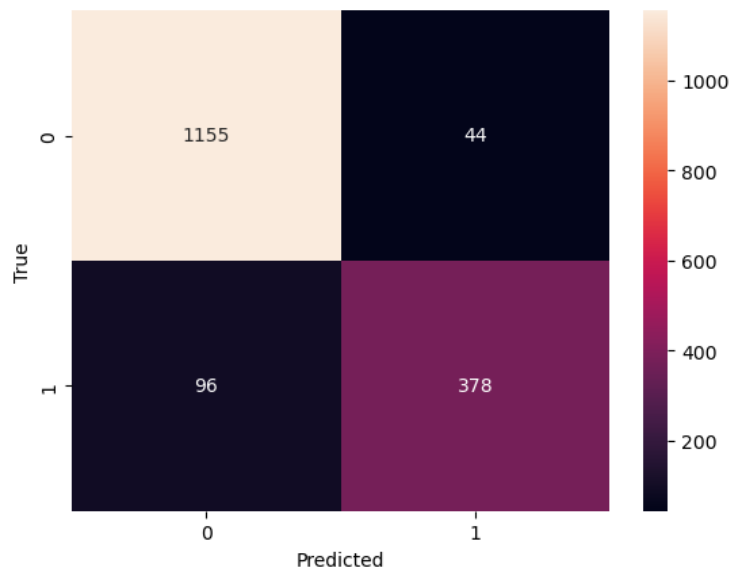


Figure 17 Confusion Matrix

Similarly, the model exhibited a strong capability in correctly predicting the negative class, with True Negatives recorded at 1155 instances. This achievement indicates the model's adeptness at distinguishing negative sentiments from other categories, a testament to its comprehensive learning and understanding of linguistic cues associated with negativity. Such accuracy in identifying negative sentiments is invaluable for applications requiring nuanced understanding of negative feedback or criticisms.

Despite these strengths, the confusion matrix also revealed areas for improvement, indicated by the occurrences of False Positives and False Negatives. Specifically, the model encountered 44 instances of False Positives, where non-positive sentiments were mistakenly classified as positive. Although relatively low, this number points to the potential for refining the model's specificity, thereby reducing instances where neutral or negative sentiments are incorrectly interpreted as positive.

Conversely, the model registered 96 False Negatives, cases where positive sentiments were not recognized as such. This metric highlights opportunities to enhance the model's sensitivity, ensuring that genuine expressions of positive sentiment are not overlooked. Addressing False Negatives is particularly critical in applications where missing out on positive feedback or endorsements could skew the overall sentiment analysis.

The insights garnered from the confusion matrix not only affirm the model's competency in classifying text

sentiment but also illuminate specific areas where targeted improvements could further augment its accuracy and reliability. The revelation of these misclassifications provides a clear direction for future model optimization efforts. By focusing on reducing False Positives and False Negatives, subsequent iterations of the model could achieve even higher levels of precision and recall, thereby enhancing its utility for a wider array of sentiment analysis applications. This analytical approach, rooted in the detailed examination of performance across sentiment categories, lays the groundwork for continuous improvement and refinement of sentiment analysis models.

### ROC Curve and AUC Value

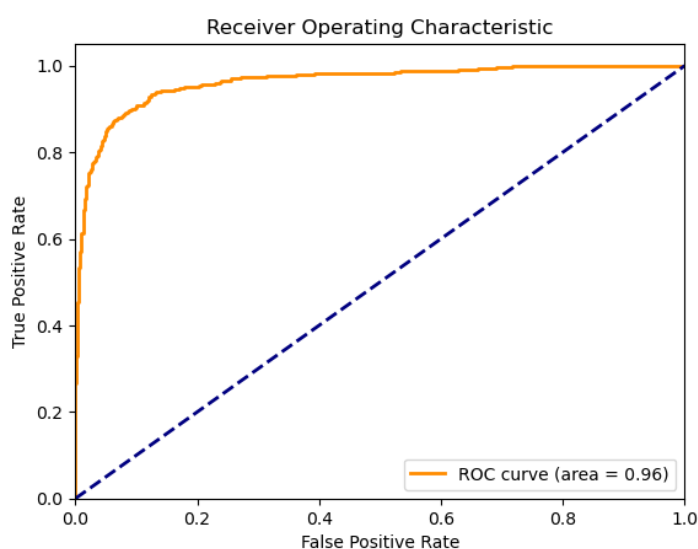


Figure 18 ROC Curve

In the intricate process of evaluating the model's proficiency in sentiment classification, the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) Curve and the Area Under the Curve (AUC) Value emerge as paramount indicators. These metrics collectively offer a nuanced understanding of the model's ability to balance sensitivity (true positive rate) and specificity (false positive rate), thereby providing a comprehensive overview of its classification efficacy. In the context of this study, the model's ROC Curve and its corresponding AUC Value were meticulously analyzed to gauge its discriminative capability between positive and negative sentiment classes.

The ROC Curve, a graphical representation plotting the true positive rate against the false positive rate at various threshold levels, serves as a pivotal tool in assessing the trade-offs between capturing true positives and avoiding false positives. The model's ROC curve area, encapsulated by the AUC Value of 0.96, stands as a testament to its exemplary classification ability. This value, verging on the ideal of 1, underscores the model's adeptness at distinguishing between the dichotomous sentiment categories with a high degree of accuracy.

A high AUC Value, such as the one achieved in this study, is indicative of the model's effectiveness and

reliability in several key respects. Firstly, it signifies that the model possesses a high true positive rate, implying that it is proficient at identifying genuine instances of the targeted sentiment without fail. This capability is crucial for ensuring that positive sentiments are captured comprehensively, a factor of paramount importance in applications such as customer feedback analysis, where overlooking positive feedback could skew the understanding of customer satisfaction.

Secondly, the attainment of a low false positive rate, as reflected in the high AUC Value, points to the model's precision in minimizing the misclassification of negative sentiments as positive. This specificity is vital in maintaining the integrity of sentiment analysis, particularly in scenarios where the erroneous classification of sentiments could lead to misleading interpretations or decisions.

The model's high AUC Value reflects not only its strong discriminative power but also its robustness and generalization ability across diverse sets of data. This robustness is essential for the application of the model in real-world scenarios, where the variability of text data demands a high degree of adaptability and precision from sentiment classification models.

In essence, the ROC Curve and AUC Value offer a holistic view of the model's performance, encapsulating its ability to effectively and reliably distinguish between positive and negative sentiments. The achievement of an AUC Value close to the ideal underscores the success of the BERT+TextCNN composite model in this regard, highlighting its potential as a powerful tool for sentiment analysis tasks. This high level of performance not only validates the model's current efficacy but also sets a benchmark for future developments in the field of text sentiment classification.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the innovative composite model, ingeniously integrating the BERT pre-trained language model with the TextCNN architecture, has exhibited remarkable proficiency in the domain of text sentiment classification. The model's evaluation, grounded in a comprehensive analysis encompassing a spectrum of performance metrics, the insightful data derived from the confusion matrix, and the rigorous assessment through the ROC curve, collectively affirms its exceptional effectiveness and accuracy. This thorough validation process has not only underscored the model's competency but also highlighted its distinct advantages over conventional methodologies, thereby cementing its place as a significant advancement in the realm of natural language processing (NLP).

The model's standout performance, characterized by its high accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 scores, alongside a notably high AUC value, delineates its robust ability to discern and classify sentiments with remarkable precision. These achievements illustrate the profound impact of leveraging deep learning techniques, specifically the synergetic combination of BERT's deep contextual understanding and TextCNN's efficient

capture of textual features, in extracting and interpreting complex sentiment expressions within text data. Such an approach has not only bridged the gap between theoretical models and practical applications but also set new benchmarks for what is achievable in sentiment analysis tasks.

Comparative analyses further accentuate the model's superior performance relative to other existing methods, showcasing its groundbreaking potential in harnessing the power of deep learning for NLP challenges. This superiority is not merely in terms of quantitative metrics but also reflects a qualitative leap in the model's ability to understand the nuances of language and sentiment, a testament to the advancements in AI and machine learning technologies.

Looking ahead, the journey of refining and enhancing this model is far from complete. Future endeavors will delve into the exploration of advanced optimization techniques for both the model's architecture and its parameters. Such optimizations aim to not only amplify the model's efficiency and effectiveness but also to broaden its applicability across a more diverse array of text classification tasks. This includes, but is not limited to, exploring more granular sentiment classifications, adapting the model for multilingual contexts, and tailoring it to specific industry needs, such as customer service or market analysis.

Moreover, future work will also contemplate the integration of additional data sources and the incorporation of richer linguistic features to further enrich the model's learning base. These enhancements will pave the way for the model to capture even more subtle linguistic cues and complex sentiment constructs, thereby extending its utility and applicability across various domains and languages.

In essence, the remarkable achievements of the BERT+TextCNN composite model in text sentiment classification serve as a beacon for the vast potentialities of deep learning in NLP. As this field continues to evolve, the continuous improvement and adaptation of such models hold the promise of unlocking unprecedented capabilities in text analysis, opening new avenues for research and application that were once deemed beyond reach.

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## The Teaching and Learning of Chemistry in Secondary Schools in Malaysia: A Critical Reflection

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to examine the use of the Malay language and the English language in the teaching and learning of Chemistry subjects in secondary schools in Malaysia, particularly among Form Four and Form Five students at the National Type schools (SMJK). National Type secondary schools are Malaysian national schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. However, these schools have their own school boards and are mainly attended by Malaysian Chinese students. The teachers are also mainly Malaysian Chinese, although the medium of instruction is the national language – Malay. However, the teaching and learning of many science subjects are bilingual, conducted in both Malay and English, in accordance with the national stream education system. The methodology employed in this study includes semi-structured interviews and classroom observations at two SMJKs in the northern part of Malaysia. The purposive sampling method was used to identify relevant teachers. Ten Chemistry teachers with at least 20 years of teaching experience in secondary schools were interviewed, and the data were analyzed thematically. The findings show that Chemistry teachers prefer teaching the subject in English, mainly due to student preferences. Additionally, the findings indicated three main areas of challenges. These include the low command of English among students and teachers, as well as the lack of reference books in English. Most reference books in the market are primarily in the Malay language. The implications of the study indicate that schools wishing to adopt the use of English must be prepared in various aspects such as learning facilities and more.

**Keywords:** Teaching and Learning, Chemistry, Secondary, School, Critical Reflection.

**Citation:** Loh, K.S., Chong, S.T., Lee, S.Y., & Listiani, T. (2024). The Teaching and Learning of Chemistry in Secondary Schools in Malaysia: A Critical Reflection. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2326-2336), Antalya,

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## Introduction

In Malaysia, Chemistry education at the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) level is a critical component of the national curriculum. The syllabus is aimed at providing Malaysian secondary school students with a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental principles and applications of chemistry. This is particularly important because the SPM examination is a high-stakes examination which plays a deciding factor in the future endeavor of the students (Ong, 2010). It is the national examination taken by Malaysian students at the end of their secondary education, typically around the age of 17.

The Chemistry curriculum in Malaysia is designed to cultivate both theoretical knowledge and practical skills among students. It covers a wide range of topics, including atomic structure, chemical bonding, chemical reactions, stoichiometry, organic chemistry, and environmental chemistry, among others. The curriculum is structured to provide a solid foundation in chemistry while also incorporating relevant real-world applications to engage students and foster their interest in the subject (Examinations Syndicate, 2018). The teaching of Chemistry at the SPM level emphasizes hands-on experimentation and laboratory work to reinforce theoretical concepts and develop practical skills. Students are encouraged to conduct experiments, analyze data, and draw conclusions, which not only deepens their understanding of chemistry but also enhances their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Furthermore, the Chemistry curriculum in Malaysia often integrates multimedia resources, such as videos, simulations, and interactive software, to enhance the learning experience and cater to different learning styles. This approach helps to make the subject more accessible and engaging for students, allowing them to visualize abstract concepts and phenomena. The Chemistry curriculum also emphasizes the importance of safety and ethical considerations in the laboratory. Students are taught proper laboratory techniques, handling of chemicals, and safety protocols to ensure a safe and responsible learning environment.

The SPM examination assesses students' understanding of Chemistry through a combination of objective questions, structured questions, and practical assessments. This comprehensive assessment approach evaluates students' knowledge, application skills, and experimental proficiency, providing a holistic measure of their competency in the subject (Mohamad, Mohd Yusoff, & Khusairi, 2022).

Overall, Chemistry education at the SPM level in Malaysia aims to equip students with a strong foundation in chemistry, essential skills, and a passion for the subject. By fostering an understanding of the principles and applications of chemistry, Malaysia's Chemistry curriculum prepares students for further studies in science and technology fields and empowers them to contribute meaningfully to society (Ahmad Zufrie, Chong, Kaman, & Leon, 2020).

## Literature Review

MBMMBI stands for the "Malay Language and the Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English" policy, which was introduced in Malaysia in 2003. The policy aimed to enhance the proficiency of Malaysian students in English and to improve their understanding of science and mathematics by teaching these subjects in English at the primary and secondary school levels. The implementation of MBMMBI was a significant shift in Malaysia's education system, which had previously primarily used Bahasa Malaysia, the national language, as the medium of instruction for all subjects. The rationale behind MBMMBI was to equip Malaysian students with English language skills that are crucial for success in the globalized world and to enhance their competitiveness in various fields, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Under the MBMMBI policy, selected subjects, including science and mathematics, were taught in English starting from Year 1 of primary school. The transition to English as the medium of instruction for these subjects was gradual, with the goal of ensuring that students could effectively grasp the content in both English and their native language (Abd Rahman, Chong, Kaman, & Leon, 2021). The implementation of MBMMBI faced various challenges and controversies. One of the main concerns was the proficiency of teachers in English, as many educators had limited proficiency in the language (Nurhani & Harwati, 2021). To address this issue, the Malaysian government implemented training programs and initiatives to enhance the English language proficiency of teachers and provide them with the necessary support and resources to teach in English effectively.

Additionally, there were concerns about the impact of MBMMBI on students' overall academic performance, particularly for those who were not proficient in English. Critics argued that the policy could widen the achievement gap between students from urban and rural areas or between different socioeconomic backgrounds. Over the years, the implementation of MBMMBI underwent several revisions and adjustments in response to feedback and challenges. In 2012, the Malaysian government announced a decision to gradually revert to teaching science and mathematics in Bahasa Malaysia (Gill, 2014), starting with Year 1 primary school students in 2016. This decision was made to address concerns about the proficiency levels of students and teachers in English and to ensure better comprehension and mastery of these subjects.

While the MBMMBI policy may have faced challenges and criticisms, it also contributed to raising awareness about the importance of English language proficiency and the need to equip Malaysian students with the skills necessary to thrive in a globalized world. The experience gained from the implementation of MBMMBI has informed ongoing efforts to improve language education and curriculum development in Malaysia.

The Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) is a comprehensive strategic plan developed by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to guide the transformation and improvement of the country's education system. Introduced in 2013, the MEB outlines a set of goals, objectives, and initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality,

equity, and efficiency of education at all levels, from preschool to higher education. The MEB is designed to address various challenges facing the Malaysian education system, including disparities in access to quality education, low proficiency in critical subjects such as mathematics and science, and the need to equip students with 21st-century skills to thrive in a globalized economy (Abd Rahman, Chong, Kaman, & Leon, 2021).

One of the key objectives of the MEB is to improve student outcomes by focusing on holistic development, including cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects. To achieve this, the blueprint emphasizes the importance of providing a well-rounded education that goes beyond academic achievement to encompass values, character development, and lifelong learning skills. Another major focus of the MEB is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. This involves improving the professional development of teachers, enhancing the curriculum to make it more relevant and engaging, and leveraging technology to support teaching and learning processes. The blueprint also emphasizes the importance of strengthening school leadership and governance to ensure effective management and accountability at all levels of the education system.

In addition to improving quality and equity, the MEB also aims to promote inclusivity and diversity in education. This includes addressing the needs of marginalized and underserved populations, such as students from low-income families, rural communities, and those with disabilities. The blueprint outlines strategies to ensure that all students have access to quality education and opportunities for success, regardless of their background or circumstances. The MEB is implemented through a series of action plans and initiatives, with progress monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure that goals are being met and adjustments made as needed. The blueprint is a dynamic document that evolves in response to changing needs and priorities, with periodic reviews and updates to reflect emerging trends and challenges in education.

Overall, the Malaysia Education Blueprint represents a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to education reform, aimed at improving the quality, equity, and relevance of education in Malaysia to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. By focusing on holistic development, quality teaching and learning, inclusivity, and diversity, the MEB seeks to empower all Malaysian students with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to succeed in the 21st century.

## Method

SMJK stands for *Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan*, which translates to National Type Secondary School in English. These schools are a unique feature of Malaysia's education system, catering to students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. SMJKs are publicly funded schools that offer education based on either Chinese, Tamil, or Malay language streams, reflecting the multicultural diversity of Malaysia.

The research design of this study is crafted following the conceptual framework delineated by Creswell and Creswell (2017). At its core, this interdisciplinary qualitative inquiry adopts interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as its chosen methodological approach. IPA, originally formulated by Smith, Larkin, and Flowers

(2009) and subsequently refined in 2022, stands as a well-regarded qualitative research methodology, renowned for its capacity to delve deeply into individual experiences and perspectives (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Underpinning this study is a philosophical worldview rooted in social constructionism, which posits that the interpretation and reconstruction of societal phenomena are inherently shaped by the socio-cultural contexts within which they occur. Within this paradigm, the significance of understanding how meaning is both constructed and negotiated in specific social milieus is emphasized.

Moreover, the inquiry strategy deployed herein is qualitative in nature. This methodological choice is justified by the predominant reliance on interviews with sixth form educators as the primary means of data collection. Qualitative methodologies are deemed most apt for capturing the intricate nuances and rich insights inherent in educators' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). By embracing a qualitative approach within the broader framework proposed by Creswell, this study endeavors to unearth and elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of the phenomena under investigation, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the subject matter and enriching the scholarly discourse in the field.

**Findings**

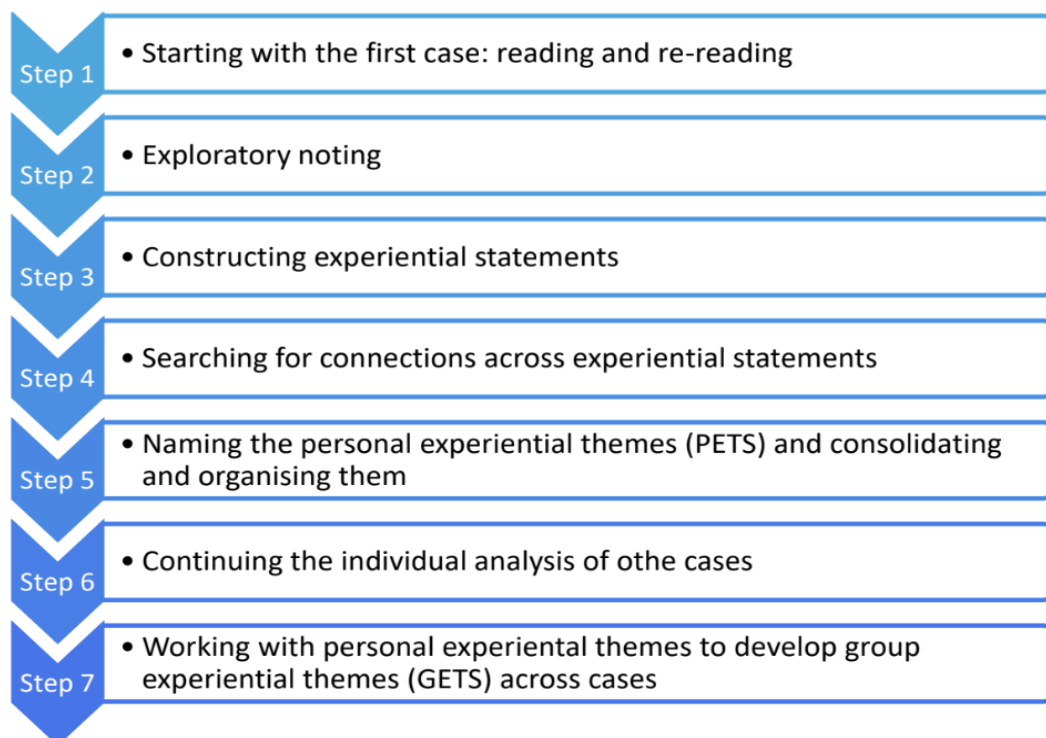


Figure 1. The Steps of Research Design

In the realm of social science research, the amalgamation of diverse research methodologies often yields a more profound understanding of intricate phenomena. This paper explores the application of a mixed methods

approach, focusing on the integration of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), within the confines of a single-case study. By employing this mixed methods design, the research aims to unravel the complex layers of human experiences, offering a nuanced and in-depth perspective that combines both qualitative and quantitative insights.

The research design for this study follows Creswell's research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Firstly, this interdisciplinary qualitative study employs interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a research method. IPAS was first developed by Smith, Larkin, and Flowers (2009) and an updated version (2022). It is a widely used method (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The philosophical worldview is a worldview of social construction in which the context is juxtaposed with the reconstruction of society. Thirdly, the strategy of inquiry is qualitative in nature. This is because the bulk of data comes from interviewing the sixth-form educators, hence, a qualitative strategy is deemed a better *modus operandi* to yield fruitful data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Mixed methods research, by design, integrates the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively address research questions. The synergy between the depth of qualitative data and the broader generalizability of quantitative measures is particularly valuable. In the context of this study, the combination of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and a case study design enables a holistic understanding of intricate human experiences within a specific context.

At the heart of this methodology is IPA, a qualitative research approach rooted in phenomenology. IPA seeks to uncover and comprehend how individuals make sense of their lived experiences, providing a nuanced exploration of subjective realities. By engaging in an iterative process of data collection and analysis, researchers employing IPA can interpret participants' accounts, revealing underlying themes and patterns that might otherwise remain hidden.

The case study design employed in this research focuses on a single unit of analysis, allowing for a concentrated examination of a real-life context. The depth and contextual richness inherent in case studies complement the nuanced exploration offered by IPA. This approach enables researchers to capture the intricacies and unique aspects of human experiences within a specific setting, contributing to a more profound understanding of the research problem.

The integration of mixed methods and IPA in a case study can take a sequential or concurrent approach. In a sequential design, one method informs the other, often with the qualitative phase following the quantitative phase. Alternatively, a concurrent design involves the simultaneous collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing for a more dynamic synthesis of results. This integration enriches the research by providing a multifaceted perspective on the research problem.

The integrated approach of mixed methods, IPA, and case study design brings numerous benefits, including a holistic understanding of the research problem, triangulation of findings, and enhanced validity. However,



challenges such as the time and resource-intensive nature of the methodology, ensuring consistency in data interpretation, and navigating the complexities of synthesizing diverse findings should be carefully considered. Despite these challenges, the potential for generating comprehensive knowledge that transcends disciplinary boundaries makes this mixed methods approach a powerful tool for unraveling the intricacies of complex human experiences.

## Findings and Discussions

The findings from the analysis were analyzed using ATLAS.ti to generate themes. Particularly, the personal experiential themes (PETS) and then from the collected group experiential themes (GETS). The GETS are developed by examining the convergence and divergence of the essence of the lived experiences.

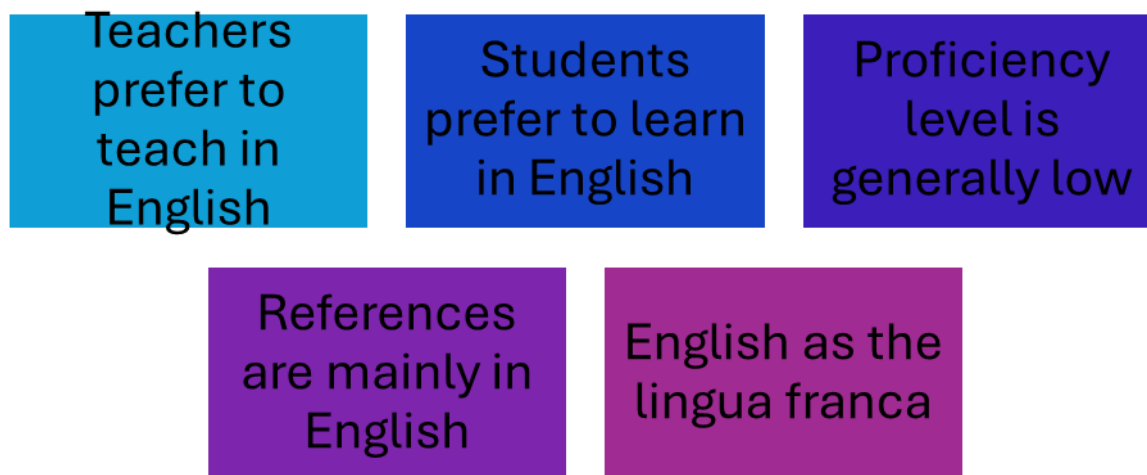


Figure 2. Thematic Analysis

The figure above is a thematic analysis generated by ATLAS.ti. Based on the emerging themes, teachers generally feel that the provision, training, and information about chemistry is insufficient in the Malaysian secondary school education landscape. From the convergence and divergence of the thematic analysis, the commonalities and particularities are further examined.

In Malaysia, educators at the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) level have expressed concerns about the adequacy of educational materials in chemistry, particularly regarding the coverage of inorganic and organic chemistry. Chemistry plays a crucial role in modern science, and understanding it is vital for preparing students for the evolving landscape of science education. The integration of comprehensive and up-to-date materials in the curriculum is essential to ensure that students are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to engage

with advancements in chemistry (Buldur, Bursal, Erik, & Yucel, 2020).

Teachers who have reviewed the current curriculum have identified a gap in the coverage of organic chemistry concepts. This shortfall poses a challenge as it limits the depth of understanding students can acquire about this critical aspect of contemporary chemistry. To address this issue, educators are providing constructive feedback to curriculum developers and educational authorities, emphasizing the need for updates and enhancements to incorporate smart grid topics more thoroughly. For instance,

*Inorganic chemistry is included in the textbook, but very very superficial level only....most of us just use YouTube to enhance the understanding of inorganic chemistry...(Teacher Maimunah)*

To address the understanding of inorganic chemistry, educators themselves can take proactive steps to enhance their own understanding of smart grids. Participating in professional development programs focused on energy technologies can empower teachers to integrate relevant content into their lessons. This approach ensures that educators are well-informed and capable of delivering engaging and informative lessons to their students. For instance,

*I think there were some programmes conducted by the GKMP, but I cannot recall it. It was conducted by some lecturers from university X. (Teacher Nizam).*

Teachers can contribute to bridging the gap by developing additional materials on smart grids. This may involve creating lesson plans, presentations, and supplementary resources that align with the existing curriculum. Furthermore, collaboration with industry experts, such as professionals from chemistry, can bring real-world insights into the classroom. Guest lectures and workshops facilitated by these experts can enrich students' learning experiences and provide practical applications of smart grid technologies. This echoes the findings of a study conducted in Jordan (Shuqair, 2023).

Advocacy for the inclusion of smart grid topics in educational policies is crucial. Teachers can actively engage with education policymakers, attending forums and discussions to highlight the importance of incorporating these concepts into the science curriculum (Sun, Khan, & Ren, 2023). Additionally, building connections with the local community, including energy providers and technology companies, can yield valuable resources and support for educators seeking to enhance the coverage of smart grids in their teaching materials. By taking these collaborative and proactive measures, educators can contribute to a more comprehensive and contemporary science education at the SPM level in Malaysia.

## Conclusion

Understanding how SPM teachers perceive the relevance of Chemistry is pivotal. This encompasses exploring their awareness of the significance of chemistry in the context of renewable energy, climate change mitigation,

and technological advancements. Teachers' insights into the applicability of chemical concepts in real-world scenarios and industries will provide valuable feedback for curriculum developers.

The study also aims to identify the challenges faced by SPM teachers in the teaching and learning of Chemistry. Whether it be a lack of resources, gaps in teacher training, or constraints within the existing curriculum, recognizing these hurdles is essential for designing effective support mechanisms. Simultaneously, uncovering the opportunities perceived by teachers can provide insights into potential innovations and enhancements in the delivery of Chemistry.

The research delves into the perceived effectiveness of current educational strategies and materials related to Chemistry. By understanding how teachers approach the delivery of these concepts, the study aims to provide recommendations for refining teaching methodologies, developing relevant educational materials, and fostering a conducive learning environment for students.

As Malaysia propels itself toward a sustainable energy future, the insights derived from SPM teachers' perceptions on chemistry education are integral. This research aims to contribute valuable information for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educational institutions, fostering an environment where chemistry education is not only seen as a theoretical concept but as a practical and essential component in shaping the energy leaders of tomorrow. By aligning educational strategies with teachers' perceptions, Malaysia can ensure that the youth are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of chemistry and contribute to the nation's renewable energy goals.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge **GP-2019-K017761** & **GP-2020-K017761**, Dana Ganjaran Penerbitan for sponsoring this research.

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## Multiculturalism Education through a Storytelling in Augmented Reality Media Usage in a School of Informal Education in Jakarta - Indonesia


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**Abstract:** The story telling method has long been known to be an effective method in education. Especially in today's digital era, the storytelling method can be assisted with augmented reality to strengthen the nuances in the story. So a combination of storytelling and augmented reality is used for multiculturalism education on the theme of religious moderation. This research used quantitative method in the form of questionnaire to 225 Paket C students in an informal school as the respondents, after they were given the storytelling using the augmented reality support to strengthen the nuances. The results of the research have shown that from 3015 for total answers of the questionnaires, 23.48% showed very agree, 49.45% showed agree and the rest (27.07%) showed not agree and very not agree. For the questionnaires are in the form of positive nuances, yet they are valid (corrected item total-correlation = 0.417) and reliable (cronbach alpha = 0.637), so the positive tendency of the respondents showed a very good religious moderation as a form of multiculturalism.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism education, Informal education, Storytelling approach, Augmented reality

**Citation:** Pane, M.M., Candra, P.H., Siregar, C. & Pangestu, H. (2024). Multiculturalism Education through a Storytelling in Augmented Reality Media Usage in a School of Informal Education in Jakarta - Indonesia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2337-2345), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Bina Nusantara University (mentioned as Binus), as the largest private university in Indonesia, has several missions, one of them is two in three graduates work in the global companies or become entrepreneurs who foster and empower the society. To support this mission, it has several values whose abbreviation is known as S-P-I-R-I-T. They are Striving for Excellence, Perseverance, Integrity, Respect, Innovation and Teamwork. To ease implementing these values, Binus provides attributes all the academic community of Binus (mentioned as Binusian) must have, called as Binus Graduate Attributes (BGA). The BGA consists of eight attributes, they are: critical & creative thinking, adaptability, growth mindset, collaboration, social awareness, digital & technology fluency, initiative, and applied management skills. Started on about 2002, Binus has a series of character building (mentioned as CB) courses as its general education courses. The courses names were CB-I, CB-II, CB-III, and CB-IV. As time went by, the names of CB courses experienced several times of changes following the changes of curriculum, and on 2014 the CB courses names transformed into CB-Pancasila (a course about Indonesian ideology), CB-Civics, and CB-Religion. The CB courses are given with five attributes of BGA contained therein to be implemented, they are critical & creative thinking, adaptability, growth mindset, collaboration and social awareness attributes. The attribute of critical & creative thinking is specially to be implemented in CB-Pancasila, adaptability is specially for CB-Civics, and growth mindset is specially for CB-Religion, whereas the collaboration and social awareness attributes are for all CB courses.

The religious moderation education in Binus was delivered in the form of final projects last semester for two courses, they are CB-Pancasila and CB-Religion. For there is one principle in Pancasila contains the value for religious tolerance among religious people, we consider it is important to introduce the value for religious tolerance in this first course of CB. After doing the project, we believe that there are values that are included to support the value of religious tolerance, whatever the percentage, into the students' minds and hearts. The most important thing is, the students have got the knowledge how important the religious moderation are.

Therefore, we are familiar with the character buildings, the multicultural matters and good graduate attributes. These things are also familiar to students in well-known private and state schools. For Binus is a well-known and high-rank private university in Indonesia, so these students are in the high interest to enter it. Indonesia is known as a country with diverse religions, we have to deal with the diversity. We also know that formally and legally, there are six official religions, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, and since 2017, the existence of belief systems has been officially recognized by the state.

Whilst we care about the multiculturalism matters, paying attention to how many cases of religious radicalism there are in Indonesia, it turns out that the Binus academic community cannot just remain silent. If the lecturers are considered successful in educating their students, then what about the community around Binus or who are its stakeholders? This fact is what motivated us to carry out this research. Is the fact about the multiculturalism behaviors in the society as good as Binus academic community? In order to answer the question, this research



objective is to get the illustration about the multiculturalism based on religious moderation on Paket C students in XYZ School as one of the Binus' partners for community development.

## Literature Review

### Religious Moderation

The English word of 'moderation' is derived from the Latin word "moderatio", which meaning is "not being excessive". It can also be defined as "wasath" in Arabic which meaning 'middle ground'. From these two words, we can say the meaning of the word "moderation" as abstaining from unduly extreme behaviors or viewpoints or interpret it as moderate behavior. English commonly uses the word "moderation" to describe ideas like core, standard, ordinary, or non-aligned (Egginton, 2011).

The Research and Development Team of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs explains that moderation has been taught by many religions. A person should have three main characteristics in practicing religious moderation: wisdom, purity, and courage. In other words, someone with extensive religious knowledge can more easily develop a moderate attitude in religion, always choosing the middle path to act wisely and not be easily influenced (Balitbang kemenag, 2019).

Religious moderation serves as the initial step in fostering unity and tolerance among believers. This means that when religious moderation is promoted and applied in every aspect of life, it will at least reduce prejudices that lead to conflicts. Religious moderation is seen as a way to achieve peaceful and harmonious living, especially in multicultural countries. To implement religious moderation in multicultural societies, what needs to be done is to make educational institutions laboratories for religious moderation and apply a socio-religious approach to religion and statehood (Muhtarom et al, 2020).

### *Storytelling-Augmented Reality in the Generation Z Education*

Augmented reality (AR) is a technology that bridges the gap between the virtual or computer world and reality. It overlays digital information, such as sound, graphics, video, 3D models, etc., onto the physical environment either directly or indirectly. Since the 1950s, Morton Helig pioneered virtual reality, which featured environmental elements but lacked interaction. As technology has advanced, AR has introduced useful interactions for users and is widely utilized in various fields such as healthcare, manufacturing, robotics, entertainment, gaming, and education. One of the effective and beneficial applications of AR is in education. AR can display text, graphics, videos, and audio in real-time environments for students. In its use, students can scan markers found in textbooks or other media to obtain in-depth information about a topic. They can also interact with computers to enhance their understanding of a subject.

There are many opinions about when Generation Z were born. But for the exact wider range of years we can say

that they are born in between the year of 1995-2015. They are the generation who grow up amid rapid technological advancements, where every aspect of life involves the use of portable digital devices, so they interact with the world and each other anytime and anywhere using the internet-based social media. According to William Strauss and Howey in Jha (2020) and McCrindle (2021), the differences between generations based on their birth years determine their ways of thinking, acting, and the abilities they possess. No wonder if a generation if they have similarities, for they have similarities in birth years, life experiences, as well as cultural influences. Generation Z utilizes various advanced technologies such as smartphones, tablets, video games, self-driving cars, and interactive assistants or speakers. This brings positive impacts for them, enabling them to develop connectivity, communication, creativity, and enhance their global social skills (Jayatissa, 2023).

In this paper, we focus on the Generation Z because, although the basic moral values in religious life must be instilled from an early age, specifically in the alpha generation category, the good moral values still can be instilled after the childhood and teenager phases, it is early adulthood phase (18-25 years old) or in other words in this era, Generation Z. We can say that the urgency of religious moderation aims to prevent radicalism to create a harmonious national life, has been a must in the past ten years. However, to achieve this goal, target mapping is needed, as the reality shows that intolerance is segmented according to certain age groups in Indonesian society. The right method is needed to introduce religious moderation.

This paper explores the role of technology in implementing religious moderation education in Generation Z. Generation Z was chosen because they integrate technology into their lives much more than previous generations (X and Y). In other words, they strongly feel the impact of technology in the process of self-discovery. One appropriate teaching medium for moderation is through augmented reality technology. Augmented reality can present the concept of religious moderation through storytelling, a learning mode that involves narrating a specific theme.

Storytelling is still believed as an effective tool to educate morals. For children usually understand a moral theme from the story, but this is not always the same moral as was initially intended by the author. This also is influenced by the ways teachers deliver stories. It is believed gives affect the success of using storytelling for moral education. Specifically, young children's understanding of moral values in a story is influenced by the knowledge of the teachers on what the stories are used for in values education and the way the teacher tells the stories for that purpose, which is essential in facilitating the students to learn from the storytelling. (Rahiem et al, 2020). According to Radu, Augmented Reality has a positive impact on the learning process (Radu, 2012) and the combination of Digital Storytelling in AR form is impactful and powerful in the learning process (Smeda et al, 2014).

### *Psychology of Learning*

In order to shorten the writing process, we would like to jump the theory about Psychology of Learning to Learning Strategy. Learning strategies can be described as techniques that students employ to acquire

knowledge. This includes methods for sharpening memory as well as more effective study and test-taking tactics (Rad, 2012). There is one strategic for effective learning, named as dual coding. Dual coding described as combining words with visuals. Implementing this strategy makes students can draw two neurons and explain how one communicates with the other via synaptic gap (Weinstein et al, 2018).

## Method

### Respondents Selection and Data Collection

As mentioned above, this research objective is to get the illustration about the multiculturalism based on religious moderation on Paket C students in XYZ School as one of the Binus' partners for community development. This research has been done in an informal school (XYZ School) providing Paket C (the program equals to senior high school level of education in Indonesia) in West Jakarta. It has approximately 400 students, and more than 70% of them are Gen Z.

The research started from the instructions for the respondents to watch the AR for Storytelling in a particular application for smartphones (named as hARmony) in the form of video. After watching the video of storytelling and interaction in hARmony, they had to make reflections. After making the reflections, they were instructed to answer the questionnaire about multiculturalism based on religious moderation by choosing the scales for their tendencies of behavior. The responses in the form of chosen scales would be the illustration of the multiculturalism behaviors of the chosen respondents.

The respondents were from Generation Z and the number of respondents who participated in this research were 225 persons, all of them are the students of Paket C. The questionnaire was given by google-form, self-construct, and adapted from 2 questionnaires about multiculturalism (Permatasari et al (2020) and Sweet (2022)) and 2 questionnaires about religious moderation (Afwadzi & Miski (2021) and Syahid et al (2024)). The number of items in the questionnaire is 22 and the sentences in the items are in the positive nuances. The tendencies of chosen behaviors about multiculturalism based on religious moderation were measured by Likert scale divided by four scales on tendency towards conformity in agree-disagree levels. They are 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for agree and 4 for strongly agree. For the items in the questionnaire are in the positive nuances, so the preferable choices to show the good behaviors for multiculturalism in this research are the scale 3 and 4.

The story in the hARmony video was expected to influence the behavior of the respondents for multiculturalism based on religious moderation. For the illustration about the behavior had to be gotten after watching and interacting in the application, it can be seen from the scales chosen from the questionnaire.

### *Data Processing and Providing*

After the results of the questionnaire filling were already available, the data were processed statistically using

the SPSS to ensure that the questionnaire has been valid and reliable to measure the behavior of multiculturalism based on religious moderation. After the validity and the reliability have been confirmed, the data for number of each scale chosen will be easier to obtained to get the illustration.

The data provided in a table showing the number of scale chosen from the whole answers provided and each scale chosen. Apart from the number of selected scales, the table also shows the percentage of each selected scale from the total selected scales. The percentages of scale chosen data will be the basis for discussion and drawing conclusions as the final result for illustration of how good the multiculturalism based on religious moderation behaviors of the Paket C students of the informal school are (Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1982), (2000) and Kusamah, W. & Dwitagama, D. (2009)).

## Results

The results of the answers for the questionnaire can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Amount and Percentage of Scale Choices

Scale Choices	Amount of Answers	Percentage (%)
1	212	7.04
2	604	20.03
3	1491	49.45
4	708	23.48
Total	3015	100.00

As we can see the results in the table above, the students' tendencies were choosing the scale 3 and 4. The questionnaire is valid (corrected item total-correlation = 0.417) and reliable (cronbach alpha = 0.637). For the questionnaires are in the form of positive nuances, the expected tendency is going towards conformity of agree. This tendency leads to scale 3 and 4 as the preference choices. Although the scale 4 is chosen by 23.48% of the population (less than 25%) and scale 3 is 49.45% (less than 50%), the illustration of measured behavior still looks good.

The illustration of the performance can be seen more clearly from the graphic in Figure 1.

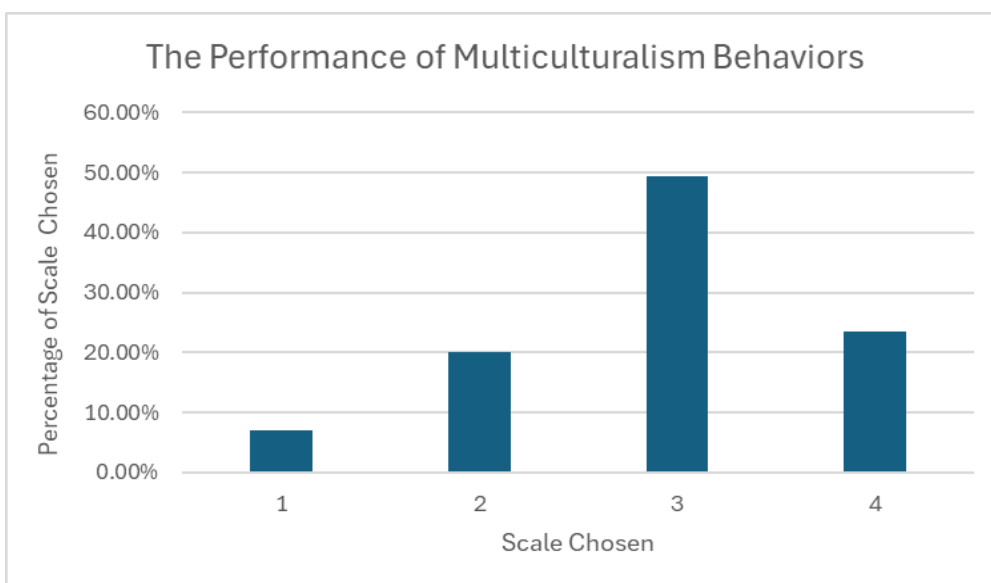


Figure 1. The Performance of Multiculturalism Behaviors of the Students in XYZ School

## Discussion

For the questionnaires are in the form of positive nuances, so the expected responses are in the scale of 3 and 4. As we can see an illustration about the results that the tendencies of the students for multiculturalism behaviors are good (mostly in the scale 3 and a little more in the scale 4 than scale 2). Referring to Balitbang Kemenag (2019), they may already had the three main characteristics in practicing religious moderation, i.e.: wisdom, purity, and courage. In this case, we believe that they can choose their own behavior by consciously their attitude or religious thinking and/or understanding to elude the extreme views for choosing way to the right or to the left (Afwadzi & Miski, 2021).

Referring to Afwadzi & Miski (2021), the results displayed the tendency of liberalism rather than radicalism, as they said that if the teaching and order of a religion is believed by the followers of the extreme views; whether it is put way to the right or way to the left is considered as radicalism, whilst the liberalism is the opposite. If the radicalism gives as a connotation to harsh, tough, rigid, and intolerant understanding, attitudes or actions, and others (Afwadzi & Miski, 2021), the illustration of the students' behavior from the questionnaire's responses displayed the opposite.

## Conclusion

The storytelling method, especially built in AR in the form of video, still has given sufficient supports in socializing the importance of religious moderation. Surprisingly, it still suits to the Generation-Z who still take a fancy of reading and still tend to the film or video watching. The messages of the story must be easier to catch. For the augmented reality bridges the gap between the virtual or computer world and reality, we believe the

story in the form of AR in videos would be easier to enjoy and internalize than in the form of animation in videos.

The augmented reality can be utilized in education as a learning medium. Through the developed augmented reality, the Generation-Z, as a group of individuals who integrate technology into their lives much more than Generation-Y and X, has been provided with new knowledge and perspectives in understanding the theme of religious moderation. Additionally, media like these are not only enjoyable but also accessible from anywhere without the need for formal face-to-face interaction in the classroom, for this in the form of applications and videos. Thus, learners are directed to creatively learn independently without the presence of tutors or teachers. In efforts to prevent religion-based intolerance, the field of education plays a crucial role. Instilling awareness from an early age is a preventive step in combating intolerance.

Although the storytelling in augmented reality most believed effective to children (alpha generation) education, this research has shown that it is still an effective method to educate the older generation, even Generation-Z. This fact has shown us that a particular method for education can be implemented to several or, maybe, every generations.

## **Recommendations**

This research also inspires us to recommend for increasing the character education quantitatively and qualitatively, started from the alpha generation to upper generations, even Generation-Z to X. for this research has shown us that another way to learn. Referring to Rad (2012) and Weinstein et al (2018), as long as students can acquire knowledge, the learning process can occur. Especially if the process of acquiring knowledge can be enriched with combination of words, visuals, or maybe music, this is believed to ease the process of learning.

For AR is known as a new media to explore, it can be tried to be the media for education. For this research has shown that AR in the form of video can be used for education as well, and we know that YouTube is the most popular social media for entertainment because of its ease to access and interact among people, we can try YouTube also to search for AR in the form of videos for YouTube education.

All of us in this era are very familiar with social media, for it has been an important part of our lives. One of the social media is YouTube. The features in YouTube make it also known as the social media that can make interactions among netizens. So many more people across generations can use YouTube for education by interacting each other. If we rarely find AR videos for education in YouTube, we can consider to produce those kinds of videos ourselves and upload them in YouTube, so YouTube can heightened its amount of educational videos as well as the variety of educational videos' topics and models. We believe that more education contents in social media would give more contributions to educate the society.

## Acknowledgements

We thank Bina Nusantara University. This research supported by RTTO of Bina Nusantara University under the PIB 2023 program.

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## **Exploratory Study of Career Decision Self-Efficacy as The Mediator for Decisional Procrastination, Career Exploration and Career Decision Making Difficulties Among Malaysian Undergraduates**

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**Abstract:** The three-step Parsonian approach has lasted more than a century and paved the foundation to the modern career counselling, which emphasized the importance of knowing the self, the environment, and “true reasoning”. The use of assessments remains as an integral part of career counselling. Therefore, the current study aims to carefully reevaluates the tenets of the Parsonian approach to better support evidence-based career counselling interventions by exploring the predictive roles of (1) decisional procrastination on career decision-making difficulties (CDD), (2) career exploration on CDD, and (3) career decision self-efficacy on CDD among the final-year undergraduates of Malaysian universities. Subsequently, the mediation models of (1) career decision self-efficacy on decisional procrastination and CDD and (2) career decision self-efficacy on career exploration and CDD were included in this study. 203 final-year undergraduates were recruited with two-stage stratified sampling for the present exploratory study using survey method. The findings revealed that decisional procrastination and career exploration were significant positive predictors for CDD, whereas career decision self-efficacy served as a significant negative predictor. Moreover, career decision self-efficacy was found to significantly mediate the relationship on decisional procrastination and CDD and the relationship on career exploration and CDD. In addition, the present study further consolidated the importance of emphasizing the role of career decision self-efficacy in the intervention of career counselling. Notably, the career exploration was found to be a positive predictor of CDD, the implications of over reliance on the career exploration in career counselling is discussed.

**Keywords:** Career decision-making difficulties (CDD), career decision self-efficacy, decisional procrastination, career exploration, career counselling, final-year undergraduates

**Citation:** Ho, K.H., Wan Jaafar, W.M., Yusni, M.Y., & T'ng, S.T. (2024). Exploratory study of career decision self-efficacy as the mediator for decisional procrastination, career exploration and career decision-making difficulties among Malaysian undergraduates. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024 - International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2346-2360), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Career decision-making is a complicated process. This decision-making process is further exacerbated by the possibility of the career being rendered obsolete by imminent technological advancements. Therefore, the pressure to make the perfect career choice by the undergraduates, a cohort impending to enter the labour force, can be overwhelming. Past research suggested that half or more of all university students experienced career-related problems (Gianakos, 1999; Herr et al., 2004). The strong sense to choose the best career choice may result in indecision, which have critical vocational adverse outcomes (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou et al., 2012; Walker & Tracey, 2012) and psychological well-being (Viola et al., 2016).

Annually, a large portion of the annual federal budget were allocated to education by the Malaysian government. In the recent Budget 2024, RM58.7 billion was specifically allocated to the Ministry of Education, which was the largest allocation to all sectors (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2023). The high allocation was aimed to ensure that Malaysians receive quality education (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2020), which is vital for national economic growth; however, it was found that more than half of the graduates experienced career decision-making difficulties (CDD, Yusof & Jamaluddin, 2015), resulting in unemployment and mental health issues. In addition, Malaysian youths aspired to graduate from university with university degrees and secure meaningful careers. However, a majority of the undergraduates would drop out from the study midway or even graduating with a degree which does not guarantee careers matching the field of study (Talib & Tan, 2009). Thus, the present study seeks to contribute to the literature of CDD by exploring the interaction of career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE), decisional procrastination, and career exploration.

The Prescreening, In-depth exploration, and Choice (PIC) model proposed by Gati and Asher (2001) suggested that large amount of information needed to be processed in making career decision could be reduced, consequently allowing the individuals to focus on the remaining relevant information. In the model, it is unreasonable for individuals to explore all possible career information; thus, the individuals are likely to search for options that are the most consistent with interests and abilities. The three stages of the PIC model are (a) prescreening potential alternatives based on interests, leading to a manageable selection of promising alternatives; (b) in-depth exploration of the remaining alternatives, leading to suitable alternatives; (c) selection of the most suitable alternative. The present study explored the possibility of the individuals failed to initiate the prescreening process due to decisional procrastination and the subsequent career exploration, providing an alternative perspective on helping clients in career guidance and counselling.

## Literature Review

Career decision-making difficulties (CDD) referred to the level of undecidedness in the process of deciding career-related pathway (Xu & Bhang, 2019). Traditionally, the notion of career decision-making was portrayed as a linear process in career development, but recent literature suggested that career decision-making is a continual process of uncovering hidden talents, skills, interests, and about the world of work in the process of career development. 20% to 50% of post-secondary students were estimated to be undecided about their future career goals (McAuliffe, 2008).

Career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE) is the belief of an individual successfully engages in behaviours and activities related to career decision-making process (Taylor & Betz, 1983). The CDSE developed by Betz et al. (1996) consisted of several dimensions, including a) accurate self-appraisal, b) occupational information, c) goal selection, d) planning, and e) problem-solving. CDSE has been consistently found to be negatively associated with CDD (Bi et al., 2023; Duru & Soner, 2021). Choi et al. (2012) used meta-analysis based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) revealed that CDSE significantly correlated with career related constructs, including career indecision, career identity, and career outcome expectation. Past study has also shown that CDSE mediates the relationship between personal factors, such as social support, and career-related constructs, such as CDD (Zhou et al., 2024). Sandra and Mularsih (2021) suggested that individuals with higher CDSE are more likely to be determined, enthusiastic to engage in proactive decision-making behaviours, seek out career information, and persevere through challenges. Thus, CDSE is one of the critical key variables in the study of career decision process.

Fernie et al. (2017) construed procrastination as intentional or unintentional failure of self-regulation. Decisional procrastination is a form of cognitive failure, which would result in the postponement of processing alternative information (Ferrari, 2000). An integrative review by Bian (2021) highlighted decisional procrastination as one of the many antecedents of CDD. This finding is supported by multiple past studies, which found decisional procrastination as significant of CDD (e.g., Bańka & Hauziński, 2015; Chuang et al., 2020; Jamali et al., 2015). Individuals with high decisional procrastination have the tendency to delay career decision-making process, potentially producing adverse career outcome.

Career exploration is a type of problem-solving behaviour (Tsai et al., 2017) associated with career development, choice, or adjustment (Esters, 2008). The process of exploration is characterized by understanding the self or self-exploration, and the world of work or environment exploration (Vignoli, 2015) by gathering career-related information (Xu et al., 2014). Self-exploration is an exploratory behaviour in uncovering individual characteristics, personality, interests, skills, and values; whereas environment exploration is an exploratory behaviour in learning information that is related to work, including the labour market, career trends, career progression, risks and benefits, job requirements (Denault et al., 2019). The quasi-experiment by Jung and Yoo (2020) found a reduction in career indecision, after the participants were provided with new

information and experience of nursing field roles, tasks, and competencies via mentoring.

### **The Present Study**

The overarching objective of the present study is to explore the interactions between several key constructs (i.e., career decision-making difficulties, career decision self-efficacy, decisional procrastination, and career exploration) among the final-year undergraduates in Malaysia pursuing a bachelor's degree. The first aim is to (1) explore the predictive roles of decisional procrastination and career exploration on CDSE, (2) the predictive roles of decisional procrastination and career exploration on CDD, and (3) the predictive roles of CDSE on CDD. Lastly, (4) the mediating effect of CDSE on decisional procrastination and CDD, and career exploration on CDD. The hypotheses of the present study are outlined as follows:

*H*<sub>1</sub> : Decisional procrastination negatively predicts career decision self-efficacy (CDSE).

*H*<sub>2</sub> : Career exploration positively predicts career decision self-efficacy (CDSE).

*H*<sub>3</sub> : Decisional procrastination positively predicts career decision-making difficulties (CDD).

*H*<sub>4</sub> : Career exploration negatively predicts career decision-making difficulties (CDD).

*H*<sub>5</sub> : Career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) negatively predicts career decision-making difficulties (CDD).

*H*<sub>6</sub> : Career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) significantly mediates the relationship between decisional procrastination and career decision-making difficulties (CDD).

*H*<sub>7</sub> : Career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) significantly mediates the relationship between career exploration and career decision-making difficulties (CDD).

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

This quantitative study allows objective examination of all the key variables of the present study. The survey respondents of the study were recruited with stratified random sampling. The first stage of stratified random sampling is to randomize the universities of the five regions in Malaysia (i.e., Northern Region, East Coast Region, Central Region, Southern Region, and East Malaysia). Subsequently, the second stage of the sampling is to randomize the program of study (i.e., education; arts and humanities; social science, business, and law; science, mathematics, and computer; engineering, manufacturing, and construction; agriculture and veterinary; health and welfare; and services) to ensure all occupational sectors are well represented. Moreover, the present study is a cross-sectional study, in which the data were collected once and contained within a short period of time, which is appropriate for the descriptive and predictive goals of survey research. The data collection procedure strictly adhered to the ethical standards of Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2005. All respondents in the present study completed the survey with face-to-face hardcopy questionnaires.

Specific inclusion criteria were used to define the parameters of the sampling frame: (1) Malaysian, (2) undergraduates pursuing full-time bachelor's degree, (3) Malaysian universities with physical campus located within the country, and (4) final-year students regardless of program of study. In addition, several exclusion criteria were included to confine possible confounding variables: (1) participants who have had at least 12 months of working experience prior to the commencement of the bachelor's degree and (2) participants who has completed one bachelor's degree prior to the current degree.

230 final-year undergraduates were recruited in the present study, who had given their consents indicated with initials on the consent form. Data diagnostics were performed to remove the following cases due to foreign nationality ( $n = 2$ ), non-final-year students ( $n = 13$ ), working experience exceeding 12 months ( $n = 3$ ), and significant missing values ( $n = 5$ ). 207 cases were retained for further analysis.

The final sample comprised of 207 respondents, mostly were female respondents ( $n = 125$ , 60.4%) with mean age of 23.11 ( $SD = 2.34$ ). The composition for program of study is Education ( $n = 12$ , 5.8%); Arts and Humanities ( $n = 18$ , 8.7%); Social Science, Business, and Law ( $n = 66$ , 31.9%); Science, Mathematics, and Computer ( $n = 35$ , 16.9%); Engineering, Manufacturing, and Construction ( $n = 48$ , 23.2%); Agriculture and Veterinary ( $n = 6$ , 2.9%); Health and Welfare ( $n = 13$ , 6.3%); and Services ( $n = 9$ , 4.3%).

### *Measures*

#### *Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ)*

The Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) was developed by Gati et al. (1996) to for the purpose of evaluating the perceived difficulties in the career decision-making process. The CDDQ comprised 34 items which can be grouped into three domains (i.e., lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information). The items are rated on a 9-point Likert-type scale, resulting in a range of 34 to 306 with greater value indicating higher career indecision. This scale exhibited excellent overall reliability with Cronbach's alpha,  $\alpha = .92$ . The internal reliability coefficients of the subscale scores in the present study were .68 for lack of readiness, .94 for lack of information, and .85 for inconsistent information.

#### *Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form (CDSE-SF)*

The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983) is a measure for identifying the perceived ability to make educational and career decisions. The 25 items were rated on a 5-point confidence continuum ranging from 1 (*no confidence at all*) to 5 (*complete confidence*), which would yield a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 125. The higher total scores imply a higher level of confidence in completing tasks pertinent to making career decisions. The overall Cronbach's alpha of the scale in the present sample was .87.

#### *Decisional Procrastination Scale (DPS)*

The Decisional Procrastination Scale was designed by Mann (1982) to assess procrastinatory behaviour pertinent to critical decision-making situations. The DPS has only five items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*). The total score ranged from a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 25, with higher score indicating higher tendency for postponing decision making. Cronbach's alpha reliability on the present sample was .80.

#### *Career Exploration Survey (CES)*

This instrument was designed by Stumpf et al. (1983), with the intention to facilitate career exploration, career development, and career decisions. In the present study, CES was used to appraise the respondents' degree of career exploration activities. Only two out of the original sixteen dimensions were adopted. Particularly, the 5-item self-exploration (SE) subscale and the 6-item environment exploration (EE) subscale. Both subscales of SE and EE were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*little*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Higher subscale score in the specific domain indicates more frequent exploratory behaviour in the same domain. This study showed a Cronbach's alpha of .84 and .79 respectively for SE and EE.

#### *Data Analytic Plan*

Data diagnostic was performed with MS Excel 365 and SmartPLS version 4.0.9.2, which is a software for Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), was used for the subsequent hypothesis testing. Aside from addressing modeling issues, such as non-normal data (Hair et al., 2017), PLS-SEM is also befitted for examining exploratory model (Henseler et al., 2009). The dearth of research in the issue of CDD in the local context suggesting the exploratory nature of the present study. Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis were used to examine the multivariate normality, as per recommendation by Hair et al. (2017). Later, the psychometric properties, including the construct validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliabilities were examined with a measurement model. Lastly, the direct and indirect effects of hypothesis testing were assessed with a structural model. 5000 resamples in bootstrapping method were used to evaluate the significance of the path coefficients and outer loadings.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

Mahalanobis distance was utilized to identify the multivariate outliers in the dataset. Four cases were found to have probability of  $D^2 < 0.001$  and were eliminated from further analysis. Subsequently, an online calculator was used to evaluate the multivariate normality (Cain et al., 2017), with Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis created at <https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/kurtosis/results.php?url=c2fad521b6188303c485c3d41a165b34>. The report showed that skewness ( $p = .037$ ) was statistically significant, while kurtosis ( $p = .073$ ) was not

statistically significant at .05 level, suggesting a violation of multivariate normality. Thus, SmartPLS was selected for further hypothesis testing.

*The Measurement Model*

The measurement model was constructed to assess the psychometric properties, including the construct validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliabilities. The outputs of the measurement models, including the outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) for construct validity, and composite reliabilities of all the latent constructs are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. The Measurement Model including Outer Loadings, AVEs, and Composite Reliabilities

	CDD	CDSE	Decisional Procrastination	Career Exploration	AVEs	Composite Reliability
Inconsistent_Info	0.846				0.861	0.674
Lack_Info	0.863					
Lack_Readiness	0.750					
CDSE_goalselect		0.845			0.890	0.620
CDSE_occuinfo		0.772				
CDSE_planning		0.784				
CDSE_probsolving		0.669				
CDSE_selfappraisal		0.852				
Pro1			0.712		0.864	0.560
Pro2			0.760			
Pro3			0.735			
Pro4			0.804			
Pro5			0.727			
SE				0.831	0.846	0.733
EE				0.880		

Note: Inconsistent\_Info = Inconsistent information; Lack\_Info = Lack of information; Lack\_Readiness = Lack of readiness; CDSE\_goalselect = Goal selection; CDSE\_occuinfo = Occupational information; CDSE\_planning = Planning; CDSE\_probsolving = Problem solving; CDSE\_selfappraisal = Self-appraisal; Pro1 to Pro5 = items in Decisional procrastination; SE = Self-exploration; EE = Environmental exploration

Table 2. Discriminant Validity with Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation (HTMT)

	CDD	Career Exploration	D Procrastination
Career Exploration	0.114		
D Procrastination	0.718	0.198	
CDSE	0.394	0.732	0.419

Note: CDD = Career decision-making difficulties; Career Exploration = Career exploration; D Procrastination =



Decisional procrastination; CDSE = Career decision-making self-efficacy

Overall, all the outer loadings ranged from .669 to .880 and are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). In addition, all the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded .50 threshold signifying acceptable standards. While the composite reliabilities of all the variables fell below the satisfactory level of .80, the literature substantiated the conceptual framework of the present study. Lastly, all the latent construct displayed HTMT values below the .90 threshold as per recommendation by Henseler et al. (2015), as depicted in Table 2. Following that, the structural model was generated.

*The Structural Model*

Figure 1 illustrates the structural model. The results showed that decisional procrastination ( $\beta = -.294, p < .001$ ) and career exploration ( $\beta = .502, p < .001$ ) are significant predictors of CDSE, therefore,  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  are supported. Next,  $H_3$  is supported, with decisional procrastination ( $\beta = .494, p < .001$ ) found to be a positive predictor of CDD. Interestingly, career exploration ( $\beta = .185, p = .003$ ) was found to be a positive predictor of CDD, which is contradictory with most of the literature and the  $H_4$  of the present study.

Subsequently,  $H_5$  is substantiated, with CDSE ( $\beta = -.261, p = .001$ ) found to negatively predict CDD. Finally, CDSE was found to be significant mediator for two different relationships: decisional procrastination and CDD ( $\beta = .077, p = .006$ ), and career exploration and CDD ( $\beta = -.131, p = .002$ ).  $H_6$  and  $H_7$  are supported. 35.5% of the variances of CDD and 36.8% of the variances of CDSE are accounted by the key variables in the current study.

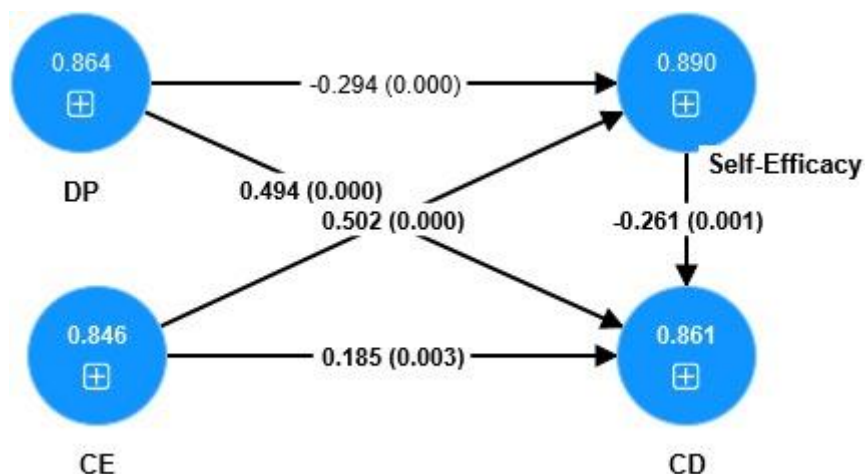


Figure 1. The Structural Model

Note: DP = Decisional procrastination; CE = Career exploration; Self-Efficacy = Career decision-making self-efficacy; CD = Career decision-making difficulties

## Discussion

Decisional procrastination negatively predicts CDSE, which is in line with multiple past studies (e.g., Marjohan, 2023; Svartdal et al., 2022). Self-efficacy is a future-oriented behaviour, as the individuals believe in their ability to execute the behaviour, they are more likely to initiate the behaviour. In addition, higher self-efficacy will also prompt the individuals to invest more effort in overcoming obstacles, increasing the likelihood of success (Kurtovic et al., 2019). Contrary, procrastination is an avoidant behaviour, reducing the likelihood of engaging in the relevant activities (Ferrari et al., 1995). The opposite polars between the self-efficacy and decisional procrastination can be explained by the appraisal of sufficiency in cognitive resources to successfully making the decision.

Career exploration positively predicts CDSE, which substantiates the previous research (e.g., Chen et al, 2021a; Chen et al., 2021b). The accumulation of the information on the self and the world-of-work would positively facilitate accurate assessment of self-appraisal and occupational information. The same information would enable the decision makers to engage in selecting appropriate goals, make planning and solve career related problems.

The present study found that decisional procrastination positively predicts CDD, which matches the previous findings (e.g., Bańka & Hauziński, 2015; Chuang et al., 2020; Jamali et al., 2015). In the sequential sampling models, arriving at a decision is a product of two critical elements, which are the accumulation of information over time for the alternatives, and the trigger to determine sufficiency of the evidence (Forstmann et al., 2016). However, if individuals spend unusual long period of time to come to a decision, the original problem is too difficult to be solved or the alternatives are equally attractive for the decision makers (Bhui, 2024). The inability to arrive at a conclusion for career decision indicates the decision is too daunting for the decision makers which may activate the decisional procrastination process. Procrastination is a dysfunctional behaviour has it will inevitably cause undesirable consequences (Hall et al., 2019). Despite the adverse outcomes, individuals will still deliberately delay decision-making, because resources on hand are perceived to be insufficient to make an immediate decision. In addition, the postponement of decision-making will significantly block the feeling of anxiety (Di Fabio, 2006).

Contrary to the hypothesis of the present study, the results showed that career exploration positively predicts CDD. Despite the contradictory results, several past studies also reported the same phenomenon (e.g., Chuang et al., 2020; Downing & Nauta, 2010; Esters, 2008). The use of Career Exploration Scale (Stumpf et al., 1983), which is a similar instrument used in the past study (i.e., Downing & Nauta, 2010), could have contributed to the same result. Alternatively, empirical evidence showed that decision making could be compromised when excessive information is presented, or large pool of alternatives are available to the decision makers (Vogrincic-Haselbacher et al., 2021). If the decision makers are unable to gauge the optimal level of information required the decide on a career choice, albeit having sufficient data to make an informed decision, the decision makers may continuously gather information via career exploration.

Similar with past studies (e.g., Park et al., 2018; Walker & Tracey, 2012), the present study found that CDSE negatively predicts CDD. Individuals with higher CDSE are expected to achieve successful career decisions, as individuals who have the capability to execute the necessary tasks in CDSE (i.e., accurate self-appraisal, obtain occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving) would reduce the challenges presented in the lack of information, lack of readiness, and inconsistent information in CDD. The finding from the present study suggests that CDSE is a necessary element in making successful career decisions.

The relationship between decisional procrastination, career exploration, and CDD, could be better understood by considering the mediating effect of CDSE. The present study posited that CDSE significantly mediates the relationship between decisional procrastination and CDD, and relationship between career exploration and CDD. Both hypotheses are supported by the results in the present study. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) hypothesized that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities influence their behaviour, motivation, and outcomes. Individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to engage in career exploration and lowered the likelihood of decisional procrastination. As a result, perceived difficulty of career decision-making is reduced which promotes confidence in the career decision-making processes.

### **Implications**

This study was conducted with the purpose of exploring the career indecision issue, especially among the undergraduates in Malaysia. Several key constructs, including CDSE, decisional procrastination, and career exploration were examined with the support of the PIC model by Gati and Asher (2001) to further contribute to the literature. The failure to initiate the first stage of prescreening of the model due to decisional procrastination will severely undermine the career decision-making process. In addition, caution should be exercised in the in-depth exploration of the second stage due to the improper data processing could compound the career indecision, rather than to ameliorate.

The examination of CDD, CDSE, decisional procrastination, and career exploration also offers practical implications for the field of career guidance and counselling, and other related fields. Firstly, the counsellors and mental health practitioners in the relevant fields should focus on increasing the clients' CDSE, by offering workshops in goal selection, planning, and problem solving. Decisional procrastination could also be assessed when the clients entered the counselling presented with career indecision. Secondly, for universities or other tertiary institutions intending to attract applicants, modest amounts of information should be presented to the candidates to avoid information overload. In addition, career decision-making tools could be developed in assisting undergraduates to make the connections between the present program of study and future career. Lastly, future studies should further validate the role of career exploration as a positive predictor of CDD, by using a different instrument for measurement or to further increase the sample size. Educational policies could be developed by integrating career decision-making as formal course or syllabus to build self-efficacy from a young age and to better manage decisional procrastination.

## Limitations and Recommendations

This study attempted to explore the phenomenon of career decision-making difficulties among final-year undergraduates. Firstly, the generalizability of the current study is limited due to the choice of the accessible population – the final-year undergraduates. The data collected from this specific niche population may not be able to generalise to other populations and pose a threat to the external validity. In addition, the overuse of tertiary education students as research respondents is often criticised by scholars (Prideaux & Creed, 2001). Future studies are encouraged to consider the inclusion of high school students to better capture the phenomenon of career decision-making difficulties of the nation, as not all high-school students will eventually enroll into tertiary education programs. Selecting undergraduates as research sample potentially skewed the data, to individuals who achieved academic excellence in high school. Secondly, the research methodologies employed in the current study inherited all of the disadvantages of the descriptive correlational study and cross-sectional study. Due to the nature of the research design employed, causality could not be established. Experimental research design could be considered to better encapsulate the causal effect between the variables. Alternatively, longitudinal studies could be considered to provide fresh perspective on the changes of the variables over time.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the career counsellors should be aware of the detrimental effects of decisional procrastination in making career decisions among undergraduates. The exact cause of decisional procrastination would differ among undergraduates and the root cause of the problem should be pinpointed. While furnishing career information to the undergraduates to facilitate career decision making process, career counsellors need to be prudent to not deliver excessive information. The career counsellors could consider the decision-making strategies, or the data processing methods used by the undergraduates, before committing to provide career information. In the present study, CDSE successfully mediates the relationship between decisional procrastination and CDD, and the relationship between career exploration and CDD. Above all, CDSE itself is also a positive predictor of CDD. Thus, the inclusion of CDSE in the interventions of career guidance and counselling would be an excellent choice in overcoming the issue of career indecision.

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## Time Travel to The Great Depression: Investigating Impact of Game Based Learning in A Metaverse for Economics Education

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**Abstract:** This study examines the effectiveness of a game-based metaverse platform in enhancing learning outcomes in economics education. Students were virtually transported back to the Great Depression within the metaverse. System data and self-assessment surveys assessed aspects such as ease of use and perceived usefulness for learning, evaluating their impact on student performance and their intent to use the metaverse for future learning. These measures also captured students' reported interest and enjoyment, gauging their engagement levels. According to self-assessment surveys, students found the metaverse platform engaging, relevant, vivid, and social, highlighting the successful integration of pedagogy and technology. The study's results are supported by regression analysis, which demonstrated a strong positive relationship with an  $R^2$  of 0.853, indicating that a significant proportion of variance in student engagement can be explained by the aesthetics of the metaverse platform and the interest it generated. Challenges such as technical issues and varying learning efficiencies were also noted. Overall, the study highlights the potential of game-based learning environments and virtual reality in economics education to foster student engagement and promote the adoption of innovative learning systems.

**Keywords:** Metaverse, Immersive Learning, Economics Education

**Citation:** Wong, G. W. W., Jiandong, D. S., & Wong, P. P. Y. (2024). Time travel to the Great Depression: Investigating impact of game-based learning in a Metaverse for Economics Education. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2361-2373), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Experiential learning, as defined by Kolb (1984), immerses students in real-world environments to enhance their experience and encourage reflection. This approach is closely aligned with constructivism, which has been

shown to be effective in meeting the diverse needs of learners, particularly in introductory economics classes (Reimann, 2004). Field trips are a prime example of experiential learning in economics education, allowing students to engage in hands-on, "learn by doing" activities. Galizzi (2014) found that students who participated in field trips had higher levels of satisfaction and retained more knowledge. Moreover, these trips offer students a real-world context, thereby stimulating critical thinking as they analyze and apply theoretical principles to actual economic scenarios (Markowitz et al., 2018). This interactive application deepens their understanding and illustrates the practical applicability of their studies.

However, transitioning field trips to a virtual environment can pose challenges. Simply navigating through 2D or 3D representations might not be sufficiently engaging. A possible solution lies in virtual reality, where learners are immersed in an ultra-realistic environment. When augmented with optional game-like elements, these environments can facilitate tasks unachievable in real field trips. For instance, students might navigate through historical simulations, discovering clues that lead to quiz questions, hence transforming from observers to active participants in their learning journey. These interactions, though impractical in real-world field trips, can be smoothly integrated into a virtual reality platform. While such immersive environments have been noted to boost motivation, their implementation can be significantly costly (Omori et al., 2023; Lan, 2020). Furthermore, the sophistication of game-based learning pedagogy calls for technology capable of supporting problem-based and task-oriented learning designs.

The educational metaverse, a 3D virtual space where learners come together to engage with one another, supported by highly integrated scenes and virtual agents, has the potential to address both scale and pedagogical needs (Nah et al., 2022). The metaverse is said to seamlessly blend aspects of social learning, game-based learning, and virtual reality, ultimately creating a new learning utility (Shin, 2022). However, there is a notable lack of empirical evidence on how metaverse features can be adopted and how pedagogies can be designed within such an expansive environment. Consequently, this study aims to incorporate novel pedagogical components of game-based learning across two environments within a metaverse-enabled learning setting, with the goal of evaluating student learning intent when utilizing the virtual reality environment to study economics. In this sense, the Research Question is: To what extent does incorporating game-based techniques in metaverse-based virtual field trips impact student engagement and intent to use the system for learning economic history?

In economics education, constructivist teaching methods, like problem-based learning, have been suggested to provide a more adaptive approach to accommodate diverse student learning needs (Reimann, 2004). These experiences can be particularly beneficial when immersing students in historical economic events, such as the Great Depression, through virtual field trips. Engaging students in experiential learning environments like the metaverse allows them to interact with content and enhances their understanding of complex economic concepts while addressing individual learning approaches and preferences through Non-Player Characters (NPCs). While the potential benefits of metaverse technology are promising, there is limited empirical evidence evaluating its specific uses for educational purposes, such as integrating virtual field trips with game-like features. With the field being relatively new and rapidly evolving, further research is needed to explore and validate the impact of

such metaverse-based learning experiences on student engagement, knowledge retention, and overall learning success. In this context, our research serves as a valuable contribution to this emerging field, offering insights and data that can help shape future educational strategies within the metaverse.

In a metaverse, game-based techniques can be seamlessly integrated with other pedagogical strategies, such as experiential learning, social interactions, and personalized learning through NPCs, to create a more immersive and effective learning experience. This combination of pedagogical and technological factors can help meet the diverse learning needs of students, catering to different learning approaches and preferences (Kye et al., 2023; Nah et al., 2022). Therefore, we hypothesize that incorporating game-based techniques in metaverse-based virtual field trips will result in higher student engagement and intent to use the system for learning economic history.

### **Theoretical background**

The promise of transforming traditional education models drives us to explore the metaverse, a learning environment utilizing virtual reality technologies. The compelling need to create immersive, engaging, and personalized learning experiences pushes us towards this digitally simulated reality (Pianzola, et al., 2021). Avatars, as digital representations of the learners, boost their sense of identity and connection within this innovative learning space (Bavelier & Green, 2019). This technology-enhanced environment can transcend traditional classroom boundaries, offering novel experiences, facilitating collaboration among geographically dispersed learners, and adapting to diverse learning approaches and paces (Gardner, 1983). These features can be integrated into a single platform, a metaverse, which combines various aspects of virtual reality like presence, reflection, empathy, and playability, thereby offering even greater utility (Shin, 2022).

While technological advancements in the metaverse provide rich immersive opportunities, the effectiveness of learning experiences transcends mere technical rendering. Immersion in this environment relies on users' assessments and preferences, not solely on technological quality (Shin, 2019). This understanding of the essential integration of technological factors with pedagogical considerations, including collaboration and personalization, to enhance the intent to use the metaverse for learning (Fussell & Truong, 2022). Such integration fosters a heightened sense of presence and promotes experiential learning through reflection and narrative-driven experiences (Kang et al., 2021). Ultimately, this technology-enhanced environment, when aligned with pedagogical principles, extends beyond traditional classroom constraints, providing diverse learning experiences adapted to individual learning approaches (Gardner, 1983).

#### *Metaverse and Gamification: Scavenger Hunt Case Study*

Recognizing the benefits of engagement and active learning, we can employ gamification in the metaverse, specifically through a scavenger hunt. The choice of a scavenger hunt is driven by its simplicity and straightforwardness, making it an excellent tool for acclimating learners to a new, potentially unfamiliar

environment like the metaverse. Furthermore, from a technical implementation standpoint, a scavenger hunt poses fewer challenges compared to more complex game designs.

This gamified activity motivates learners to immerse themselves in active problem-solving, stimulating collaboration and information-seeking behaviors. The virtual context of the scavenger hunt allows for a complexity and imaginative scope that is typically difficult to achieve in conventional classrooms due to limited time and space. These innovative elements of the metaverse enhance learner motivation and enjoyment, leading to improved learning outcomes (Mochizuki et al., 2022).

The scavenger hunt method has been explored in various settings such as academic libraries for orientation and place-based learning, demonstrating its adaptability and effectiveness in engaging participants (Stark et al., 2021). However, Stark et al. (2021) highlighted significant gaps in the research, including a lack of rigorous or experimental design and inconsistent data, making it difficult to conclusively evaluate the effectiveness of scavenger hunts. The incorporation of multifaceted interactions with non-player characters, nuanced narratives, and clue-based exploration can potentially amplify the effectiveness of virtual scavenger hunts as an educational tool, providing a new avenue to expand our understanding.

#### *Unique Aspects: NPCs, Personalization*

Within the scavenger hunt activity in the metaverse, NPCs serve more than mere decorative elements. They can act as interactive guides, providing clues that stimulate exploration and discovery. For example, in a lesson on the Great Depression, NPCs might be assigned roles as historical figures or ordinary citizens, offering insights into the economic hardships of the era (Hwang & Chien, 2022). This approach adds depth and drama to the story, enriching the learning narrative. By appearing in the right place at the right time with contextually relevant content, these NPCs contribute to a sense of realism, fostering a more engaging and authentic connection to both the historical period and the educational content (Ferguson et al., 2020; Shin & Chung, 2017).

Furthermore, the metaverse's flexible environment offers significant opportunities for customization and personalized experiences, empowering learners and allowing them to choose their own paths within the scavenger hunt (Nah et al., 2022). By providing learners with the freedom to navigate and explore the metaverse according to their preferences, we enhance their sense of ownership and engagement. This learner-driven approach fosters self-directed learning and encourages learners to take responsibility for their own educational journey, resulting in a more dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Within the proposed method, the utilization of NPCs and personalization in the scavenger hunt activity not only enhances interactivity but also transforms immersion and presence into dynamic processes. Learners can actively create and modify their own immersive experiences by interacting with clues to help them decide on their responses. Through the scavenger hunt, the metaverse's capabilities are leveraged to foster a more engaged

and adaptive learning environment, where immersion becomes a fluid and interactive concept (Shin, 2022).

## Method

We employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both correlational and experimental research designs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. By examining the relationships between variables (correlational) and manipulating independent variables to determine their effect on dependent variables (experimental), we aimed to evaluate the intent to use metaverse-based learning environments, focusing on pedagogical and technological factors (Fussell & Truong, 2022).

Fifty undergraduate students aged 17 to 19, from a university in Hong Kong were included in this study. These participants were part of two specific classes across two consecutive semesters. Participants comprised of students from the same major and age group (17 to 19) within the university's economics classes, reflecting the random nature of class enrollment. The selected topic was the Great Depression. This topic was traditionally taught through lectures, but for the purpose of this study, a metaverse-based learning environment was introduced as an alternative approach to teaching and learning.

The course titled "Finance and Politics: Public Interest and Private Manipulation" is an undergraduate offering aimed at acquainting students with the dynamics of financial institutions, corporate ownership structures, and corporate governance. This is accomplished through a blend of case studies, anecdotal evidence, and academic research. The course structure particularly focuses on imparting a pragmatic understanding of financial policies and government regulations. Students are subsequently trained to discern implications for future financial advancements and practices, with special emphasis on both Hong Kong and global scenarios.

The teaching approach integrates traditional lectures with tutorials, encompassing a total of 2 hours of lectures and 1 hour of tutorial per week, spanning 13 weeks. In lectures, learners are presented with core knowledge encompassing financial theories and government policies, which is further enriched with real-life examples and case-based studies. Tutorials adopt a more interactive approach; students are clustered into groups for presentations and discussions that delve into the applicability and constraints of the discussed theories and policies. Given a class size of 35, this method ensures engagement and participatory learning. Specifically related to our study, an e-learning activity within a metaverse environment constitutes 5% of the course assessment. The primary learning outcome of this activity is to enable students to elucidate and interpret the characteristics of significant financial upheavals, such as the Great Depression and the recent financial crises, especially focusing on the interplay between the banking sector and policymaking.

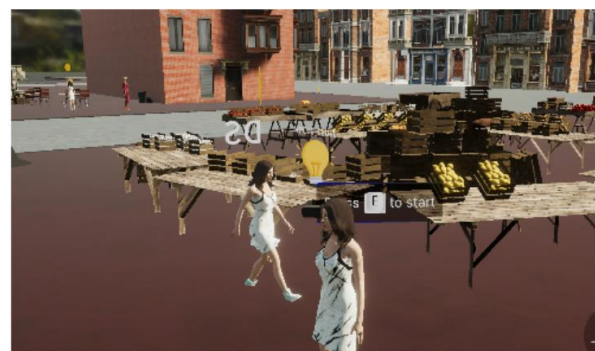
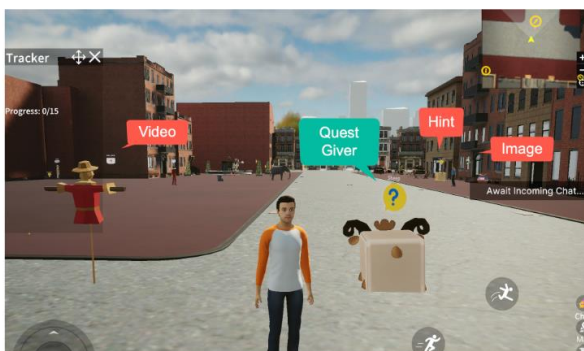
In this study, students were transported to Wall Street of the 1930s, immersing them in a realistic setting that mirrors the era's financial dynamics. The content and themes focused on i) Economic Policies and International Trade ii) Fiscal and Monetary Policies, and iii) Business Environment and Uncertainty. To ensure a tangible



connection between the virtual exploration and their academic curriculum, MCQs were strategically placed throughout the experience. These MCQs had dual objectives: 1. Reinforce Foundational Knowledge: As students traversed the virtual streets of Wall Street and delved into the content, these MCQs acted as checkpoints, offering real-time feedback on their basic comprehension of the introduced material. 2. Bridge Virtual and Classroom Learning: Beyond providing an engaging virtual alternative to traditional lecture halls, the MCQs played a pivotal role in tying the online journey to offline discussions. Students were encouraged to carry the insights, queries, or uncertainties they encountered online into classroom dialogues, ensuring a comprehensive learning experience.

Examples to topics include quiz tasks for the metaverse that focus on "Economic Policies and International Trade," learners encounter questions about the Smoot-Hawley trade bill of 1930 and the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. For instance, they might be asked to identify the effects of the Smoot-Hawley bill, which notably led to increased tariffs and a decrease in trade volumes, highlighting how protective trade policies can adversely affect international commerce. Another question could involve the Agricultural Adjustment Act, asking learners to recognize that the legislation aimed to reduce agricultural supply to maintain high prices, affecting national trade policies. These questions serve to deepen understanding of how governmental economic policies can influence international trade dynamics and domestic market conditions.

The study made use of the "Classlet" platform by Soqql, as referenced at <https://soqql.com>. Classlet stands out due to its combination of metaverse and learning management features. It provides authoring tools for content creation within the metaverse. Moreover, its integrated learning management capabilities encompass multiple choice questions, clue integration, and learning analytics, all available from a web dashboard. Screenshots of the specific scene utilized in our study are presented in Figure 1. We selected Classlet because of its ease in managing and uploading content, which was pivotal for our tailored gamification needs.



In this study, students explored a recreated 1930s 3D scene (in Classlet), based on the authentic learning principles described by Farrell (2020). This immersive setting aimed to place students in a specific time and location while introducing them to the works of researchers like Romer, Irwin, Friedman, and Schwartz. The purpose of using the metaverse was to enhance traditional teaching methods. By combining a historical setting



with academic content and hands-on tasks, the goal was to create a deeper and more authentic learning experience, rooting academic teachings in real-world situations.

After exploring the metaverse, participants were assigned the task of identifying discrepancies between the lecture content from the "Finance and Politics: Public Interest and Private Manipulation" course and their experiences in the metaverse. These discrepancies were reported via a Google form. This task aimed to prompt students to reflect on content delivery and contrast the teaching methodologies. Additionally, to secure the 5% metaverse assignment score, as described earlier, they were required to complete all MCQs.

To analyze the outcomes of the study, data were sourced from quantitative insights through Likert scale questions and qualitative insights via open-ended questions to assess student perceptions. Statistical analyses including Cronbach's alpha, T-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests, correlation, and regression were used to examine data reliability, and the impact of variables on MCQ scores.

The independent variables for the self-assessment survey included pedagogical and technological factors, adapted from (Fussell & Truong, 2022), such as ease of use ("how easy was it for you to use the platform") and the extent to which the metaverse environment was helpful or useful for learning ("how useful is the platform for my learning"). Other questions focused on aesthetics, technical functioning, ease of use, enjoyment, accessibility, and usefulness of Metaverse resources. The dependent variable was the students' intent to use the metaverse for learning purposes. Before conducting the correlational analysis, assumption checks were performed to ensure the data met the necessary criteria for the analysis. These checks included assessing the normality of the data, linearity of relationships between variables, and the absence of multicollinearity.

## Results

**Survey Reliability.** Reliability analysis confirmed the internal consistency of the survey items. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.964 demonstrated a strong consistency across the survey's items. **Correlation Analysis.** The Spearman's correlation coefficients provided insights into the relationships between different variables, as detailed below. Please refer to Table 4 for the abbreviations and detailed descriptions of each variable:

**Technical Factors with "Intent to Use":** Among the technical considerations, TECH4 exhibited the highest correlation (Spearman's  $\rho = 0.809$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with "Intent to Use," suggesting the importance of this particular technical aspect. This was followed by TECH2 (Spearman's  $\rho = 0.736$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and TECH1 (Spearman's  $\rho = 0.726$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Pedagogical Factors with "Intent to Use":** Within the pedagogical domain, PEDAGOGY4 demonstrated the most substantial correlation with "Intent to Use" (Spearman's  $\rho = 0.872$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This might highlight its significance in influencing user intentions, especially in the context of a metaverse system.

Inter-correlations Among Technical and Pedagogical Variables: The data also indicated strong inter-correlations among the technical and pedagogical variables. For instance, TECH2 and TECH3 displayed a correlation of Spearman's rho = 0.794,  $p < .001$ . Similarly, PEDAGOGY3 and PEDAGOGY2 were significantly associated (Spearman's rho = 0.840,  $p < .001$ ).

Regression Analysis: Intent to Use. The regression model for 'Intent to Use' provided significant insights into the variables affecting this construct (please refer to APPENDIX C for the complete model). The model explained 85.3% of the variance in 'Intent to Use' (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.843$ ,  $F(3, 48) = 92.584$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Our analysis revealed the following key findings: Significant Predictors: TECH1: The variable representing the aesthetic of the resource produced in the Metaverse (TECH1) emerged as a significant predictor, with a coefficient  $\beta = 0.220$  ( $p = 0.005$ ), emphasizing its role in influencing 'Intent to Use.'. PEDAGOGY4: The belief that using a Metaverse system makes learning more interesting (PEDAGOGY4) showcased its importance with a substantial coefficient,  $\beta = 0.774$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating its significant influence on user intention.

Qualitative Insights. The surveys also allowed students to key in, in an open text field, 3 suggestions for what they like about the learning experience as well as 3 potential opportunities. Illustrative responses were selected below. Students found it fun, relevant, vivid, social, more comprehensive. "Fun, let students join in the period of the Great Depression in the game, The knowledge is more memorable by playing the game", "1. The map setting is highly related to the Great Depression era 2. The application is interactive and interesting, 3. There are photos provided in the explanation pages", "Quite vivid and intriguing to learn about the GD through the method", "- more virtual experiences, Heightened social connections and lifelike interactions, more effective and interesting", "- interesting for learning, like playing a simulation game, more comprehensive information for the course contents, more diverse in absorbing the information of the Great Depression"

However, some students highlighted some challenges, related to inefficiency of the method, technical bugs like stuck characters, insufficient quest tracking, boring interactions, and scenario (although better than face to face classroom), and insufficient instructions: "I think it is interesting but not that efficient personally. In fact I think a quiz in class would be more useful and there will also be less technical problems.", "I'd rather get to the point when learning subjects, a video would be fine as well, however I see zero value in using a metaverse", "When people are stuck in some places, people can't move and need to quit and start again", "Sometimes I don't even know have I answered the questions correctly because it doesn't tell me am I wrong or not.", "Lack of interactions: The scenario is fixed and boring.", "not interesting/beneficial to study since phone's monitor is smaller, also not interesting by reaching the NPC and receive information (although not boring than sit in classroom)", "The instructions are not very clear in this Metaverse."

## Discussion

Based on the regression analysis, which shows a high predictive accuracy of 85.3%, the integration of pedagogy

and technology—especially through features like NPCs and quests—significantly enhances student learning. The aesthetics of the metaverse, which include detailed and historically accurate visual environments, coupled with engaging narratives, substantially contribute to this effectiveness. The design and visual appeal of the metaverse help sustain student interest and immersion, making the educational experience both informative and captivating. For example, one student noted, “The map setting is highly related to the Great Depression era, making it interactive and interesting.” This feedback describes the effectiveness of the metaverse in engaging students through a vivid and contextually rich educational environment, highlighting how these elements enhance the learning experience.

In terms of experiential learning pedagogy, the use of the metaverse was observed to be ideal for transporting students back in time as a form of virtual field trips. The use of multimodal channels as well as NPCs to simulate dialogue is an ideal way to recreate experiences that are difficult to do in the classroom. When placed into the virtual field trip, students can experience living in 1930 during the Great Depression and link the experience cognitive back to their physical self through embodiment and reflection. These processes are particularly important in the process of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). In the context of economic history, recreating the Great Depression even physically is impossible, but can be done in the metaverse platform. The use of intelligent NPCs was described by Hwang & Chien (2023) and this study further affirms its ability to recreate unique experiences, especially when combined with a type of scavenger hunt activity. Following the framework established by Shin & Chung (2017), our implementation has been able to create different narratives of the Great Depression, consequently encouraging a more immersive and presence-filled learning experience. Despite this, it should be noted that the scenes did not make use of real historical characters or profiles that can make the environment even more real. It could be interesting to bring in this aspect to help guide students to better appreciate why certain actions were taken.

To demonstrate the personalized game-based learning experience, we present a flow diagram of the user on Figure 2. The flexibility of the game, designed with and setup using metaverse tools, enables it to cater to various learner preferences. As depicted in Figure 2, a decision box for “Enjoy game method” signifies the student's preference between a game-based learning scavenger hunt method and a more traditional learning approach. It allows those who are not engaged by the scavenger hunt to fall back to repeated MCQ attempts, providing an alternative route for learning. The inclusion of this decision-making aspect emphasizes the need for adaptable learning strategies within the metaverse, acknowledging that students' preferences and learning approaches can widely differ. It supports our concept that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective, and that personalization and flexibility should be integral to the design of learning environments.

Some students highlighted challenges related to inefficiency of the method, technical bugs, insufficient quest tracking, boring interactions and scenarios, and insufficient instructions. The primary challenge of this learning method is related to inefficiency. Some students reported that the time it takes to learn the system and run around to find NPCs can make the process inefficient. However, only a small number of students reported this issue. The challenge of attracting non-gamers to serious games is a known problem (Krotoski, 2010). Simply

using the word "game" in the classroom may be off-putting to some learners who identify as "non-gamers." Furthermore, there is some debate over whether non-gamers may be at a disadvantage when it comes to serious games. Bavelier and Green (2019) highlight how gamers may have better visuo-motor coordination and better handling of perceptual load compared to non-gamers, which was observed in our study as some students gave feedback that they were distracted or mixed up between learning the platform and learning, leading to inefficiencies. However, Warden et al. (2016) claim that non-gamers are not at a disadvantage and can equally participate in a virtual world classroom. Further research and studies on this topic, specifically on how the technical environment can cater to personalized learning needs, are needed.

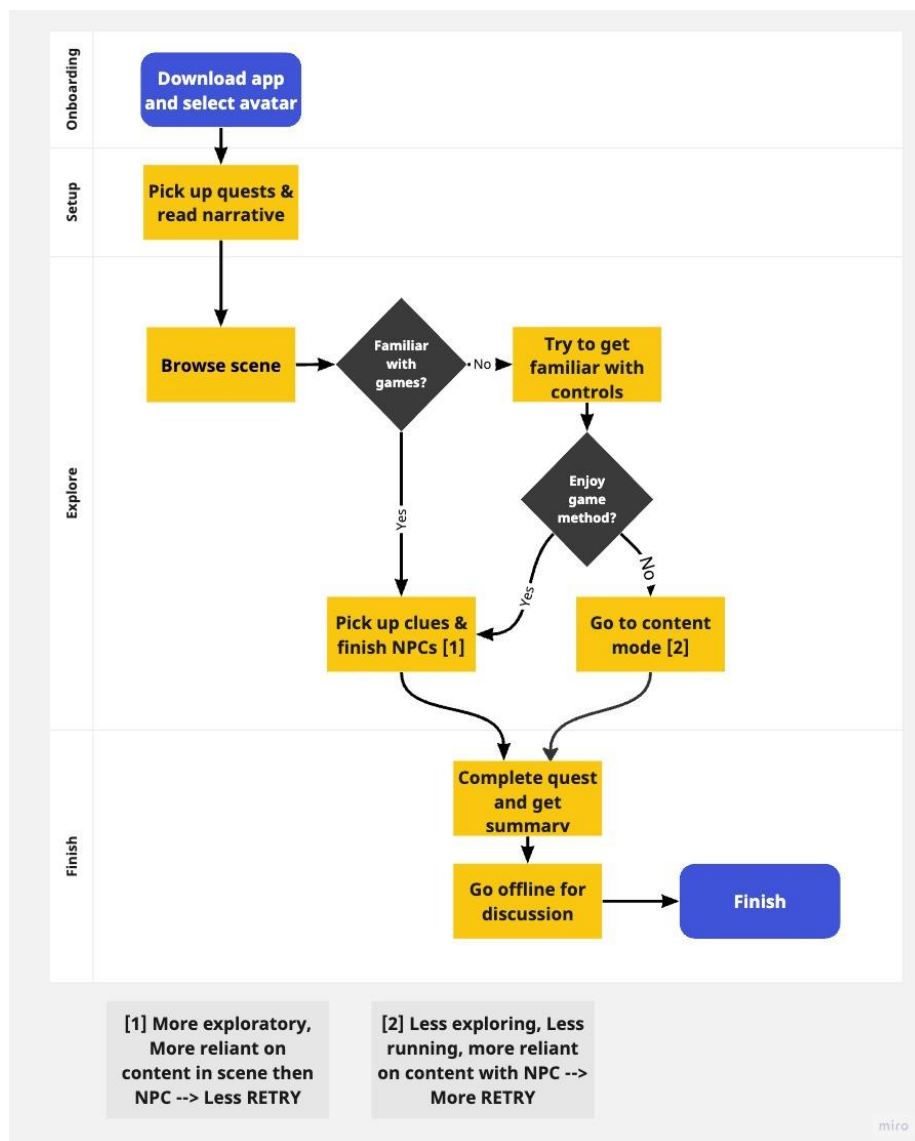


Figure 2. Personalized learning experience in game-based metaverse

Regardless, it is beneficial to find ways to improve the user experience and reduce the cognitive load of learning the platform. One idea that may work is reducing the dependency on using a joystick, such as implementing a point-to-move system. Other issues like technical bugs and lack of quest tracking can be addressed by

introducing enhancements to the game system. Additionally, the issue of boring quests could be solved by maximizing branching quest design that can be afforded by the metaverse platform. While branching logic is attractive and can allow for personalized learning, it requires high levels of creativity and pre-planning. To this end, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) systems such as ChatGPT may be useful. AI systems like ChatGPT have consumed a large number of books and have the ability to create engaging and potentially immersive narratives, which could enhance the learning experience in a game-based environment.

One limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Conducting the study in a single educational setting may also bias the outcomes, limiting its applicability to other settings with different demographics or teaching styles. While the study included system data such as the number of completions and second tries, its reliance on self-reported data for the correlational analysis may introduce bias, potentially skewing the results in a direction that reflects perceived rather than actual behavior or attitudes. Furthermore, Classlet system was unable to capture duration taken by a student to make decisions thus it was not possible to evaluate if retries were due to lack of seriousness, possibly adding noise to the results.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides insights into the use of game-based learning and metaverse platforms in promoting an engaging and participatory learning experience for students. The findings suggest that the use of game mechanics and pedagogical strategies such as experiential learning and constructivism can enhance learning outcomes and promote student engagement. The study used both system data and self-assessment surveys to evaluate the learning outcomes and student engagement.

Our study's findings offer a response to the gaps identified by Stark et al. (2021). In our context, quizzes were seamlessly integrated as simple tasks within our metaverse simulation of the Great Depression. This illustrates the potential of virtual scavenger hunts as an engaging and effective educational tool and how multifaceted interactions with non-player characters, nuanced narratives, and clue-based exploration can be utilized to create immersive learning experiences.

The study also highlighted several challenges related to the system's technical limitations and user experience, including learning inefficiency, technical bugs, and insufficient instructions. To address these challenges, it is crucial to improve the user experience and reduce the cognitive load of learning the platform. This could be achieved by reducing the dependency on using a joystick and introducing enhancements to the game system.

Overall, the study shows promising results for the use of game-based learning and metaverse platforms in promoting an engaging and participatory learning experience for students, but further research is needed to fully realize the potential of this approach.

## Acknowledgements

This study was funded by Lingnan University, Hong Kong (Teaching Development Grant, Project Code: 102716).

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## The Mediating Role of Teacher Personality on Classroom Teaching Effectiveness in Teaching Today

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**Abstract:** With a more demanding post Covid-19 student, a surge in teaching requirement changes is taking place. Teachers are confronted with students who have access to knowledge and have undergone severe psychological lock-down consequences. This self-reporting quantitative study is conducted with 476 consenting anonymous students and their 32 respective teachers. The findings demonstrate that emotionally intelligent teachers play a noticeable role in enhancing teaching effectiveness, and that personality traits of teachers mediate this positive relationship and improve it to a certain extent. These findings suggest that university educators and administrators alike, need to work on developing the emotional intelligence skills of their current and future teachers, should seek to hire and retain teachers with high emotional intelligence. Moreover, they need to coach and mentor current teachers who need help building this skill through workshops and continuous development, with continuous assessment. The avail of such positive reinforcement is expected to improve classroom teaching effectiveness through self-managed better emotional control, while simultaneously providing a role-model example for students' behaviour. These developmental cognitive changes at the teacher's level are expected to create stronger student-student relationships and interactions, foster a positive association between teachers and student, and lead to better engagement and exchange in the classroom and better educational achievements.

**Keywords:** teaching effectiveness, personality traits, emotional intelligence, teachers, undergraduate, mediation.

**Citation:** Maamari, B. E. (2024). The mediating role of teacher personality on classroom teaching effectiveness in teaching today. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2374-2383), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Today's students are ever more changing than the norm. Post Covid-19 students, traumatized by the lock-down inflicted upon communities and individuals, have for many, under-developed social skills. These students are pushing the bar for teaching requirement changes in the classroom. Teachers are confronted daily with issues in the classroom that require a new skill, where the classical teacher-student (father-son) relationship is not necessarily evident. Emotional intelligence is reported to play a mending role in this capacity, for working with these students who have open access to knowledge through internet connectivity but have undergone severe psychological lock-down consequences where some did not have the opportunity to develop their social skills.

Research on emotional intelligence (EI) has gained significant attention across various fields, including psychology, business, and education (Maamari & Salloum, 2023). The importance of EI lies in its contribution to personal and professional success. In the realm of education, the mastery of subject knowledge alone may not suffice for effective teaching. This study aims to investigate the impact of high emotional intelligence on teaching effectiveness in the university setting and explore whether and how personality traits mediate this relationship. This study aims at discovering the potential of using emotional intelligence as a skill, in developing better teaching effective teachers for university settings. The research question at hand is whether teacher personality traits mediates the relationship between teachers' EI and their teaching effectiveness. The following sections review the pertinent scholarly literature, lay the method and results and puts forth academic and administrative recommendations, implications and conclusions.

## Literature review

Emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others (Goleman, 1998). It involves perceiving and discriminating among emotions, using emotions to guide thinking and actions, and effectively managing emotions. Previous research has proposed three main models to measure emotional intelligence: ability, trait, and mixed models. These models assess various aspects of emotional intelligence, including perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

The three different perspectives models on EI resulted in developing three tools for assessing it. The first, presented by as the 'Ability Model' by Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2000) (also known as the MSCEIT test) is composed of four parts, each measuring one aspect of EI, namely (1) perceiving emotions, (2) using emotions, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). The second - the Emotional Quotient Inventory, known as the 'Trait Model' focuses on one's self-perception of their emotional abilities, characterizing EI as a cognitive ability and skill that a person uses under pressure and demanding environments (Bar-On, 1997). The third is developed as a 'Mixed Model' by Goleman (1995) encompasses five personal and social competencies known as 'The Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI)'.

Teaching effectiveness as a practice is related to in-class pedagogy (Haroutunian-Gordon, 1988) and is closely linked to pedagogical practices and the creation of an engaging learning environment (Maamari & Salloum, 2023). Emotionally intelligent teachers are more capable of regulating their emotions, maintaining positive teacher-student relationships, managing classroom dynamics effectively (Maamari & Majdalani, 2019), and serving as positive role models. In line with this above, the constructivist learning view emphasizes active class participation as conducive of better learning experience and process (Dewey, 1997; Piaget, 1972), so that the greater the student engagement, the better the cognitive development and knowledge retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Students' active participation and engagement in the learning process are essential for knowledge acquisition and cognitive development. Emotionally intelligent teachers contribute to the creation of a positive classroom climate that optimizes learning outcomes, academic engagement, and achievement. Research reports a positive correlation between a teacher's EI and classroom teaching effectiveness, whereby high EI teachers have higher teaching effectiveness (Penrose, Perry, & Ball, 2007; Hassan, Jani, Som, Abd Hamid, & Azizan, 2015). These teachers are able to control their emotions, both negative and positive to create a peaceful environment conducive of relaxed learning (Sutton & Harper, 2009), build relationships with their students and better manage classroom dynamics (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These teachers rely on their four emotional skills, namely self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management, adopt a positive classroom environment and stimulate learning (Maamari & Majdalani, 2019). This leads to better academic engagement and achievement (Bracket, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010; Waiswa, Baguma, & Oonyu, 2020).

Furthermore, the teacher's personality plays a crucial role in teaching (Polk, 2006). Scholarly research reports that personality is associated with teachers' both job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, and Mount, 2002) and performance (Judge, Rodell, Klinger, Simon, & Crawford, 2013). Scholars have designed and validated a number of personality frameworks including the 16 Personality Factors (Cattell et al., 1970), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers et al., 1998) and the HEXACO (Ashton & Lee, 2007), to name a few, yet the Big Five is the most widely utilized (John et al., 2008).

As a measure of job performance in teaching, effectiveness captures the teacher's impact in class (Kim, Jörg, & Klassen, 2019). The domains of the Big Five personality traits includes openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, align with teaching evaluation and effectiveness (Kim et al., 2019). Openness and flexibility in teaching, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability are positively associated with teaching effectiveness, with teacher openness playing a specifically important role in overall teacher evaluation (Kim & McCann, 2018). First, teacher flexibility is a valued quality, empirical findings report a positive association between a teacher's conscientiousness and teaching effectiveness (Kim & McCann, 2018). Second, extraversion is considered crucial in interactive jobs such as teaching (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Third, teachers high on agreeableness create warm and positive environments where students' learning fosters (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Fourth, a teacher's emotional stability is inversely related to emotional exhaustion (neuroticism), which helps create a stable learning environment. Finally, one's own high self-efficacy perception is conducive of high performance (Sehgal, Nambudiri, & Mishra, 2017; Soto-Pérez, Sánchez-García, & Núñez-Ríos, 2020). Moreover, high EI teachers present high self-efficacy in teaching (Valente, Lourenço, Alves, & Dominguez-Lara, 2020) and both teacher efficacy and EI have direct positive effect on teacher effectiveness (Ashraf, Hosseinnia, & Domsy, 2017). Thus, the literature shows that personality traits and EI contribute to both teaching context and behavior toward achieving the intended outcome of effective teaching/learning.

The gap that this study is aiming to answer to the research question at hand and the hypotheses summarized in figure 1.

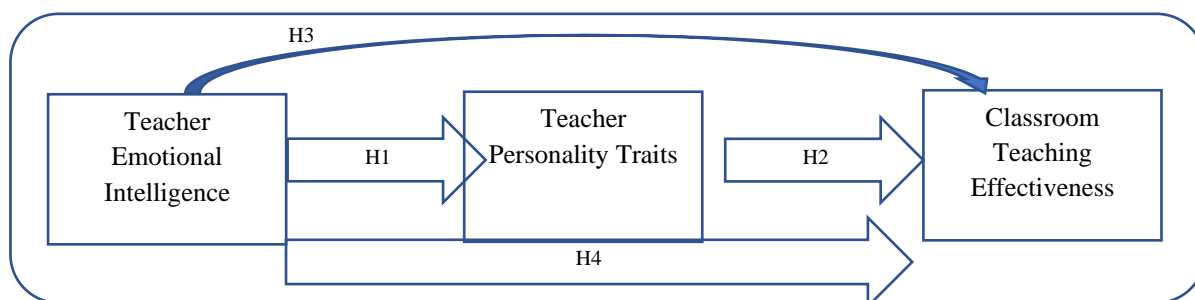


Figure 1. Model to test

## Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing self-reporting questionnaires collected from 476 students and their 32 respective faculty members. Regression analysis is applied to analyze the data and investigate the mediating role in the relationships between emotional intelligence and teaching effectiveness. The study uses three questionnaires, the MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2000) to measure EI through 25 scale items, the Big Five Inventory (44 items) to measure personality traits (John & Srivastava, 1999), and classroom teaching effectiveness scale (Hassan et al., 2015) of 21 scale items. The tool was pilot-tested on a small group of respondents (9 students and 5 teachers) and found acceptable.

The hypotheses at hand are:

H1: Teacher EI (TEI) affects the teacher's personality traits (TPT)

H2: TPT affects the teacher's teaching effectiveness (TTE)

H3: TEI affects TTE

H4: TPT mediate the relationship between TEI and TTE.

## Results

The participating respondents are selected from a number of universities, both public and private, in KSA, in Spring 2023. The participating faculty respondents received the questionnaire after accepting to volunteer for the study. Their respective students were asked to volunteer to the study, and those consenting were given the questionnaire (either soft copy by email or hard-copy in class). The targeted population included 1200 students and 100 teachers. The collected responses were 502 from students and 32 from teachers. 26 student responses were cancelled due to incompleteness. The authors took precaution to avoid the common method bias through separating the independent variable data collection (collected from teachers) from the dependent variable (collected from students). The teachers filled their self-reported questionnaires outside the classroom, pertaining to their EI and personality traits, while the students filled their questionnaires in class, pertaining to the respective teacher effectiveness in the classroom. The collected data is analysed using SPSS 26, for reliability, KMO, descriptive analysis, correlation and regression.

First, the reliability tests run show that the tools used are reliable, with Cronbach’s Alpha being 0.917 for TEI; 0.601 for PTP and 0.874 for TTE. Second, the KMO results range between 0.701 and 0.802, with  $p=0.000$  for all. The tool and data are thus deemed acceptable. Third, the descriptive results reveal that 64.5% of responding students are males and 35.5% females. Moreover, 23.7% are sophomore, 47.9% juniors and 28.4% seniors at the undergraduate level. In addition, 21.6% of the responding students are studying arts, while 78.4% are majoring in business studies. Finally, 3.2% of the students have no work experience, while 57.4% have less than two years of work experience and 39.4% have more than two years of work experience. Fourth, the correlation analysis test between shows that TTE is positively moderately correlated with TEI with  $R^2=0.571^{**}$ , and  $Sig.=.000$  ( $**p<.01$ ), and TPT is positively weakly correlated with TEI,  $R^2=0.096^*$ , and  $Sig.=.0380$  ( $p<.05$ ). Finally, to test the hypotheses at hand, a number of linear regressions (4) is run. The results are summarized in table 1 and figure 2 below. The results show that when introducing the TPT variable into the analysis, the effect of TEI on TTE improves by 10.6%.

Table 1. Summary Results of Linear Regression Tests

#	Variable		R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	F Change	Sig.	Formula of straight line
	Indep.	Dep.						
1	TEI	TPT	0.330	0.109	0.107	4.314	0.038	$F(TPT)=149.002+0.098TEI$
2	TEI	TTE	0.571	0.326	0.325	229.225	0.000	$F(TTE)=67.730+0.261TEI$
3	TPT	TTE	0.124	0.101	0.101	0.277	0.599	$F(TTE)=90.772-0.11TPT$
4	Mediation	TTE	0.576	0.432	0.429	4.392	0.000	$F(TTE)=73.013+0.265TEI-0.035TPT$

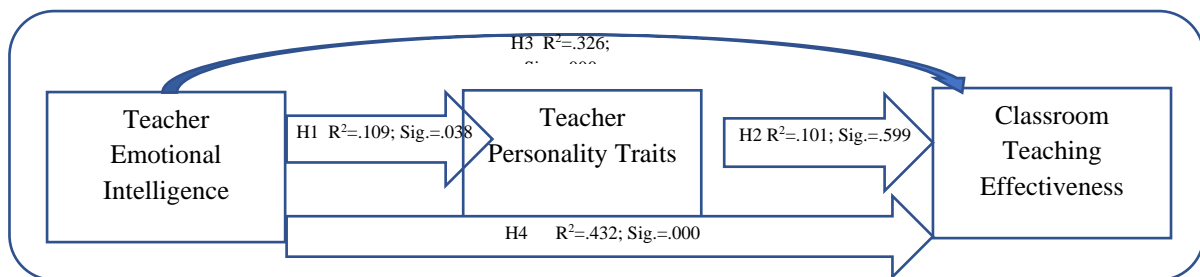


Figure 2. Results of Regression tests

To summarize, the results show that all four hypotheses are supported:

H1: Teacher EI (TEI) affects the teacher’s personality traits (TPT); is supported

H2: TPT affects the teacher’s teaching effectiveness (TTE); is supported

H3: TEI affects TTE; is supported

H4: TPT mediate the relationship between TEI and TTE; is supported.

## Discussion

With the aim of investigating the mediating effect of personality traits on the relationship between teachers’

emotional intelligence and their classroom teaching effectiveness, a quantitative study is done on 476 students and their respective teachers at undergraduate university levels. The collected data is used to run linear regression analysis to answer the research question at hand. The results of the study confirm the former mediation relationship and the findings support the hypothesis that emotional intelligence significantly influences teaching effectiveness and this relationship is improved with the mediating role of the teachers' personality traits. These findings contribute to improving our understanding of the factors that impact teaching effectiveness in higher education.

Educational institutions can benefit from these findings by recognizing the need for and importance of emotional intelligence in teacher training and professional development programs. Moreover, incorporating strategies that cultivate agreeableness and consciousness among teachers may further enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. By promoting EI and fostering positive personality traits, educational institutions can create a conducive learning environment that positively impacts student learning experience through engagement, behaviour and academic performance.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between EI, personality traits, and teacher effectiveness. It emphasizes the significance of these factors in the context of higher education and provides valuable insights for educators, administrators and policymakers, aiming to enhance the quality of teaching and the learning experience.

## **Recommendations**

### **Managerial implications**

To sustain high job performance and competitive advantage among competing educational institutions, universities ought to focus on developing the EI and skills and positive personality traits of their employees, administrators, and teaching staff. Emphasizing the importance of EI, agreeableness and conscientiousness throughout the recruitment process can help recruit the high EI teachers that promise high positive added-value performance, better fit in and adaptability to the culture, more classroom engagement, and diverse interactivity. As a result, the institution would reap multiple benefits in terms of team-spirit, team-work, conflict resolution initiatives, job satisfaction and better learning levels. In turn, the better learning will result in higher performance of the graduates, and higher institutional reputation. Therefore, the recommendation of integrating EI into the hiring process becomes a tool for recruiting teachers with competency.

### *Teaching implications*

Emotional intelligence is positively correlated with classroom teaching effectiveness. Teachers with high EI are better prepared to create a positive and motivating classroom climate. Personality traits are also correlated with classroom effectiveness. High EI teachers with positive personality traits foster optimal learning through

interpersonal relationships and individualized attention to students, and with active engagement in class. Therefore, personality trait development workshops and EI training should be administered to all teaching faculty members, in order to enhance their teaching effectiveness. they would be better able to attract student attention and interest in the subject-matter discussed and help contribute to higher student engagement and thereby learning experience.

### *Educational policy implications*

The official policy makers in the educational arena are invited to integrate developing EI skills and personality trait of agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism, in their teacher preparation programs for all educational levels. EI training should be offered in parallel to students to increase academic experience leading to better learning, improved teacher-student relationships, and reduces behavioural problems. Introducing EI and positive personality traits can transform teaching from a tasked-duty to a fun-experience with positive impact for students and teachers. On one hand, students would benefit from personal and intellectual growth as well as social and relational growth. On the other hand, teachers will have a more enjoyable career and state of mind, with lower stress levels and burnout. Moreover, teachers and administrative staff would benefit from higher job satisfaction, improved well-being, better coping mechanisms and lower negative emotions, thus higher quality of life.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that this study had some limitations. First, the sample size and the self-reported responses may play a limiting role in generalizing the results. Second, students' ratings may be influenced by various undisclosed factors such as mood or personal feelings. Some students may have misinterpreted the visit of the researcher to their classroom for teacher data collection as a chance for them to vent or express unfair teacher evaluation, either positive or negative as is reported by other researchers (Maamari & Naccache, 2022).

### **Future research**

Future studies should consider larger sample sizes and include participants from diverse educational settings to enhance generalizability of the findings. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the underlying mechanisms and subjective experiences related to emotional intelligence and teaching effectiveness. Finally, Third, using additional sources for evaluating teaching effectiveness may lead to more accurate assessment. These may include in-class observations, peer ratings, and department-head evaluations of teaching effectiveness in person.

To conclude, the research highlights the positive impact of EI and personality traits on teaching effectiveness in higher education. Faculty members with high EI skills contribute to supportive teacher-student relationships,



effective classroom management, and positive role modelling. The personality traits of agreeableness, openness, extroversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability (neuroticism) play a mediating role in the relationship between EI and teaching effectiveness.

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## Military Pedagogy in Malaysia: Establishing Defense University Teaching and Learning Characteristics

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**Abstract:** There is debate about whether military pedagogy differs from other forms of pedagogy, such as andragogy or heutagogy. The concept of military pedagogy can be comprehended from multiple viewpoints. Military pedagogy is regarded by certain researchers as the act of instructing and acquiring knowledge within a military educational setting. However, another faction of scholars argue that military pedagogy is employed specifically for the goal of instructing in defense and military strategies. This paper aims to understand the specific characteristics of military pedagogy in Malaysia, as witnessed and documented by the author, who has been working at the Defense University since its establishment. The analysis is derived from the observations conducted on the pedagogical methods employed at the Defense University. Initial results indicate that the qualities of military pedagogy encompass the six attributes of intellectual leaders of character at the Defense University. Military pedagogy then may form the foundation of the university's teaching and learning philosophy.

**Keywords:** Defense University, Intellectual Leaders of Character, Military Education, Military Learning Environment, Military Pedagogy

**Citation:** Binti Juhary, J. (2024). Military Pedagogy in Malaysia: Establishing Defense University Teaching and Learning Characteristics. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2384-2393), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

There is limited awareness of military pedagogy in this region, which includes Asia and Oceania. The absence of documented evidence regarding military pedagogy in these nations substantiates this assertion. The author can attribute these reasons to a lack of understanding of the importance of training future military members and a lack of scholarly interest in military education-related topics. This paper provides a detailed analysis of the specific characteristics that define military pedagogy within the context of Malaysia. Due to the scarcity of materials on military pedagogy in the country and the surrounding region, this research relies on long-term observations of the learning and teaching environment at the Defense University and the methods used to educate the students.

Being the youngest established public university in Malaysia, the National Defense University of Malaysia

(NDUM) is well equipped to offer the highest quality learning and teaching environment for its students. After almost two decades of existence, the Defense University firmly insists that its graduates must exhibit six attributes of intellectual leaders of character. To attain these attributes, the learning environment and experience must be flexible and responsive to changes and challenges.

The author contends that after conducting observations over the course of 20 semesters at the Defense University, there are three distinct arguments on military education as it is observed at the NDUM.

### **Employing the Best Schools of Thought**

There are two contrasting perspectives on the concept of military pedagogy, which refers to the education of future intellectual leaders for both academic and military reasons. Caforio (2000) introduced the idea of divergence and convergence, whereas Kirkels, Klinkert, and Moelker (2003) proposed the Spartan and Athens models. The NDUM implements both models. The Defense University stands out not just due to its historical significance but also because it falls under the jurisdiction of two ministries in Malaysia, specifically the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, and the Ministry of Defense, Malaysia.

Applying both schools of thought to the defense institution involves the implementation of Caforio's concept, which focuses on educating future officers at a public institution. However, the NDUM is also producing individuals who possess the qualities of both Spartans and Athenians. Graduates undergo training to become proficient soldiers while simultaneously developing their capacity to think critically and make decisive decisions. This is implementing the models developed by Kirkels, Klinkert, and Moelker.

#### *Building Personality for Future Defenders of the Nation*

In numerous instances, the individuals responsible for managing and 'building' the organizations are crucial for achieving success. Therefore, it is imperative to develop the character of future leaders in the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF). This is a component of military education that has been implemented at the NDUM. As explicitly discussed by Darr et al. (2022), personality is crucial in guaranteeing the presence of morally upright authorities. The NDUM is prepared to shape future intellectual leaders with six key attributes necessary for achieving the desired personality. Shaping intelligent leaders with strong character is a challenging endeavor, given the disparities in the educational and socio-economic backgrounds of the students. The military orientation phase (familiarization program), also known as *Tunas Wira*, plays a significant role in initiating the process of 'eliminating' disparities in terms of lifestyles and thought patterns.

#### *Balancing Two Essential Principles*

Military pedagogy enables the harmonious integration of two essential principles. The primary essential aspect is the appropriate amalgamation of civilian and military experience for the students to emulate. Although

military cadets adhere to strict schedules, they also need to undergo shaping to integrate into society. The exposure provided at the Defense University should guarantee that students possess the necessary skills and abilities to perform effectively and efficiently when entering the professional realm. The second principle is that both behaviorism and constructivism learning methodologies guarantee the development of graduates as both followers and, eventually, leaders. By incorporating both traditional and digital teaching methods too, the NDUM can enhance students' learning experiences and broaden their horizons.

Going ahead, this paper is segmented into five primary components. The initial component comprises this introduction. The second section provides a curated collection of literature on military pedagogy. The third section provides a concise explanation of the approach employed in this paper. Following that, this part provides an analysis and discussion of the specific characteristics of military pedagogy within the context of Malaysia. Finally, a conclusion succinctly encapsulates the essence of this paper.

## **Selected Literature**

Given the limited familiarity with the phrase military pedagogy, it is crucial to understand its fundamental concept before proceeding with the discussion in this paper. Toiskallio (2003) stated that military pedagogy falls within the realm of "military sciences that examine the philosophies, conceptions, visions, doctrines, aims, approaches, and technologies of military education and training." For several decades, there has been a long-standing discussion regarding the most effective approach to educating military officers, particularly at the tertiary level. This is particularly accurate given the heightened participation of these individuals in military and humanitarian endeavors, necessitating a structured program of education and training. For example, military pedagogy serves as a means for the Danish to address learning in the context of military education and training (Schunk & Nielsson, 2002). Schunk and Nielsson further contended that while the term pedagogy may not differ significantly from conventional pedagogy, there are distinct qualities that set military pedagogy apart from others, as outlined in the following paragraphs.

Schunk and Nielsson (2002) argued that military pedagogy includes (a) the readiness of military personnel to cooperate during their military training and education; this means that during the process of knowledge acquisition, their ability to adapt in order to sharpen their proficiency is highly required; (b) the personnel are skilled at surviving and working under extreme conditions; this suggests that students undergo academic and military training concurrently, and there are massive pressures on the students to achieve well in both aspects; (c) the personnel must be able to perform their obligations accordingly and efficiently; (d) the personnel are considered adults undertaking tasks as armed forces; (e) the instructors are not only class instructors; they are also administrators or tactical commanders; this suggests that the instructors are also military personnel; (f) the people involved in the training vary and have different backgrounds in order to allow multiple and various experiences to be shared with the students; and (g) the principles used for teaching are valid at all levels and situations; thus these principles must have common substances.

Falk (2008) provided a concise concept of military pedagogy. He stated that military pedagogy consists of two components. Military pedagogy refers to the process of teaching and learning that takes place inside a military environment. Furthermore, military pedagogy is specifically employed in contexts where instruction and the acquisition of knowledge are intended for military objectives. By adhering to these components, the global community would be able to promptly discern whether institutions are embracing military pedagogy. However, the author contends that military pedagogy encompasses more than just identifying whether organizations employ military pedagogy; the impacts of military pedagogy in educating graduates at the NDUM are the utmost importance. The fourth section of this paper presents these arguments. In addition, academic experts such as Paile (2013), Kirkels, Klinkert, and Moelker (2003), and Caforio (2002) have discussed the fact that the education systems in different countries vary, which in turn leads to differences in the interpretation of military pedagogy. These scholars also focused on two schools of thought for comprehending the functioning of military pedagogy. The following two paragraphs will delve deeper into these topics.

In the year 2000, Caforio introduced a classification system for military education that distinguishes between divergent and convergent approaches. These two are not contradictory; they are complementary. The previous categorization prioritizes the provision of necessary resources to military personnel to successfully complete their assigned tasks. This classification specifically highlights the importance of the commander's military expertise. In contrast, the subsequent categorization permits these individuals to pursue formal tertiary education, wherein the curriculum prepares them to excel as officers and integrate effectively into communities. This implies that the officers could acquire their education through the civilian school system.

This study is subsequently corroborated by another study conducted in 2003. This study presents two models of military education and pedagogy. These models are derived from the inherent characteristics of the officers and their unique responsibilities. There are two models: the Sparta model, which focuses on military personnel as defenders of a nation, and the Athens model, which promotes officers as intellectual elites who must utilize their skills to make good decisions professionally. It is contended that by combining the Sparta and Athens models, a more robust military can be created. These training institutions have the option to focus on either one of these models or to select only one model. Regardless of the choice made for the model at military tertiary institutions, Paile (2013) emphasized that the higher education business for these military personnel is evolving into a distinct intellectual process.

Toiskallio (2008) argued that pedagogy encompasses not only the act of instructing, training, and educating but also the essence of human nature and the prospects for future existence. In this context, pedagogy seeks to provide individuals with a high quality of life. Therefore, military pedagogy is a discipline within the field of human sciences. At the same time, military pedagogy, as a branch of human science, focuses on addressing four significant dangers faced by military personnel. These risks include (a) nuclear wars or large-scale warfare; (b) the rise of totalitarian power; (c) the breakdown of economic growth mechanisms; and (d) ecological decay or disaster (Giddens, 1992).



With the newfound knowledge of military pedagogy, it is important to consider the impact and relevance it has on the NDUM. Should military pedagogy become the primary catalyst for achieving greatness at the only defense university in Malaysia? Is military pedagogy truly significant? The fourth section will evaluate the current characteristics of military pedagogy at the Defense University.

## Method

This section describes the methodology used to understand military pedagogy and its current practices. The technique employed in this concept paper solely relies on observations of the teaching and learning approaches at the Defense University. The author conducted observations over a period of 10 years (20 semesters) to assess the students' acceptance and perceptions of the teaching and learning approach implemented. Based on the transition from a lecture-based method to a flipped classroom approach, the author concludes that students are hopeful about the changes and highly discerning when it comes to their personal learning experience.

The classes observed were taught by the author and six other academics at the NDUM. Over the course of 10 years, the author conducted four action research studies. The research focused on the behavior of students in the classroom, the teaching styles employed by the author and other academics, and the learning activities of students during classroom sessions. The findings of these action research studies can be summarized as follows.

Initially, students exhibit heightened levels of involvement and enthusiasm in their educational pursuits when the classroom activities incorporate interactivity. "Interactive" refers to the idea that lectures should be minimized or completely avoided. Furthermore, a few academics are open to modifying their teaching methodologies, although a small number of them maintain that the traditional approach remains efficacious and pertinent. Consequently, students are encountering difficulties adjusting to a traditional educational setting due to their lack of familiarity with it. As digital natives, these new groups of students are equipped to utilize digital technologies (Prensky, 2001; Sadiku et al., 2017). Furthermore, the author notes that the Defense University lacks a comprehensive and formally stated policy for teaching and learning. Consequently, this has compelled academics to adopt instructional methods and classroom management techniques according to their own preferences. This is an urgent matter that requires quick attention from the NDUM.

Thus, the author's previous research has resulted in the identification of the specific characteristics of military pedagogy within the Malaysian setting. This study aims to provide a more detailed explanation of the arguments mentioned previously in the introduction in the following section.

## Further Analysis and Discussion on the Characteristics

The NDUM's implementation of military pedagogy will guide this section. The six attributes of the NDUM's graduates are clearly demonstrated in these three characteristics, and it is important to highlight this fact. The

origin of these attributes was traced back to extensive and thorough deliberations on the desired accomplishments of the NDUM graduates, spearheaded by the second Vice Chancellor of the NDUM (Zulkifli Zainal Abidin & Tengku Mohd Tengku Sembok, 2010). The next few paragraphs explain the characteristics of military pedagogy which have supported molding leaders of character at the NDUM and also informed the arguments highlighted in the introduction.

*Military Pedagogy as an Approach to Educate Future Intellectual Leaders of Character*

The most notable characteristic of military pedagogy at the NDUM is arguably its utmost significance. The Defense University is dedicated to creating intellectual leaders with strong character. The learning environment and experience provide an opportunity to educate the intellect and develop the physical abilities of future graduates. Only individuals who are prepared to relinquish their personal liberty will thrive in this setting. While the Defense University is not limited to military cadets, its development has been carefully designed considering the nation’s national strategic objectives. Civilian students who enroll in the Defense University are strongly urged to sign up for the Reserve Officer Training Unit. Given the immense responsibility of preparing future defenders of the nation, it is crucial to carefully prepare and implement teaching and learning methods, activities, and assessments.

As the only Defense University in Malaysia, the primary focus is on the academic qualifications of the graduates. The first attribute of the leaders of character is that they are graduate officers (see Figure 1). The primary motivation for students to attend a university is to acquire advanced education. The second attribute of the leaders of character is commissioning officers. Academic qualifications are crucial for enhancing military professionalism. Some say that academic degrees are the basis of military professionalism (see Sarkesian, 1981; Galvin, 2011; Novy, 2017). Academic achievement refers to the graduates’ ability to freely pursue information at the institution. Simultaneously, students receive academic instruction and endure military training. The military cadets possess a well-organized hierarchy of authority. They are accommodated in seven companies, with each company having its own individuals who hold ranks. This structure instructs the younger cadets to adhere to the guidance of the older cadets, and in turn, this procedure sharpens the leadership abilities of the older groups.



Figure 1. The classroom learning experience

*Military Pedagogy for Building Personality of Military Personnel*

Effective military pedagogy is essential for ensuring that the initial recruits of the MAF possess not only strong academic and physical capabilities for their military pursuits, but more importantly, they must also demonstrate moral and spiritual integrity. There are three qualities associated with this feature. One aspect of developing one’s personality involves ensuring that students actively participate in sports, since it contributes to the development of their character and discipline. In addition, it is necessary for the graduates to possess proficiency in at least one kind of hand-to-hand combat without the use of weapons. Primarily, it is imperative that the graduates establish a profound spiritual connection with God. This enables them to enhance their concentration and self-assurance. Hence, when considering the participation of future officers in foreign humanitarian activities, it is imperative that their character remain beyond reproach.

The military necessitates dynamic and resilient workforces. All military cadets and civilian students at the Defense University are required to be registered for participation in at least one sporting activity; this is the third attribute of the leaders of character (see Figure 2). The designated time for this activity is 5.00 to 6.30 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays. The students receive comprehensive training not only to excel as participants in the sports but also to develop the skills necessary to become trainers, coaches, and umpires in the same sports. This will enhance the students’ talents. Additionally, the students are to develop proficiency in unarmed combat, a crucial quality for developing intelligent leaders with strong character (the fourth attribute of leaders of character). Unarmed combat in military institutions refers to the requirement for personnel to exhibit the capability to protect themselves without relying on any weapons. The objective of the Defense University is for all military cadets to get a black belt in Taekwondo. Every Friday from 3.00 to 6.30 p.m., Taekwondo training sessions take place. Students are categorized based on their level of competence in the martial art.



Figure 2. Sports on the field

The MAF mandates that all personnel possess a steadfast belief in the existence of a higher power. Therefore, it is imperative that all military personnel adopt a faith or belief. The fifth attribute of leaders of character states that Muslim male students at the NDUM must possess the necessary qualifications to serve as Imams and Khatibs. It is challenging to train 70 percent of the student population in the skills of leading prayers and delivering sermons. To effectively handle this situation, only the students in their last year of study shall be

appointed as Imams and Khatibs. This trait is crucial due to one primary reason: the leaders on the battlefield must also possess the ability to lead prayers. These graduates must demonstrate excellence in every part of their lives. Female Muslim students must also understand all aspects of becoming exemplary Muslim leaders. Further, the non-Muslim students are not neglected; they are provided with support to practice their religion and encouraged to attend churches or temples. As prospective leaders of the MAF, it is strongly encouraged for all military cadets to have faith in God and lead lives characterized by moral excellence.

*Military Pedagogy as a Balanced Mixture for Critical Teaching and Learning Aspects*

Attaining a harmonious blend of essential instructional and educational elements poses a difficulty. This argument can be categorized into two primary constituents. The primary issue is to ensure a well-rounded educational experience for the students, achieved by incorporating both military and civilian faculty at the NDUM. Military cadets must possess the ability to exemplify the behavior and values of their military instructors. What is the optimal ratio of military professors to civilian academics that will facilitate effective role modelling? Furthermore, the lack of a teaching and learning policy has impeded the implementation of effective teaching and learning methods. This is because academics have the freedom to investigate and employ several approaches, but there is no universally accepted guiding principle for determining the most effective method. Academics often imitate their former instructors; if their lecturers were creative and innovative, it is likely that the academics will also possess these qualities. The optimal equilibrium between these two primary constituents enables the graduates to attain a state of wholeness, as elucidated subsequently.



Figure 3. Marching as a form of molding discipline

Developing graduates into individuals who embody the qualities of officers and gentlemen and women is an exceptionally challenging attribute to attain; the last attribute of leaders of character is molding graduates to become officers and gentlemen/ladies. This is because instilling strong principles requires a lengthy process, which begins on the very first day of a graduate’s enrollment at the Defense University. Students are introduced to the principles of etiquette while dining, socializing, and doing similar activities. Some individuals may question the reasons behind the difficulty of achieving this task. The graduates may encounter difficulties in effectively managing their schedules due to the inherent tension between their military training as protectors of the nation and their aspiration to embody the qualities of a refined gentleman or lady. However, the expressions of this sixth attribute are evident in their demeanor and conduct within the services and organizations.

## Conclusion

In summary, the author asserts that military pedagogy in the Malaysian setting, as implemented at the NDUM, possesses three distinct characteristics. The author argues that no other Malaysian universities have implemented a pedagogical approach identical to that of the NDUM. Therefore, military pedagogy plays a crucial role in ensuring a structured and efficient education for the nation's future protectors. However, the incorporation of these characteristics is not widespread across the entire university, as only a limited number of academics are familiar with the concept of military pedagogy. It is now appropriate to construct the teaching and learning philosophy at the Defense University based on these specific characteristics of military pedagogy.

## Recommendations

Based on these observations, the author also notes that some academics lack knowledge of military pedagogy and its characteristics. The author highlights one key suggestion. The Defense University can organize a series of seminars or webinars to 'educate' academics on the characteristics of military pedagogy and its potential benefits for effective teaching and learning. However, to facilitate these training sessions, it is crucial to inform the administrators of the Defense University about the significance of promoting and implementing military pedagogy. It is important too to recognize that military pedagogy is not a novel form of teaching and does not exist independently. Further, all members of the NDUM must be made known on how military pedagogy and its characteristics can assist in achieving the attributes of leaders of character.

## Acknowledgements

This paper owes much to the Defense University for the opportunity to conduct this research through continuous observations during classroom teaching and learning and military training on the field.

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# A Modified Gaussian-Based Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) Clustering Algorithm with Total Variation Regularization Technique Applied in Image Segmentation


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**Abstract:** Fuzzy clustering, an unsupervised classification method, allows data points to belong to multiple clusters simultaneously, reflecting their varying degrees of association with each cluster. Within image segmentation, the widely employed Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) algorithm seeks to delineate images into distinct regions. The FCM algorithm works by assigning membership to each object or data point corresponding to each centroid, based on distance between the data point and cluster. However, current FCM implementations confront significant challenges, notably in scenarios with complex non-spherical data or unbalanced clusters, exhibiting sensitivity to noise and resulting in excessive segmentation due to a lack of detailed spatial information. This study proposes an enhanced FCM algorithm, integrating a Gaussian distance metric and Total Variation



regularization to mitigate these challenges. Comparative analysis between the Gaussian-based FCM algorithm with Total Variation (TV) regularization technique and the conventional Euclidean FCM algorithm was conducted across diverse image datasets, evaluating segmentation time, evaluation time, Rand Index, and Coefficient of Variation. Results consistently demonstrated the superior performance of the proposed modified algorithm with TV regularization, exhibiting enhanced accuracy in segmentations and expedited execution times. This advancement renders the Gaussian-based FCM algorithm with TV regularization well-suited for real-time and resource-constrained applications. Future investigations should explore the efficacy of this enhanced algorithm across diverse datasets with varied subjects and image resolutions.

**Keywords:** Image Segmentation, Gaussian metric, Fuzzy C-Means, Total Variation regularization, Computer Science

**Citation:** Banzon, T.M., Dionisio, K.A.H., Mata, K.E.M., Regala, R.C., Contreras, F.V., Guilail, J.S., Morano, J.C., & Mahusay, L.M. (2024). A Modified Gaussian-Based Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) Clustering Algorithm with Total Variation Regularization Technique Applied in Image Segmentation. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2394-2409), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Clustering is an unsupervised classification algorithm which aims to partition the data into several disjoint subsets depending on its features (Arora et al., 2018). In unsupervised learning, the algorithm divides the data into sets in which the data is unlabeled based on the underlying hidden features in the data. In clustering the data into groups, the algorithm makes it possible to exploit the hidden features in the data, which can be useful for tasks like anomaly detection (Jones, 2017).

In computer vision, image segmentation is a crucial stage in recognizing and categorizing objects. Despite the numerous algorithms developed for image segmentation, it remains a challenging research area since no single method can provide a comprehensive approach for achieving fast and efficient image segmentation. This difficulty arises from two main reasons. Firstly, image segmentation is a multiple solution problem, i.e., there are multiple best segmentation results for one image. Secondly, images are inherently complex due to factors such as noise, background, low signal-to-noise ratio, and uneven intensity. This complexity makes it hard to develop a universal segmentation framework for handling complex image segmentation tasks (Asqiriba, 2020).

In pattern recognition and image analysis, clustering is one of the important tools to examine the data, since an image is always complex due to noise, background, and intensity nonuniformity (Lei et al., 2018). Image segmentation is the process of partitioning an image into multiple segments or regions, typically based on certain characteristics such as color, intensity, texture, or other features (Asqiriba, 2020).

Among those various areas of clustering methods, the Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) is a very well-known technique for its simplicity (Hashemi et al., 2023). The FCM algorithm for image segmentation has been continuously applied in different fields such as medical image segmentation, infrared pedestrian segmentation, high dimensional data clustering, etc. The FCM algorithm works by appointing membership to each object or data point corresponding to each cluster center, based on distance between the data point and cluster (Mantilla & Yari, 2021). Through this way, the FCM balances the number of data points in each cluster, in which the centers of smaller clusters are forced to drift to larger adjacent clusters (Lin et al., 2014). However, the FCM clustering algorithm often faces two problems for image segmentation. First, it is sensitive to noise, and secondly, it usually leads to over-segmentation due to lack of local spatial information of images (Abu & Diamant, 2019). Image noise is an erratic variation of brightness or color information in images, and it is usually an aspect of electronic noise that can be produced by the image sensor of a camera or scanner (Siddiqui, 2021). Noise and outliers contribute to the computational procedure of algorithms like FCM, which leads to unbalanced and misplaced cluster centers (Askari, 2021). Thus, making the FCM algorithm sensitive to noise and outliers.

To improve the clustering accuracy and separation of the clusters in fuzzy clustering, the Gaussian function model can be used, since this model can effectively eliminate noise on segmentation results (Yin et al., 2018). Moreover, the Gaussian model is less sensitive to outliers than other models like triangular distribution, and it has two easily interpretable parameters: the mean and the variance (Clark, 2020). The Gaussian function is radially symmetric, which means that its value depends only on the distance from the center, not the direction. This attribute makes it invariant to rotations, which is beneficial when dealing with images and other data where the orientation may not be known or relevant (Yang et al., 2022).

### **Problem Statement**

With the increasing importance of image data across different industries including medical imaging and high-dimensional data clustering, there exists a need for stronger and more effective clustering algorithms to perform image segmentation. The Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) algorithm is a popular choice due to its adaptability and ease of use. However, it faces certain obstacles that prevent it from achieving its full potential and usability. The main issues that have been identified are:

1. Despite regularization-based modifications, current FCM algorithm that uses Euclidean distance metric struggle with robustness issues when dealing with complex non-spherical data or datasets with unbalanced clusters.
2. Existing FCM method encounter obstacles, such as sensitivity to noise and outliers, which limit their adoption in several applications, including image segmentation.
3. The slow execution time of current FCM clustering algorithm is a major barrier to their use in real-time and resource-constrained environments.

Given the specified problems, this study aims to achieve a modified Fuzzy C-Means clustering method using a Gaussian metric to address the noise sensitivity and non-spherical data challenges inherent in the FCM

algorithm. This study also aims to enhance the accuracy of the FCM algorithm by incorporating a regularization technique that is less sensitive to noise and outliers. Lastly, this study seeks to improve and implement changes and optimizations to reduce the execution time of the current FCM clustering algorithm.

### *Fuzzy C-Means Algorithm*

The utilization of the Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) Algorithm in this research paper is motivated by its widespread adoption as the prevailing method for image segmentation, as evidenced by numerous scholarly references. The objective function of FCM algorithm is defined as:

$$J = \sum_{i=1}^c \sum_{j=1}^n u_{ij}^m \|x_j - v_i\|$$

In the given equation of the FCM algorithm,  $c$  signifies the number of clusters,  $n$  represents the number of samples, and  $u_{ij}$  denotes the membership level of data point  $x_j$  with respect to the cluster center  $v_i$ . The membership level  $u_{ij}$  ranges between 0 and 1 inclusively, and for each data point  $x_j$ , the sum of its membership levels across all clusters equals 1. Additionally,  $m$  denotes the fuzzification exponent employed in the partition matrix  $u_{ij}$ , typically set to 2 to distribute equal weighting to all data points. The notation  $\| \cdot \|$  denotes the Euclidean norm.

The membership degree  $u_{ij}$  measures the degree of association between a data point  $x_j$  and a cluster center  $v_i$ . A high membership degree means that  $x_j$  is highly associated with  $v_i$ , whereas a low membership degree means that  $x_j$  is only weakly associated with  $v_i$ . The membership degrees are updated iteratively until a convergence criterion is met, typically when the change in  $J$  falls below a specified threshold.

Following the calculation of membership levels, the cluster centers or centroids are updated according to the equation:

$$v_i = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n u_{ij}^m x_j}{\sum_{j=1}^n u_{ij}^m}$$

In the following equation,  $v_i$  represents the centroid of cluster  $i$ ,  $x_j$  signifies the  $j^{\text{th}}$  data point,  $u_{ij}$  denotes the degree of membership of data point  $j$  within cluster  $i$ ,  $m$  indicates a weighting exponent that governs the degree of fuzziness of the clustering, and  $n$  represents the total count of data points. The numerator is the weighted sum of the data points  $x_j$ , where the weights are the membership degrees  $u_{ij}$ . The denominator is the sum of the membership degrees for cluster  $i$ , which normalizes the weights so that they sum to 1.

## **Method**

In enhancing the efficacy of the FCM algorithm for image segmentation, the proposed research introduces nuanced modifications. These adjustments encompass refinements to the objective function, the incorporation of

spatial information, and the implementation of innovative Gaussian-based adaptations. A critical gap in the existing literature calls for a meticulous exploration into the robustness of Gaussian-based FCM variants, specifically addressing challenges posed by noisy data and outliers in image segmentation. The Gaussian metric, known for its ability to capture detailed image features, plays a significant role in addressing challenges related to noise and outliers. The research also considers the use of Total Variation regularization as a valuable tool in image processing. Acknowledged for its ability to reduce noise while preserving essential image details, Total Variation regularization plays a diverse role in image segmentation. Furthermore, the research acknowledges the importance of addressing computational challenges related to the execution time of FCM, particularly when dealing with large datasets.

### **Gaussian Metric**

The performance of image segmentation algorithms depends on the choice of distance metric used to measure the similarity between image pixels (Na Zhao et al., 2015). The Gaussian metric is a commonly used distance metric in image segmentation and has been shown to effectively improve the results of image segmentation (Yin et al., 2018). The Gaussian metric is a way to measure the similarity between two vectors using a Gaussian function. Given two vectors  $x$  and  $y$ , the Gaussian metric is defined as:

$$G(x, y) = \exp\left(-\frac{\|x - y\|^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$$

In the given equation of the Gaussian function,  $x$  and  $y$  represent the  $d$ -dimensional vectors, while  $\|\cdot\|$  is the Euclidean distance between two vectors, and  $\sigma$  is a scaling parameter that governs the width of the Gaussian function. The Gaussian function is centered at  $x$ , and its value at  $y$  decreases as the distance  $\|x-y\|$  between  $x$  and  $y$  increases. The parameter  $\sigma$  controls how quickly the Gaussian function decreases with distance. A smaller value of  $\sigma$  leads to a narrow Gaussian function, which assigns high similarity to vectors that are close together, while a larger value of  $\sigma$  leads to a broad Gaussian function, which assigns high similarity to vectors that are farther apart.

Following the computation of the Gaussian function, the metric is used in this study to revise and update the membership values for each pixel. This process involves assigning the membership value for each pixel and each cluster as the ratio of the Gaussian function for that pixel and that cluster to the sum of the Gaussian functions for that pixel across all clusters.

### *Total Variation Regularization Technique*

Total Variation regularization is a powerful technique with diverse applications in image processing and data analysis. In denoising, Total Variation regularization plays a crucial role in reducing noise while preserving the important details of an image. By encouraging smoothness and reducing noise variations, Total Variation regularization results in cleaner and visually appealing images. This advantage is particularly essential in medical imaging processing, where noise reduction is vital for accurate diagnosis and analysis (Caselles et al.,

2015). It is also capable of preserving edges and facilitate smooth image intensity transitions without over smoothing or over-sharpening. This is important in maintaining the sharpness and detail of segmented regions, which can be crucial for tasks such as object detection and tracking (Oh et al., 2013).

For clustering, according to Liu et al. (2014), Total Variation regularization is applied in cases where data exhibits spatial coherence. It enforces smoothness among neighboring data points, making it suitable for segmenting multidimensional data into coherent clusters. Total Variation regularization helps reduce sensitivity to outliers and sharp transitions, leading to more stable and interpretable clustering results. By discouraging noise and over-segmentation while promoting spatial coherence and edge preservation, Total Variation regularization leads to more well-defined and semantically meaningful segmented regions. This makes the results easier to interpret and use in several color image processing applications (Jia et al., 2019). In this study the total variation of the membership functions is introduced to encourage piecewise smoothness in the fuzzy membership assignments, thereby incorporating TV regularization technique into the FCM algorithm.

#### *Gaussian-Collaborative Fuzzy C-Means Algorithm (GCFCM)*

The Gaussian-Collaborative Fuzzy C-Means (GCFCM) study has been a significant contribution in addressing imbalanced clusters in various data analysis applications. It is known for managing complex, non-spherical datasets by incorporating collaborative information from a Gaussian mixture model (GMM) to improve clustering accuracy.

In the current study, the researchers focused on leveraging Gaussian blur, specifically for preprocessing images. This aspect of the GCFCM study was selected as a critical component for their investigation into the optimization of the FCM algorithm for image segmentation. Moreover, the researchers seek to delve deeper into the efficacy of the Gaussian distance metric itself. The aim is to optimize the algorithm, specifically exploring how the Gaussian metric, can further elevate the FCM algorithm's performance, particularly in image segmentation with real-world datasets.

#### *Conceptual Framework*

Figure 1 showcases the researchers' proposed algorithm. The algorithm has been developed to tackle some of the problems left unaddressed by the current approach. The research adopted a Gaussian distance metric in lieu of the conventional Euclidean one. The rationale behind this modification stems from the related literatures, which demonstrated that the Gaussian metric exhibits superior speed and flexibility when applied to intricate image datasets. This alteration has led to adjustments in the formulas used for calculations in the algorithm.

Meanwhile, to address concerns pertaining to noise and outliers in images, the researchers have chosen to preserve certain components from the prior approach, such as the utilization of Gaussian smoothing. Furthermore, a novel methodology known as Total Variation regularization has been proposed. The

implementation of this technique is anticipated to facilitate the mitigation of noise and outliers present in the segmented images, while concurrently maintaining the distinct boundaries of objects within said images. The researchers have chosen to utilize Total Variation regularization, which is a more sophisticated technique, with the goal to successfully mitigate the impact of noise and outliers across a broad spectrum of noise levels.

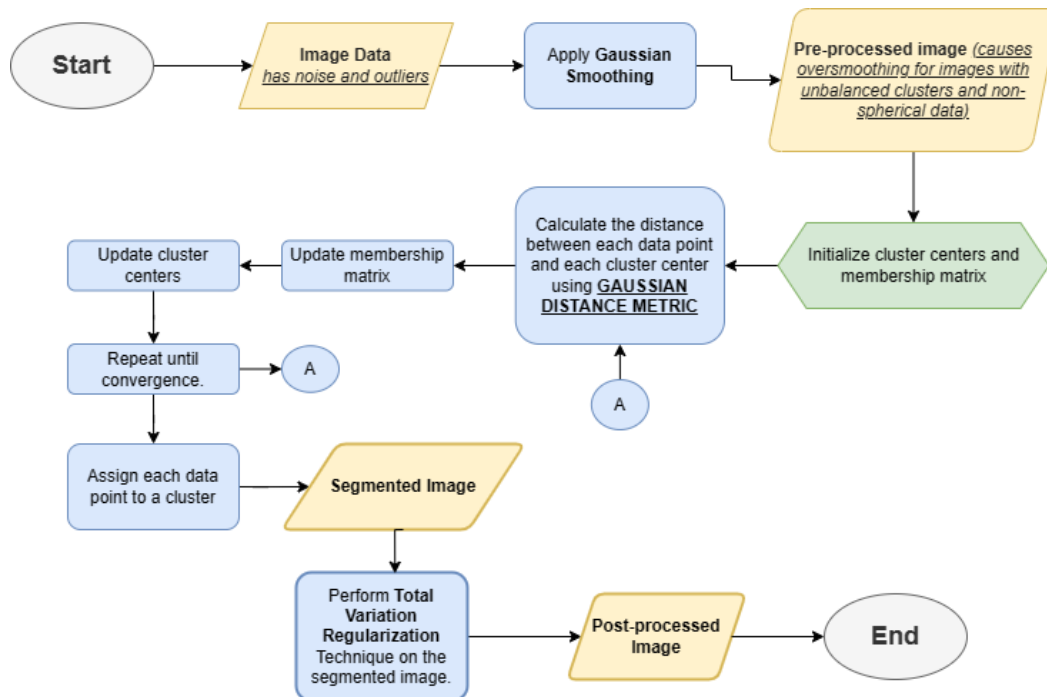


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Proposed Algorithm

### Datasets and Materials

This study evaluates the Gaussian-based Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) clustering algorithm using a diverse range of images, primarily sourced from publicly available datasets. These datasets offer images with varying complexities and conditions, enabling thorough testing and evaluation of the proposed algorithm. The Berkeley Segmentation Dataset is an essential dataset for this research. The dataset includes images and their corresponding ground truth segmentation, serving as a benchmark for evaluating the proposed algorithm's performance. The study also utilizes PASCAL VOC and MS COCO (Lin et al., 2014) datasets due to their extensive image collection and detailed segmentation ground truth annotations. These datasets allow for a thorough assessment of the proposed Gaussian-based FCM algorithm in comparison to the existing FCM algorithm. The proposed method's segmentation results will be compared to the dataset's ground truth segmentation.

The suggested modification of the Gaussian-based Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) clustering method is implemented in Python programming language for improved image segmentation. NumPy and SciPy are both extensively employed during implementation. NumPy offers an efficient N-dimensional array entity for managing and

manipulating image data. Meanwhile, SciPy offers supplementary functionalities to NumPy, including optimization tools, distance calculation, and other features. The study also involves using the Scikit-Image and Scikit-Fuzzy libraries. Scikit-Image facilitates image processing and includes functions for introducing noise to images, which can aid in the assessment of algorithm robustness to noise.

### *Evaluation Tools*

Following the attainment of the segmented image, the researchers embark on a crucial stage of evaluation of the modified Gaussian-based Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) algorithm with Total Variation Regularization Technique to assess its precision and effectiveness. This evaluation includes analyzing its rand index, and coefficient of variation to gain a thorough understanding of its performance and pinpoint areas for enhancement.

### *Rand Index*

The Rand Index (RI) is a measure of similarity between two data sets, in this study, it is the ground truth and the segmented image. The RI calculates the percentage of pixel pairs that are either correctly or incorrectly classified by the algorithm. The RI varies from 0 to 1. A higher value indicates better agreement between the segmented image and the ground truth. The following formula is used to calculate the Rand Index:

$$RI = (TP + TN) / (TP + TN + FP + FN)$$

### *Coefficient of Variation*

The coefficient of variation (CV) measures the ratio of the standard deviation (SD) to the mean of a set of data. SD is the standard deviation of the gray values within each cluster, and Mean is the mean gray value of the cluster. A CV value closer to one suggest that the variability or dispersion of the data points, in this case, the differences between the ground truth and the segmented image, is relatively low compared to their mean, indicating better agreement between the two images and thus higher accuracy and precision in segmentation. The CV for each cluster can be calculated using the following formula:

$$CV = (SD / Mean) * 100$$

## **Results**

### **Image Segmentation Results**

Figure 2 illustrates the results of the image segmentation process, encompassing the application of Gaussian blur, FCM algorithm, the proposed modified algorithm, and the modified algorithm with Total Variation (TV) Regularization technique.

The first column contains the original images, and in the second column are their corresponding ground truth



images. These ground truth images are used to compare against the segmented images to assess the accuracy of the FCM algorithm used for segmentation. In the third column, the figure shows the results of Gaussian blur preprocessing, which reduced image noise and smoothed the appearance of the image. This pre-processed image is then utilized for further segmentation.

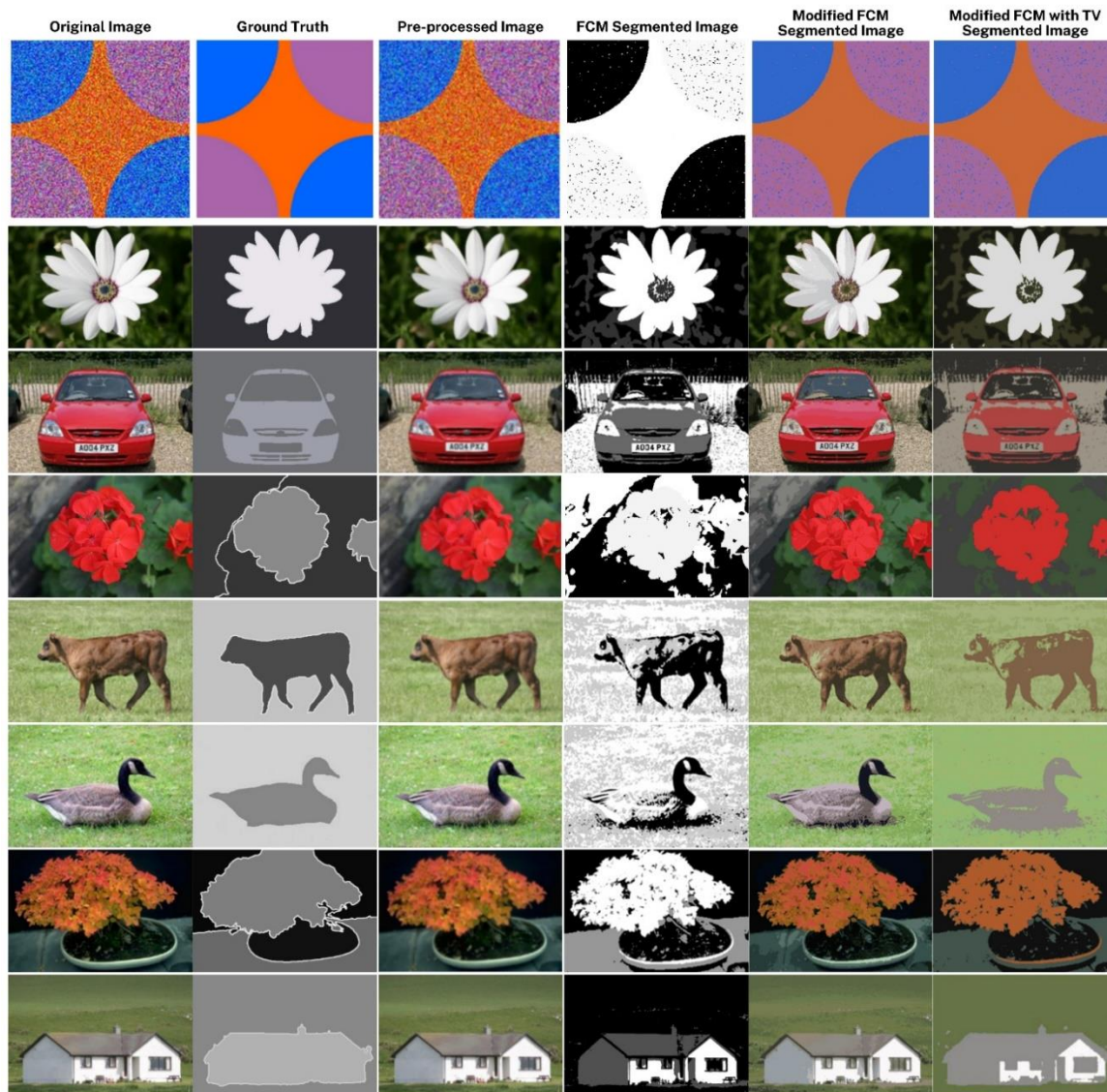


Figure 2. Image Segmentation Results of Eight (8) Image Datasets

Subsequently, in the fourth column, the FCM algorithm is applied, where cluster centers (centroids) are determined by computing weighted averages of pixel values using established membership values. This process integrated the 'fuzzy' affiliation of each pixel with a cluster into the determination of the cluster center, hence, influencing the resulting image segmentation. Next, in the fifth column, the proposed modified algorithm is utilized, incorporating the Gaussian distance metric for improved performance. This step is crucial for addressing robustness issues, particularly in dealing with complex non-spherical datasets or unbalanced clusters.

The modified algorithm applies Gaussian blur during preprocessing, maintains the same cluster initialization steps, but updates the membership matrix using the Gaussian distance metric instead of the Euclidean distance metric. Finally, in the last column, the TV Regularization technique is introduced, further refining the segmented image by reducing noise and preserving important features. This method promotes smooth regions while preserving edges, resulting in a visually improved and more accurate segmentation.

In the figure shown, the modified algorithm consistently delivers superior segmentation results, characterized by sharper, well-defined details, improved texture depiction, and more visually appealing outcomes. A particular highlight is the algorithm's capability to differentiate between background and foreground elements accurately, as evident in the cleaner delineation of foreign objects from the background. In images where color is incorporated, the modified algorithm introduces richer color spectrum and contrast, enhancing the visual appeal and overall segmentation quality.

Additionally, the modified algorithm excels in preserving intricate details and contours, especially around the edges and fine structures. It also effectively eliminates noise and outliers, resulting in a cleaner, more refined segmentation. These observations underscore the effectiveness of the modifications in improving segmentation quality and overall algorithm performance.

#### *Rand Index Results*

Table 1. Rand Index Results (Average across ten runs)

Datasets	GCFCM	Modified
Image 1	0.79	0.90
Image 2	0.73	0.90
Image 3	0.72	0.89
Image 4	0.72	0.91
Image 5	0.61	0.89
Image 6	0.77	0.91
Image 7	0.83	0.93
Image 8	0.78	0.95

Table 1 showcases the Rand Index (RI) for the previous and modified segmentation algorithms across ten runs for the eight image datasets. The Rand Index quantifies the resemblance between clustering results and the ground truth; hence, a higher Rand Index indicates a closer resemblance to the ground truth, suggesting better segmentation accuracy. For instance, in the case of the calf image segmentation (Image 5), the modified algorithm achieves an average RI of 0.89, while the original algorithm has an average RI of 0.61. Adding these RI averages of images 1-8 of the GCFCM gave a total average of 0.74375. Meanwhile, the total average of the proposed algorithm is 0.91, which is about 22.37% higher.

*Coefficient of Variation Results*

Table 2. Coefficient of Variation Results (Average across ten runs)

Datasets	GCFCM	Modified
Image 1	0.74	0.93
Image 2	0.78	0.92
Image 3	0.64	0.94
Image 4	0.75	0.88
Image 5	0.69	0.90
Image 6	0.74	0.89
Image 7	0.85	0.92
Image 8	0.71	0.90

The Coefficient of Variation (CV) represents the ratio of the standard deviation (SD) to the mean of a dataset. A CV value closer to one indicates that the standard deviation is roughly equal to the mean. Hence, a CV value closer to one indicates more consistent and reliable segmentation results. In Table 2, the CV of the GCFCM obtained an average of 0.7375. On the other hand, the CV of the proposed algorithm had 0.91, approximately 23.35% higher. This consistent trend across multiple images signifies the improved performance and reliability of the modified algorithm in terms of segmentation accuracy and consistency.

*Segmentation Time Results*

Table 3. Segmentation Time Results (Average across ten runs, in seconds)

Datasets	GCFCM	Modified
Image 1	8.55	4.39
Image 2	6.24	1.13
Image 3	6.45	1.3
Image 4	6.66	1.94
Image 5	7	1.97
Image 6	10.11	5.52
Image 7	6.55	1.11
Image 8	116.9	48.35

The segmentation time, representing the duration taken to complete the segmentation process for each algorithm on the image dataset, is consistently shorter for the modified algorithm compared to the GCFCM. For instance, in the second image dataset across ten runs, the previous algorithm takes an average of 6.24 seconds per image, whereas the proposed modified algorithm requires only 1.13 seconds.

The total segmentation time average of the GCFCM is 21.0575 seconds, while the proposed algorithm has the average of 8.21375 seconds. This is approximately 60.92% faster than the GCFCM in segmentation. This marked reduction in segmentation time underscores the improved efficiency and computational performance of the modified algorithm, making it a quicker and more efficient choice for image segmentation tasks.

### *Evaluation Time Results*

Table 4. Evaluation Time Results (Average across ten runs, in seconds)

Datasets	GCFCM	Modified
Image 1	0.21	0.16
Image 2	0.11	0.07
Image 3	0.13	0.06
Image 4	0.1	0.06
Image 5	0.09	0.07
Image 6	0.26	0.15
Image 7	0.11	0.07
Image 8	3.1	1.46

The evaluation time refers to the duration taken by each algorithm to complete post-segmentation tasks, including computing evaluation metrics like the Rand Index and TV Regularization. The data presented in Table 4 indicates that the modified algorithm consistently achieves shorter evaluation times compared to the FCM algorithm across all runs, highlighting its enhanced efficiency in post-segmentation evaluation. The modified algorithm completes these tasks in a significantly shorter duration compared to the previous algorithm, showcasing improved computational proficiency.

Specifically, the GCFCM has an average evaluation time of 0.51 seconds, whereas the modified algorithm averages 0.2625 seconds, representing approximately a 48.53% increase in speed. Moreover, the table demonstrates that the modified algorithm consistently outperforms the original algorithm in all ten trials, suggesting potential benefits for rapid feedback in real-world applications or subsequent processing stages. This efficiency is particularly advantageous in scenarios that require prompt assessment.

## **Discussion**

### **Robustness issues**

To enhance the robustness of the current FCM algorithm, a modification was implemented by substituting the Euclidean distance metric with a Gaussian distance metric. This decision was informed by prior research success in image segmentation.

A significant difference between the two algorithms is in their membership calculation: the FCM algorithm utilizes the Euclidean distance metric, while the Modified algorithm employs the Gaussian distance metric. This change is critical for the modified algorithm's performance improvement as it allows for better handling of complex data distributions and more accurate segmentations.

The Gaussian distance metric, unlike the Euclidean counterpart, permits the representation of intricate and non-spherical data distributions. Additionally, it is adept at dealing with datasets with unbalanced clusters, ensuring equitable consideration of each cluster size. The adoption of the Gaussian distance metric in the modified algorithm resulted in better segmentation accuracy, as indicated by the results of the Rand Index (Table 1) and Coefficient of Variation (Table 2). This implies that the modified algorithm excels in grasping the spatial relationships among data points, especially in challenging non-spherical data contexts.

Consequently, the choice to integrate the Gaussian distance metric in the modified algorithm effectively addresses the limitations associated with the Euclidean distance metric as seen in the results, thus resolving the first problem statement.

#### *Noise and outliers*

To address the sensitivity to noise and outliers in the FCM algorithm, the researchers made two key modifications to the algorithm. Firstly, they adjusted the way the membership matrix is updated, thereby reducing the influence of noise and outliers on the clustering results. This was achieved by refining the formula for updating the membership matrix, ensuring that the algorithm is less sensitive to these data points.

Secondly, the researchers introduced a post-processing step called the Total Variation (TV) Regularization Technique. This technique is commonly used to address over smoothing in image pixels caused by methods like Gaussian Blur, as well as to reduce noise and outliers in the data. By integrating this technique into the modified algorithm, the researchers aimed to further enhance the algorithm's robustness in handling complex datasets with noise and outliers.

Through these changes, the modified algorithm not only addresses the sensitivity to noise and outliers but also improves the overall quality of the clustering results, particularly in the context of image segmentation. This demonstrates a significant advancement over existing FCM methods and highlights the potential of the modified algorithm for a wide range of applications, including those involving image data.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the modified algorithm in eliminating noise and outliers was notably apparent in the image datasets, specifically as seen in Figure 2, where a substantial amount of background noise and outliers were eliminated due to the proper segmentation. This exemplifies the efficacy of algorithmic modifications in managing real-world image data and underscores their potential to enhance the precision and resilience of clustering in diverse applications.



### *Execution time*

As seen in Tables 3 and 4, the researchers noted that the Gaussian-based FCM algorithm consistently outperformed the Euclidean FCM algorithm in terms of segmentation and evaluation times across multiple runs. This aligns with the hypothesis that the Gaussian-based approach would offer faster execution times.

The empirical evidence from ten runs on eight image datasets demonstrated the modified algorithm's consistently quicker performance. Several factors contribute to this improvement: the Gaussian distance metric inherently accounts for data point distribution, while the Total Variation Regularization Technique enhances noise handling and segmentation accuracy. These findings are significant for real-time applications, where computational efficiency is critical. The Gaussian-based FCM algorithm's ability to achieve faster execution makes it well-suited for such environments. The consistent performance across multiple runs and datasets provides robust evidence supporting the algorithm's efficacy.

## **Conclusion**

The implementation of the modified Gaussian-Based Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) clustering algorithm with Total Variation (TV) regularization technique has significantly enhanced image segmentation processes. Through the utilization of the Gaussian metric, the algorithm has demonstrated notable improvements in image segmentation accuracy. Empirical evidence also indicates that the Gaussian-based FCM algorithm outperforms its Euclidean counterpart in terms of execution time, attributed to the accuracy of the Gaussian distance metric and efficiency gains from the regularization technique. These advancements make the modified algorithm suitable for real-time and resource-constrained environments, where responsiveness and computational efficiency are crucial. Moreover, the incorporation of Total Variation regularization technique as a post-processing step has further contributed to the refinement of segmented images by effectively reducing noise. This comprehensive approach not only enhances segmentation accuracy but also addresses the challenge of noise reduction, thereby improving the clustering for image segmentation processes. This comprehensive investigation and subsequent modifications to the FCM clustering algorithm have resulted in significant improvements in robustness, noise and outlier handling, and execution time efficiency. These advancements not only contribute to the advancement of image segmentation techniques but also hold promise for a wide range of applications requiring efficient data clustering in diverse domains.

## **Recommendations**

For future works, it is advised to use the Gaussian-based FCM algorithm with TV algorithm regularization technique on diverse datasets comprising two or more subjects, and datasets with varying image resolutions. This will facilitate a deeper assessment of the algorithm's capability to accurately segment various objects within an image. By examining multiple subjects within the datasets, the algorithm's flexibility and

generalizability can be thoroughly evaluated. Moreover, exploring additional regularization techniques or their combinations is also suggested to better understand the algorithm's ability to denoise images. Examining various regularization methods can provide valuable insights into how they affect both segmentation accuracy and computational efficiency.

## Acknowledgements

The researchers extend their heartfelt thanks to their families for their unwavering emotional and financial support. Their belief fueled the researchers' determination, especially during challenging moments. One of the authors would like to express heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Mike Miguel O. Gomez, for his continuous emotional support and encouragement. His unwavering belief provided a constant source of strength throughout this academic journey.

The authors are incredibly grateful to their thesis adviser, Dr. Khatalyn Mata, for her invaluable guidance, support, and insightful contributions. Her expertise and mentorship played a crucial role in shaping this research and refining their approach. They also express their appreciation to the panelists, Mr. Richard Regala and Florencio Contreras Jr., for their constructive feedback and suggestions. Their critical evaluation significantly improved the quality of this paper. A special thanks goes to the coordinators, Ms. Jamillah S. Guialil, Mr. Jonathan C. Morano, and Ms. Leisyl M. Mahusay, for their dedicated guidance and assistance throughout the research process.

Finally, the authors acknowledge the blessings and guidance they received throughout this endeavour from the Lord God, without whom this accomplishment would not have been possible.

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## Growing Interest in AI in Education: Systematic Literature Review


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**Abstract:** Although AI in education has been written about for decades, recent years have seen exponential growth in this area. The aim of this paper was to determine the distribution of content and areas of education in which AI is researched. The article provides an overview of the newest research in the field of AI in education, available in open access journals. In the theoretical part, an overview of the historical context is given. Also, key definitions and approaches for understanding the topic are listed. In the methodological part, Systematic Literature Review was used, with AI and education as search words. Publish research studies between January 2023 and December 2023. The research found that there is a difference in the amount of AI research at certain degrees and fields of education. The application of AI is particularly explored in higher education. As specific areas of research, the ethical issues of applying AI in education and the possibilities of applying AI in the learning and teaching process appear.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, learning, STEM education

**Citation:** Blanuša Trošelj, D., Maričić, S., & Ćurić, A. (2024). Growing Interest in AI in Education: Systematic Literature Review. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2410-2427), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

#### AI Foundations: An Overview of the Fundamental Structural Elements

The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education mainly focuses on three fundamental architectural elements that collectively aim to transform traditional learning environments and pedagogical techniques. Advanced AI technologies are leading the way in this change, employing robust adaptive learning systems that customize instructional content to suit individual learning styles and speeds. These systems utilize advanced

data analytics to carefully examine student interactions and successes, allowing for personalized feedback and learning paths. In addition, AI enhances efficiency in administrative procedures by automating repetitive work, enabling educators to allocate more focus to interactive instruction. Natural Language Processing (NLP) technology improves communication in educational environments, enabling students to interact with intelligent conversational agents that facilitate learning experiences. Machine learning algorithms enhance this field by making predictions about student outcomes and identifying learners who are at danger, allowing for prompt implementation of intervention techniques. Five important pillars are shown in Figure 1:

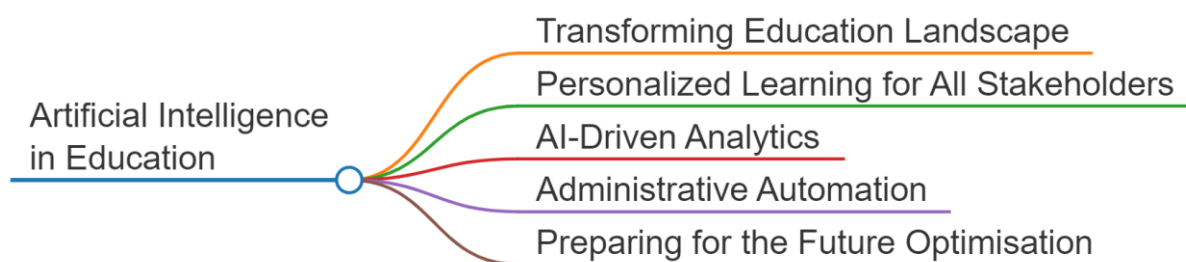


Figure 1. Important pillars in AI for education

As shown in figure 1, there are important aspects in which AI is transforming the educational environment. The pillars encompass following - AI technologies are significantly reshaping the education environment by offering innovative approaches to distributing material and improving interactive learning experiences. This process frequently entails combining artificial intelligence (AI) with conventional teaching approaches to establish hybrid learning environments that are highly adaptable and sensitive to the requirements of students. In this context, AI enables individualized learning by customizing educational information and adjusting the pace of learning to match the individual learner's style and degree of proficiency. This customization not only benefits students but also empowers instructors and other individuals involved by offering them personalized insights and tools that assist various learning processes and results. Also, by utilizing AI-powered analytics, educational institutions may get significant insights into student learning patterns, performance indicators, and educational outcomes. These analytics facilitate data-driven decision-making to enhance instructional tactics, curriculum design, and overall educational efficacy. In this context, AI facilitates the automation of administrative duties, including scheduling, attendance monitoring, and student enrollment procedures. This automation decreases the burden on administrative personnel, enabling them to allocate more attention to student involvement and less to laborious, manual chores. AI enhances educational systems by streamlining processes and resources, therefore preparing them for future problems. This includes the creation of predictive models that anticipate future patterns and needs in learning, allowing proactive adaptations to educational tactics and infrastructure. Each pillar shown in figure 1 illustrates a key area where AI technologies may be used to improve and advance the educational sector. This may result in a more effective, inclusive, and forward-looking environment that meets the expectations of 21st-century education.

As Khosravi et al. (2022), stated, there is increasing awareness over the *Fairness, Accountability, Transparency,*

*and Ethics* (FATE) of educational efforts that depend on AI algorithms. An effective method to increase confidence in AI systems is by using eXplainable AI (XAI) techniques. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) encompasses the use of methods that produce coherent and logical justifications for the choices made by AI systems.

#### *Artificial intelligence development in the educational context*

Artificial Intelligence (AI), as a concept and field of research, has existed since the 1950s when Alan Turing posed the question, "Can machines think?" (Gonçalves, 2023). Since then, the development of AI has undergone various phases and challenges, from initial enthusiasm to the "AI winter" periods of the 1970s and 1980s. The history of AI spans nearly a century, marked by milestones in hardware, software, programming languages, and various technologies (Mukherjee, 2023). This development has advanced from rule-based statistical approaches to data-driven methods in fields such as computer vision, natural language processing, and machine learning (Guerrero, 2023; Zhang, 2023). AI's impact on society has been significant, with a shift towards human-machine collaboration and a focus on computing power for sustainable development (Zhang, 2023). Additionally, the rise of AI is intertwined with the development of the Internet, leading to its widespread application in society and everyday life over the past decade. In recent years, thanks to advancements in computing power and the availability of large data sets, AI is experiencing a renaissance and is being applied in increasingly diverse areas, from speech recognition to task automation. This historical trajectory reflects the complex interaction between technical progress, philosophical perspectives, and social implications in the evolution of AI.

The development of AI in an educational context presents a range of opportunities and challenges. Classrooms are increasingly being transformed through the use of AI-driven tools and applications, enabling new approaches to learning and teaching. Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is gaining recognition for its potential to revolutionize education by replicating human intelligence (Latif et al., 2023). AGI aims to improve tasks that require human-level intelligence, like solving problems and understanding emotions (Latif et al., 2023) by using what we have learned from big language models like GPT-4 and ChatGPT. AGI's goal is to create machines capable of human-level cognitive performance across various tasks, drawing inspiration from the human brain. AGI has the potential to significantly impact society in many ways. However, the development of this technology also brings a range of challenges that need to be carefully addressed. Continuing research and responsible development of AGI are crucial for harnessing the potential of this technology for the benefit of humanity.

Furthermore, AI applications in education (AIED) are developing to support autonomous student learning through systems such as Learning Generated Content (LGC), which aids students in self-directed learning (D. Lee et al., 2023). LGC involves students creating digital materials to enhance learning experiences, such as posters and videos that facilitate content acquisition and language skills development. This approach encourages collaboration between students and teachers, resulting in dynamic information resource that evolve over time. Integrating LGC into education offers numerous benefits, including a personalized learning experience, improved pedagogy, and enhanced support for students in learning and homework completion. The diversity of

AI chatbots, such as those for personalized teaching (Ada), emotional support (Replika), concept understanding (Socratic), text processing (ChatGPT, Bard), fostering good study habits (Habitica), and online discussions (Piazza), can potentially enrich the educational experience (Labadze et al., 2023).

AI offers the potential to extend assessments and evaluations in the classroom, including automated scoring of open-ended teacher responses. It is important to carefully consider the implications and potential biases of AI systems in the educational context to avoid undesirable consequences (Amyatun & Kholis, 2023). Their impact on education can result in potential improvements in learning outcomes, increased student motivation, and provide an exceptional tool for knowledge acquisition, problem-solving, and self-regulation. From the teacher's perspective, AI systems for writing evaluation can automate feedback and grading, facilitating teachers' tracking of student progress. AI tools for monitoring provide real-time information about student engagement and learning, helping teachers personalize instruction and enhance the learning experience (Amyatun & Kholis, 2023). Teachers often have an unclear opinion about AI, necessitating continuous education and training to understand the power and applications of this technology. How research findings on AI are presented can affect their perceived credibility among teachers (Amyatun & Kholis, 2023).

Despite potential benefits, integrating AI chatbots into education raises concerns about reliability, accuracy, ethical dilemmas, and the possible impact on the development of critical thinking in students, their limited ability to understand complex issues, and the need to address ethical issues, develop evaluation methods, and create high-quality AI systems (Labadze et al., 2023). AI chatbots have the potential to significantly impact education. They can provide a personalized learning experience, assist students, and improve teaching. However, the challenges and concerns associated with these technologies must be considered. Numerous studies and initiatives are exploring the use of AI in various environments, from intelligent tutoring systems to teacher monitoring tools and automated writing evaluation. AI in education represents a journey into the unknown, full of promise and risk. Developing a deeper understanding of AI, responsible use of tools, and continuous evaluation of impacts are key to the successful integration of this technology into the future of education. Integrating AI tools and technologies in education is crucial for improving the teaching, learning, and decision-making processes in the digital age.

## Method

For our research we choose Systematic Literature Review. Publish research studies between January 2023 and December 2023.

Through this research, we aimed to find answers for following research questions :

Q1: Does science monitor the influence and possibilities of AI on education and care at all levels?

Q2: What are the key questions related to AI in the field of education, which are addressed by scientific papers?

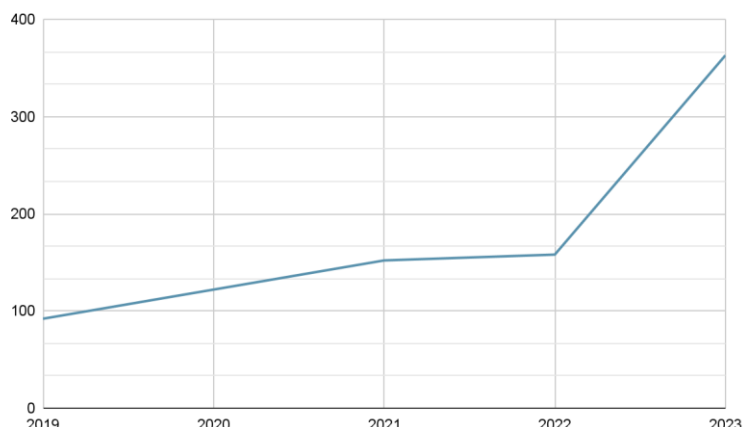


Figure 2. Number of scientific articles about AI in Education in DOAJ base for period 2019-2023

In the first step, we entered the keywords 'AI' (or artificial intelligence) and 'education' into the DOAJ database and limited the period from 2019 to April 9, 2024. The total number of all published papers in the DOAJ database with these keywords is 1590 papers. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the number of published papers in the DOAJ database for the mentioned period.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Keywords	Artificial Intelligence, AI, Education	All other
Subject area	Education	Not education
Language	English	Non English
Timeline	2023	Before 2023, 2024
Literature type	Peer Reviewed Journals, Single article in regular number	Conference proceedings, journal articles that are not published in Peer Reviewed Journals, Editorials, Special numbers, Books
Content	Research; at least one of educational topics and at least one of educational level	Not Research

In the second step, we decided to limit the research to the year 2023. With this criterion, there are 363 papers in the database. In the third step, we added other criteria, shown in Table 2. Of the remaining 76 papers, after a detailed reading, 57 papers remained for further content analysis.

## Results

### The Science of AI in education

*Does science monitor the influence and possibilities of AI on upbringing and education at all levels?*

After all papers that did not meet the set criteria were excluded, the analysis of the texts was approached. The number of papers dealing with each level of education is shown in Table 2. It is evident that a considerable number of papers pertain to higher education, and that the number of papers decreases with the level of education. There are almost no papers in the early school period, while they are completely absent in early and preschool education and care.

Table 2. Number of articles according to the level of education

level of education	number of articles
<i>kindergarten and preschool</i>	0
<i>elementary /primary school</i>	4
<i>high / secondary school</i>	5
<i>higher education</i>	37
<i>general education</i>	10
<i>professional development</i>	1

*What are the key questions related to AI in the field of education, which are addressed by scientific papers?*

To answer the second research question, we proceeded with a detailed reading and analysis of the entire group of articles. Content analysis led to several key themes. The first set of themes relates to the (1) application of AI in education, which includes content related to the advantages and disadvantages of its use, attitudes of students and teachers towards the use of AI in education, and individual tools and AI systems that are used or can be used in education. Within this, two dominant themes emerged: Chatbots in education and Language development using AI in education. The second key group of themes covered in the papers is the (2) ethics of applying AI in education, which encompasses the possibilities of unethical use of AI in teaching by students, issues of fairness, transparency, authenticity, and academic integrity, and the question of AI ethics policy in education.

## Discussion

### Possibilities of AI in Education

Many potential applications of AI in education have been recognized, but some of them encounter difficulties in implementation, while the impact of others is still being examined. The authors whose works are analyzed here recognize many benefits of using AI in education, but with cautious consideration of possible dangers and unknowns (Tlili et al., 2023). "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Learning, Teaching, and Education" (2018) is a JRC Science for Policy report published by the EU. The goal of the report itself is to stimulate an



informed discussion about artificial intelligence, its possibilities, and potential impacts on upbringing and education. The integration of AI into educational processes requires further research into the "digital divide" and social inclusion, risks associated with such innovations, and opportunities that technologies offer to address these issues with new approaches (Gentile et al., 2023). The question of the teacher's role also arises, namely what competencies are needed and what tools are necessary to be conscious actors in the innovation processes in the field of AI (Gentile et al., 2023). Generative AI could become the most efficient technology in education (Bozkurt, 2023, p.262). It offers many possibilities and potentials (Ningsih, 2023) (Ningsih, 2023), but by itself, it means nothing. Thus, teachers are expected to creatively integrate the potentials of AI according to the "evolving educational landscape" (Bozkurt, 2023, p.262).

A particularly significant advantage of using AI in education is the personalization of learning, i.e., the adaptation of the curriculum and tailored learning experience (Fowler, 2023; Gómez Martínez et al., 2023) to each student or pupil. In this regard, AI and machine learning techniques can be a means of identifying (Gómez Martínez et al., 2023) and strengthening student motivation. However, the paradox that the authors warn about is at the same time a danger of bias (Fowler, 2023), as algorithms carry the hidden potential to amplify existing inequalities. Particularly significant are the possibilities of applying AI to working with children and students with difficulties (Toyokawa et al., 2023), and the possibility of identifying students at risk (Ouyang et al., 2023), and opportunities for support and counseling (Akiba & Fraboni, 2023). Students and pupils can receive useful feedback on the motivational and behavioral aspects of their learning using data from the digital traces of their activities (Suraworachet et al., 2023). AI can enable personalized and adaptive learning systems that adjust content, activities, and feedback to the needs and interests of students, improving engagement and outcomes (Tarisayi, 2024).

One of the recognized potentials of AI in education is tutoring (Imam Karya Bakti et al., 2023), or mentorship. AI functions that are currently widely implemented on various educational technology platforms serve as virtual mentors. AI has the ability to provide feedback on students' learning activities and exercises, and then recommend materials that need to be reviewed (Suparyati et al., 2023). An example is Blackboard (Suparyati et al., 2023), an AI tool often used for publishing lecture notes, assignments, quizzes, and tests, allowing students to ask questions and submit assignments for grading. This tool can identify the reasons behind students' misunderstandings and offer the student solutions that the professor has previously ensured and programmed (Suparyati et al., 2023). Therefore, AI adjusts content and tasks to students' abilities and needs and directly affects the learning experience. On the other hand, AI also helps teachers more effectively assess student progress and provide timely and accurate feedback. Artificial intelligence thus becomes a means of aligning the curriculum with the demands and needs of the market (Suparyati et al., 2023). Furthermore, the Metaverse has the potential to serve as a revolutionary learning environment that can redefine educational experiences for students worldwide (Qian et al., 2023). Metaverse technology allows students to access and participate in educational settings without time and location restrictions (Qian et al., 2023). AI provides opportunities for designing and implementing innovative teaching methods, managing workload, expanding and improving evaluation (Laupichler et al., 2023), and the overall education process (Gentile et al., 2023).

Furthermore, AI can help in providing feedback and assessing progress. Special attention is given to the advantages of automated scoring and immediate feedback (Ningsih, 2023). When it comes to assessment, AI increases the efficiency of assessment, reduces subjectivity, and improves accuracy (Ningsih, 2023). Students themselves rate the online testing system for AI positively. The benefits of such an assessment system are manifested in flexibility, convenience, ease of use, engagement, immediate feedback, accessibility, efficiency, enjoyment, clarity, and unique features (Ningsih, 2023).

Different levels of education will likely develop different applications of AI, due to the specificities of children's developmental periods and their learning. However, there are also tools and systems that will be common, especially in the domain of the teacher's application. AI in early education is seen as a catalyst for promoting learning and teaching (So & Lee, 2023). In this regard, robotics has already been implemented at this level in many parts of the world. It is a departure from traditional teaching methods, which improves the learning experience and student interactivity. The role of the teacher in this changes, becomes less direct, and more resembles the role of a facilitator (So & Lee, 2023). The authors emphasize that this is in line with the settings of the constructivist approach. Robots are very attractive to children and have a positive effect on their motivation. However, the path to the everyday use of robots in teaching is long. Robots are still too expensive for most educational institutions and require certain technical support. Technical problems are recognized as one of the biggest challenges in their use (So & Lee, 2023). Interestingly, children see a humanoid robot as more fun and friendlier than a teacher (So & Lee, 2023).

Various studies on student engagement in virtual and digital education suggest that such teaching and learning environments can indeed encourage educational growth. However, there is a question of effective teacher-student interactions in this process, as the same studies have shown that almost half of the students do not believe that online lectures effectively facilitate interaction and collaboration (Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2023). Managing student engagement within a virtual educational environment is key to encouraging success in online learning (Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2023). Perhaps the solution is somewhere in the middle, the use of AI in a real environment, where an informed teacher can be a significant example of a quality ratio of virtual and real experience.

The application, possibilities, and discussions related to AI are extensively researched in the field of higher education (Greiner et al., 2023; Teferi et al., 2023). Using AI in education, first of all, requires knowledge and understanding, and awareness of limitations and potentials. It is necessary to understand that, for example, tools like ChatGPT, to realize their potential, must themselves receive strategically well-formulated queries. However, many such tools offer information that is already partially outdated, as they were used in their training.

Also, many studies have pointed to the creation of false articles, although giving references may seem like they are about real articles. This is particularly important in the context of informing and educating students, who may be unaware of these dangers, and thus exposed to the unconscious creation of their own false works, and

raises the question of whether students using these tools achieve the intended learning outcomes (Lancaster, 2023). The ethical issue will be discussed more in the later part of this paper.

The use of AI in academic programs is not yet sufficiently prevalent (Li & Qin, 2023). It is necessary to modernize academic curricula, but considering the methods and time frames for changes to academic programs on one hand, and the speed of AI progress on the other, it will certainly take a significant amount of time before changes occur. Students inform themselves independently, which raises discussions about awareness of ethical issues in this domain. It is particularly important to consider introducing an AI curriculum into academic programs in areas where AI is already very functionally used and has a significant contribution, such as medicine. Li & Qin, (2023) emphasize that three key points should be considered: Raising student awareness; Enriching the curriculum; and addressing student needs. Similar settings can be applied to other areas of higher education. It is essential to ensure alignment between the labor market and its needs with the education of future professionals in that labor market (Li & Qin, 2023).

New learning and assessment opportunities enabled by AI, according to Williams, (2023), are visible in support for individual students and collaborative scientific work. In this context, AI's potential in supporting individual students is seen in individual academic activities and students' self-regulatory skills through dynamic information filtering, curating notes, creating summaries, and connecting resources, as well as support for team project work and problem-based learning through dynamic information filtering, curating notes, creating summaries, and connecting resources, among many others. Williams (2023) discusses the implications of cheating with AI in academic circles. He concludes that it is impossible to ban the use of AI by students, so the general use of summative assessment should be considered a weakness that must be transformed. It provokes questions about the purpose of assessment and even about the delivery and assurance of higher education.

The full potential of AI use in education is still not known. However, many areas have begun testing changes in school curricula, such as geography teaching, for example. Innovators emphasize that there is a gap between ideas and implementation, meaning that education often lags behind technological innovations, and the implementation of new technology-based teaching methods requires time - time for designing teaching, teacher training, and updating educational policies to adapt to these changes (Lee, 2023).

New technologies like AI design tools offer an efficient and effective way for elementary school teachers to create attractive educational materials (Hong Chuyen & Vinh, 2023). Scientific research should also have an applicable application in the field of design and development. For example, a study aimed at investigating the intention to use AI design tools among elementary school teachers (Qian et al., 2023), with a special focus on the dimensions that influence their adoption and use of these tools, offers practical implications relevant for both designers and developers of AI design tools. It provides insights into factors that can positively influence user intent to adopt the examined tools, such as performance and effort expectations, peer influence, and the availability or accessibility of resources. The study emphasizes the need to focus on improving the usability and ease of use of these tools, while simultaneously highlighting their potential benefits and the support they can

provide in the design process (Qian et al., 2023).

#### *Attitudes Towards the Use of AI in Education*

Study findings suggest that students have a positive attitude towards generative AI technologies and want to integrate them into their learning, such as ChatGPT. Students who are more familiar with these technologies and use them more frequently are more inclined to use them in the future (Chan & Hu, 2023). It is important to create supportive environments that emphasize the importance of AI and offer adequate technological resources and technical assistance to encourage students to learn AI. Students who perceive higher levels of efficiency and usefulness in learning AI are more likely to learn AI (Wang et al., 2023). Gender differences have been identified. Male students perceive higher levels of supportive environments and expectancy-value beliefs in learning AI, indicating a need for greater attention to supportive environments and expectancy-value beliefs among female students to improve their learning in AI (Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, according to research, students are positive about the application of AI in their education but are also aware of its shortcomings and express skepticism about the quality of information and sources that, for example, ChatGPT provides (Lozano & Blanco Fontao, 2023).

#### *Chatbots in education*

Chatbots, among other things, have been recognized as potential in higher education teaching across various disciplines. However, there is a need for further development. Research by Gregory (2023) found that chatbots provide better responses to questions based on real situations than hypothetical ones, especially when it comes to requests for redefining terms. Nevertheless, during the research, Chat GPT showed rapid progress (Gregory, 2023). According to some authors, ChatGPT could refresh the education system, for both students and teachers. Its use could significantly reduce the time spent preparing tasks, especially for tasks that address individual differences among students. AI can certainly reduce the time for various administrative tasks that have significantly burdened teachers' work (Lozano & Blanco Fontao, 2023). By alleviating these burdens, teachers could focus more on the students themselves. The special value of AI in education has been recognized in the personalization of tasks, or the possibility of frequent application of Universal Design for Learning (Lozano & Blanco Fontao, 2023).

ChatGPT can be used in many ways in teaching. For example, it can generate exercises related to topics with which students are not familiar and offer them some advice instead of solutions. It can provide steps in problem-solving. Furthermore, ChatGPT can be an outcome for group discussions or an integral part of graded tasks. Its potential is visible in formative assessments, providing real-time feedback after activities (Liang et al., 2023).

The mentioned tools are limiting in creating content and connecting information as well as in-depth insight from different positions, and when they do provide insight from different positions, they do so by separating information about each area.

AI does not have the ability to understand how to strategically connect information that has been previously used (Davis & Lee, 2023). Also, despite all the information it possesses, ChatGPT still lacks more detailed insights that integrate elements relevant to students and their learning environment (Davis & Lee, 2023).

Further research on the impacts of integrating chatbots into upbringing and education should provide insight into their long-term sustainability over time. Such information is crucial for educational policymakers. The integration of artificial intelligence, including chatbots, is not an insignificant issue before making any long-term decisions, and one should be well informed (Labadze et al., 2023).

### *Language and AI*

A significant number of studies explore the possibilities of AI application specifically in the field of language, where its contribution is recognized (Ningsih, 2023). On one hand, the quality of tools is questioned, and on the other, attitudes towards them. Although AI tools have significantly improved in recent years, they still create illogical and unusual translations, as well as linguistic and grammatical errors (Makeleni et al., 2023). Research indicates that there is a diverse array of AI writing tools (e.g., Quillbot, Jenni, Chat GPT, WordTune, Copy.ai, Paperpal, and Essay writer) that are actively used among teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Marzuki et al., 2023). The growing trend of using these AI tools has a positive impact on students' overall academic performance. It positively affects motivation and enriches the learning experience and writing skills. However, as in other areas, we encounter possible challenges here. Teachers warn of potential dependency and the risk of limiting critical thinking and personal creativity. Therefore, there is a need for balanced use of AI tools, encouraging both creative assistance and independent thinking (Marzuki et al., 2023).

One of the costlier tools for natural language processing using artificial intelligence and language processing technology today is QuillBot. The primary goal of QuillBot is to assist users in writing, summarizing, and improving text, i.e., creating more sophisticated and influential written content.

QuillBot AI indicates an improvement in the writing abilities of eleventh-grade students in creating hortatory expository texts (Amyatun & Kholis, 2023). Using QuillBot AI as a media tool in combination with a problem-based learning approach can lead to multiple improvements in the educational context. For example, it helps in paraphrasing and improving written content; it helps students express their ideas more effectively, ensuring that their solutions and thought processes are articulated so that peers and instructors can easily understand them; it assists students in enhancing their written explanations and reports, as well as improving students' writing abilities and confidence (Amyatun & Kholis, 2023).

Most teachers, according to Putra (2023), do not believe that AI writing correction tools can positively influence the increase in the level of critical thinking among students. As promising aspects of using these tools, they see the discovery and correction of errors, while students see AI as help in meeting deadlines for fulfilling obligations, i.e., saving time (Putra, 2023). Interestingly, neither students nor teachers saw AI writing tools as a

means of cheating and plagiarism. Teachers, however, show a deeper understanding and knowledge of various writing tools (Putra, 2023; Marzuki et al., 2023).

### *Ethics and AI in education*

In most of the analyzed papers, authors touch on the ethical issue of using AI in education in some way. The use of artificial intelligence is recognized as a threat to the traditional view of academic honesty (Fowler, 2023). There is a visible need for the education system and the accompanying scientific community for a clearer understanding of the possibilities and dangers of using artificial intelligence. Also, there is a noticeable need for systematic support of educational policy and policy in general, leadership of educational institutions, and the connection of educational actors and scientists with designers and developers of AI.

One of the exposed problems is related to the potential dangers of student misuse of AI in creating their papers. In this regard, much research is focused on questioning the effectiveness of tools for detecting AI-generated text, i.e., distinguishing human text. Many studies have shown that ChatGPT is not always objective and accurate, nor are other generative models, because their effectiveness depends on the quality and diversity of materials used in training (Grassini, 2023). These materials are often raw data. Although this can be seen as a problem of artificial intelligence on one hand, on the other hand, in a world that is just learning to live with AI, including in the academic part, inconsistencies and inaccuracies allow for easier detection in checking student papers (Grassini, 2023). Plagiarism has become a significant problem and concern of educational institutions in the context of AI application (Grassini, 2023). Parallel to generative models, various anti-plagiarism systems are being developed, which, in addition to checking for plagiarism, also check for the presence of AI in student texts.

Studies indicate that AI detection tools can to some extent distinguish content created by humans from that generated by AI. However, the same research emphasizes that their performance is inconsistent and varies depending on the sophistication of the AI model used to generate content. Therefore, AI detection tools should not be used as the sole determining factor in cases of plagiarism and academic integrity questions (Elkhatat et al., 2023). Even widely used academic AI text detection tools have shown significant rates of false negatives, but also false positives (Farrelly & Baker, 2023). False positive results can lead to wrongful accusations of students, and false negatives allow students to avoid detection of unauthorized content generation, gaining an unfair advantage and avoiding sanctions (Weber-Wulff et al., 2023). In addition to the issue of misuse of various tools for writing student papers, another ethically questionable practice appears here. Namely, AI text detection tools imply the submission of student papers, without consent, to a multitude of freely available platforms that can be easily found with a simple internet search (Farrelly & Baker, 2023). The educational communities play an extremely important role in conveying academic values and academic integrity (Nam & Bai, 2023) to students, including in the area of ethical use of AI, both in writing papers and in its broader possibilities of application. To make this possible, the highest standards of professional and personal ethics must exist in all spheres of academic life, and teachers themselves must be trained to apply various artificial intelligence systems



(Lozano & Blanco Fontao, 2023).

Policies on the ethics of artificial intelligence in higher education are a growing concern of academic communities (Chan, 2023), so many colleges and universities are increasingly adopting and integrating AI systems into their operations and decision-making processes. The emphasis is placed on issues of fairness, transparency, accountability, security, and human autonomy (Slimi & Villarejo Carballido, 2023). The use of AI in admissions, financial aid, and other student services could exacerbate existing biases and discrimination based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Therefore, everything AI does should be understandable and easily verifiable. Institutions of higher education should prioritize the formulation of robust digital literacy programs, which represent a key mechanism for mitigating the harmful impact of artificial intelligence on academic integrity (Fowler, 2023).

Care must be taken to ensure that decisions made by the AI system are aligned with human values and do not undermine human independence. Universities must be aware that their administrations are responsible for the actions and decisions of AI and for ensuring mechanisms for control, corrections, and other issues that may arise in this domain. Existing AI ethics policies, such as those of the European Commission, can help them (Slimi & Villarejo Carballido, 2023). Therefore, the priority must be on the ethical use of AI, AI literacy, and the development of frameworks that empower students and educators to safely harness the full potential of these technologies (Farrelly & Baker, 2023). AI still cannot replace humans. According to Greiner et al., (2023), the differences between human-to-human communication or with AI are visible in capabilities (AI may not be able to understand or respond to complex or abstract concepts in the same way as a human), responses (AI's responses may be more limited and predictable than those of humans), empathy (AI may not be able to respond to emotional signals or provide emotional support in the same way as a human), learning (AI may not be able to adapt to new situations or learn from its own experiences in the same way as a human), and trust (the level of trust in information provided by AI is lower than that we have when it is spoken by a human).

The strategic leadership of universities plays a key role in guiding the appropriate adoption and innovation of AI to balance benefits and risks. It is crucial that the leaders themselves have a deep understanding of the possibilities of AI, trends, challenges, and applications tailored to higher education, with the aim of maximizing benefits while minimizing potential harm (Tarisayi, 2024).

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that the educational community is facing global changes, shifting from traditional to contemporary methods of teaching and evaluating all segments of the upbringing and education process. There is a growing interest in the number of published works on the topic of AI in education. Many possibilities for the development of education have been observed, as well as significant potential in the use of AI in many spheres of education, especially in the field of higher education. Alongside a series of recognized advantages of using AI



in education, and the development of a range of AI tools and systems intended for the educational process, many questions and unknowns also arise. The field of AI is advancing significantly faster than the practical and scientific part of education. Thus, works published in 2023 in many ways show already nearly outdated data, at a time when the awareness of respondents is growing, and new tools are being applied. Among the most significant advantages of using AI in education are the possibilities of personalizing the educational process for students and pupils, reducing administrative obligations and the time invested in them for teachers, influencing motivation and learning processes in children and students, opportunities for tutoring and mentoring, significant contributions to foreign language learning, assessment and feedback that are immediate and tailored to the needs of students and pupils, and many others. The tools and systems used are diverse, and as such, can meet the needs of the entire vertical of the educational system, and various subject areas. On the other hand, questions arise related to the dangers of applying and doubts about AI, many ethical dilemmas, the possibility of creating an even greater gap and discrimination, the question of the impact on critical and creative thinking, the absence of personal experience of relationships, the question of the role of teachers and others.

Significant research on AI in education relates to the academic community. Many potentials are visible there. However, for these potentials to be realized, the academic community must simultaneously deal with many challenges related to the ethics of using AI, which calls into question the very operation of higher education institutions and its fundamental postulates, academic honesty, integrity, professionalism, intellectual property, and autonomy. Universities must approach this issue responsibly and in a timely manner, taking into account the speed of the emergence of novelties, labor market needs, and ethical recommendations of educational policy, and adapt in time, acting as a model for students, with clear guidelines based on informed use of AI in education.

## **Recommendations**

AI offers revolutionary changes to the education system by providing personalized learning experiences, improving accessibility, enhancing assessment, and automating tasks. However, it is crucial that AI is used in a way that is ethical, responsible, and integrated into the existing curriculum.

The use of AI in education brings with it a number of ethical dilemmas that need to be carefully considered. The development and implementation of sound ethical guidelines are crucial to ensure that AI systems are used in a transparent, fair, and responsible manner.

Furthermore, educational institutions should invest in comprehensive digital literacy programs to enable educational stakeholders to deal with the complexity of AI. These programs should equip people with the skills and knowledge they need to critically evaluate and responsibly use AI-generated content. In doing so, ongoing research is needed to monitor the impact of AI on education, including its long-term sustainability and its impact on learning outcomes.

By implementing the above recommendations into policy and practice, we can harness the full potential of AI to transform education while ensuring ethics, fairness, and benefit for all involved in the educational process.

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## **Transformative Leadership and Organizational Citizenship (OCB): A Case Study of the SMEs Development Authority in Oman**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore – from the perspectives of employees working at the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Development Authority in the Sultanate of Oman - the extent to which transformational leadership improves Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and innovation strategies increase employee performance. In addition to revealing how transformational leadership is perceived, the study reports on the correlation between transformational leadership behaviors and OCB dimensions—inDesign/methodology/approach. The study's research design is based on a positivist philosophy. Data collection was conducted using a quantitative research design using a correlational approach, involving surveys administered to 40 employees of the SME Development Authority. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to analyze the quantitative data component. Findings suggest that transformational leadership components, precisely 'Inspirational Motivation' and 'Intellectual Stimulation,' improve OCB among SMEs Authority. These leadership behaviors correlate with increased OCB, representing that employees are expected to exceed job expectations under inspiring and intelligently engaging leadership. The results also reveal the importance of cultural values in moderating the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB. The findings suggest that the selective use of particular leadership abilities would be instrumental in seeing organizational success more Significantly. Although the sample was taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, it may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings. The study opens a new research horizon to validate the results in similar locations. originality/value – The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings, into the impact of transformational leadership and innovation strategies on SMEs in Oman. It spotlights the critical role of leadership in motivating employee performance and organizational citizenship behavior. The insights gained from this study are helpful to SME leaders, decision-makers, and scholars. It gives them an understanding of the value of leadership and innovation in improving organizational effectiveness.

**Keywords:** SME (Small and Medium Enterprise), OCB (Organizational et al.), Transformational Leadership, Cultural Values

**Citation:** Al Jabri, S.R. (2024). Transformative Leadership and Organizational Citizenship (OCB): A Case



Study of the SMEs Development Authority in Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2428-2441), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEs) is the backbone of Oman's strong and dynamic economy, setting new impulses for growth, innovation, and economic diversification. The SMEs' Development Authority is pivotal in fostering job creation, entrepreneurship, and resilience, primarily driven by effective transformational leadership. This leadership style is essential for inspiring and motivating employees to achieve organizational goals. Transformational leadership is emerging as the most important in Oman's ever-changing market, where quick innovation is critical to solving problems. In Oman, respect, community, and loyalty are cultural values that increase transformational leadership via amplified engagement of employees and productivity within the SME Development Authority. Sultan Haitham bin Tariq underlined that he wants to focus on the role of SMEs in the national economy. Those innovations and advanced technologies could be the basement of national recovery (Qamar et al., 2023). Royal Decree No. (2020/107) has been issued to establish the SME Development Authority to promote further SME development and strengthen (Sultanate of Oman, 2020). In this background, the study will underscore that transformational leadership and innovation strategies remain relevant for Oman's SME sector because of their critical role in the country's economic plan.

This report seeks to dissect and understand the connection between transformational leadership and OCB within the SMEs Development Authority in Oman. This paper tries to discover how the leadership styles employed in this significant institution follow the cultural and economic goals set forth by the Sultanate of Oman. Beyond the practical leadership framework investigation, it highlights the undercurrents that bear the effects of OCB, which is one factor of significant importance for the vibrancy and resilience of the SME (Palalić et al., 2023). With this firmly in mind, the following report attempts to investigate, with quite a high level of granularity, transformational leadership dynamics to understand how it might be that this mode of leadership can serve, hypothetically, as a proposal for leaders across SME development authority in Oman and, possibly, to set a precedent for similar institutions.

## Research objective

In this regard, the paper will play two roles.

This study investigates the relationship between the style of transformational leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) by Omani SMEs. OCB has been defined as organizational citizenship behavior, meaning those professional behaviors from employees that are extra-role and not recognized through the formal reward system but very much beneficial for the organization's effectiveness (Palalić et al., 2023).



To explore the leadership innovation strategies used by the leaders of these SMEs and examine how such strategies may enhance employee performance (Tian et al., 2020).

Appreciating the above fact is essential for SMEs in Oman as they face the challenges of modernization, globalization, and higher competition. This appreciation is aimed at drawing empirical insights on the effectiveness of transformational leadership toward driving behaviors beyond basic job requirements through comprehensive quantitative research and analyzing data collected from diverse SMEs across the Sultanate. This report aims to derive empirical insights into how effective transformational leadership is in the Sultanate toward driving behaviors beyond basic job requirements. Considering these problems, this paper explains leadership effectiveness within a broader perspective of the SME staff and presents practical recommendations to SME leaders in Oman.

*Literature review:*

*Leadership Theories with a Focus on Transformational Leadership:*

There have been essential shifts in leadership theories over time, responding to organizational dynamics and the workforce's expectations. Early trait and behavioral theories, among others, all sought to explain precisely which trait or behavior leaders required to be effective (Vasilescu, 2019). However, with the rise of more complex organizational structures came forth theories that took the limelight instead: transformational leadership, coined by James Burns and later expounded upon by Bernard M. Bass (Gonfa, 2019). Transformational leadership focuses on visionary, change-agent leaders who inspire people toward organizational or group goals. It has four components: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration (Reza, 2019). It goes beyond the transactional exchange, with a push or motivational factor for the employees to excel beyond their expected limit. This inspiration is of the most significant importance for SMEs since the critical issues related to success are adaptability and innovation. Even though transformational leadership has been a successful approach in many cultures to facilitate innovation and increase collaboration, it has been a relatively under-researched aspect in the context of SMEs in Oman. Oman adds another level of complexity to its leadership dynamics: the cultural details of Oman, like the strong inclinations of its people toward community and collective values. Understanding how transformational leadership principles interface with Oman's cultural values in an SME can offer unique perceptions of leadership effectiveness and organizational outcome (Reza, 2019). This gap within the literature must be bridged for academic enrichment and practical leadership development, particularly within Oman's growing SME, whereby effective organizational leadership could drive sustainable growth and competitiveness.

*Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Its Importance:*

Dennis Organ conceptualizes Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) as behavior that exceeds one's expectations from the formal organizational job requirements and contributes highly to the organization and the atmosphere (Kayaalp et al., 2021). These include, though are not limited to, the behaviors in which an employee

helps his colleague voluntarily, takes on additional responsibilities, and exhibits a high level of dedication and commitment towards the organization. With fewer resources and staff compared to big corporates, the effectiveness of SMEs is highly likely to reflect much more disproportionately in organizational effectiveness and find its reflection in OCB. It has to encourage a culture of mutual support and proactive involvement that is critically required to help these enterprises drive growth and adaptability. Moreover, OjsonCB can contribute to developing team cohesion and workplace spirit to create a productive and harmonious working atmosphere.

For example, the expression and meaning of OCB among individualistic cultures, such as Oman, may differ from the more collectivist societies. Under the communal values and the collective ethos that Omani culture espouses, the behaviors embraced within OCB may be intrinsic, moving in nature, and socially induced (Romaiha et al., 2019). It presents an exciting context of this cultural background regarding how OCB reveals itself in Omani SMEs and to what extent the transformational leadership style influences it. With such studies already present to cover the extent of OCB within various organizational contexts, the literature surrounding it is already enormous. It must explain how such a concept would behave within Oman's SMEs. This gap is essential in understanding how particular leadership approaches embedded in the nation's cultural fabric could either evoke the OCB development or act as a hindrance against it. Filling this negated with focused research would not just further the theoretical understanding of OCB but also provide valuable practical insights to the SMEs in Oman to nurture a work culture from which such beneficial behaviors naturally arise.

#### *Identification of Literature Gap:*

The present body of literature develops a relatively strong base to understand the effect of transformational leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB); there remains an apparent gap within the existing research bodies, closely the case of Oman's public sector entities, including the SME Development Authority. Research has focused mainly on private sector firms, or even worse, on public institutions in cultures far more different from each other (De Oliveira et al., 2019). Specifically, how the strategic imperatives outlined by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and the interplay of Omani cultural distinctions may influence the appearance of OCB under transformational leadership within such an authoritative body is a crucial area yet to be thoroughly probed by the literature. This uncharted research space, hence, provides the opportunity to investigate, for the first time, the generalizability of the transformational leadership theories in the Omani public sector and the uniquely tailored nature of OCB that could be engendered by the culturally agreed leadership practices in the SMEs Development Authority. Such attention would add both new dimensions and central perspectives to academic discourse. This attention would assure policymakers and organizational leaders of the certainty of the full tapping of human capital potential to serve the national economic objectives.

#### *Conceptual framework*

Within this background, therefore, it is clear that the research is based on a theoretical model that elucidates transformational leadership as the independent variable with Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) as the

dependent variable, with a keen focus on the moderating influence of Omani cultural values and organizational factors like regulatory constraints and technological relevance. Based on this, one may outline two main hypotheses: The first would state that there is a positive significant relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and OCB within the SMEs Development Authority, while the second would argue the fact that Omani cultural values, with organizational factors, as moderators, will moderate the relationship and influence the Extent and manner of OCB manifestation (Novianti, 2021). It will, therefore, guide the design of the study instrument and further help in analyzing the data obtained from the study. The framework will further help as a theoretical lens through which the data shall, on the one hand, be gathered and, on the other hand, interpreted towards the empirical findings on the larger academic discourse on leadership and organizational behavior.

### *Research Question*

Given the identified gap in the existing body of literature, this study will endeavor to answer specific research questions. These will be questions about how transformational leadership within the SME Development Authority influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) within the Omani context (Psomas & Antony, 2019).

In light of the above, the following will be the research questions:

1. How significantly do transformational leadership behaviors, as practiced in the SMEs Development Authority, correlate with the employees' OCB dimensions?
2. What is the role of cultural values in moderating the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB in the Authority?

These research questions are central to providing a framework for guiding the study's methodology and analysis. They establish a framework for comprehensively exploring how leadership styles and strategies within SMEs in Oman can shape employee behaviors and organizational outcomes.

### *Research objective*

In this regard, the paper will play two roles.:

1. This study investigates the relationship between the style of transformational leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) by Omani SMEs. OCB has been defined as organizational citizenship behavior, meaning those professional behaviors from employees that are extra-role and not recognized through the formal reward system but very much beneficial for the organization's effectiveness (Palalić et al., 2023).
2. To explore the leadership innovation strategies used by the leaders of these SMEs and examine how such strategies may enhance employee performance (Tian et al., 2020).

Appreciating the above fact is essential for SMEs in Oman as they face the challenges of modernization, globalization, and higher competition. This appreciation is aimed at drawing empirical insights on the effectiveness of transformational leadership toward driving behaviors beyond basic job requirements through comprehensive quantitative research and analyzing data collected from diverse SMEs across the Sultanate. This report aims to derive empirical insights into how effective transformational leadership is in the Sultanate toward driving behaviors beyond basic job requirements. Considering these problems, this paper explains leadership effectiveness within a broader perspective of the SME staff and presents practical recommendations to SME leaders in Oman.

*Research Variables:*

The research is based on a theoretical model that elucidates transformational leadership as the independent variable with Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) as the dependent variable, focusing on the moderating influence of Omani cultural values and organizational factors like regulatory constraints and technological relevance. Based on this, one may outline two main hypotheses: The first would state that there is a positive significant relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and OCB within the SMEs Development Authority, while the second would argue the fact that Omani cultural values, with organizational factors, as moderators, will moderate the relationship and influence the Extent and manner of OCB manifestation (Novianti, 2021). It will, therefore, guide the design of the study instrument and further help in analyzing the data obtained from the study. The framework will further help as a theoretical lens through which the data shall, on the one hand, be gathered and, on the other hand, interpreted towards the empirical findings on the larger academic discourse on leadership and organizational behavior.

*The Hypothesis to be tested:*

H1: The high levels of transformational leadership behaviors exhibited by leaders within the SMEs Development Authority have a significant positive relationship with the dimensions of OCB exhibited by the Authority's employees.

H2: Cultural values moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB so that transactional leadership improves the expression of citizenship behaviors within the SMEs Development Authority.

The research questions hypothesized how the interaction of leadership style with organizational behavior and cultural context would further shape and be shaped to create a focus for empirical research (Crede et al., 2019). Thus, the present study is expected to test the same to provide a valuable contribution in the form of theoretical insights into the effectiveness of transformational leadership in specific cultural settings and pragmatic input for organizational development within the public sector of Oman

## Method

### Research Design

This study used a quantitative research design, using the correlational approach, to test relationships postulated in the hypotheses.

The research hypothesis and conceptual framework mentioned above will guide the study instrument's design and further assist in analyzing the data obtained from the study. The framework will further help as a theoretical lens through which the data shall, on the one hand, be gathered and, on the other hand, interpreted towards the empirical findings on the larger academic discourse on leadership and organizational behavior.

It takes the honor of leading the strategy for economic diversification and growth through SMEs for the Sultanate. Its setting is chosen to be in the countries of Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana, whereby it is purposively selected not only because it has relevance to the national economic narrative but also as an exemplar of the potential impact of transformational leadership within a public sector context (Cremin & Collins, 2019). Operating at the confluence of traditional Organizational cultural values and modern organizational practices gives a perfect microcosm to examine how leadership styles may engender OCB within this culturally rich but rapidly evolving economic landscape. This entity provides a rich vein of insight into how leadership and cultural values come together concerning organizational behavior, thus the focus it gives to this study with a localized understanding that may be important to similar institutions within the Region and beyond.

This study will engage 40 employees of the SMEs Development Authority in Oman as the selected sample. A sample of this nature is chosen so that the manageability and depth of the data are not compromised while still ensuring that a broad spectrum of insights into the study's objectives is obtained. Participants will be taken using the stratified sampling technique, representing different sections and levels within the organization so that the perspective relating to leadership and OCB comes from all possible diversities (Rahman et al., 2022). The fact that participation was open to full-time staff of the Authority with at least one year in service indicates, at least, their opportunity to serve and get exposed to the entity's leadership styles and organizational culture as offered at their organization. The criterion will collect information from persons who have watched how leadership behavior is portrayed and how it influences organizational citizenship behaviors.

This study used a quantitative survey that used a structured questionnaire to assess the latent constructs such as Transformational Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), and Organizational Commitment, which were influenced by Omani cultural values (Harris & Brown, 2019). It contains three major sections:

1. Transforming Leadership: This indicates the modification of Bass and Avolio's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to evaluate subordinates' perceptions concerning the transforming patterns demonstrated by their supervisors within Authority (Batista-Foguet et al., 2021). Transformational objects were adapted to

correspond with the longitudes of perfect impact intensity, great incentivization, high intellect, and accurate individual consideration.

2. Organizational Citizenship Behavior: This section entails three elements of OCB, as demonstrated in Podsakoff et al.'s OCB scale. Contextualized questions will be the ones that will suitably be based on the organizational circumstances of the Omani SMEs Development Authority (Henderson et al., 2020).

3. Cultural context: Measures of Omani cultural ties shall be included to estimate their impact on transformational leadership and their connection to OCB (Ugheoke, 2019). Items are to be developed based on the cultural dimensions identified in the relevant literature so that they may apply to the Omani work environment.

The developed questionnaire was pilot-tested on an assumed small sample of Authority employees, whereby employees are drawn to assure clarity, relevance, and cultural relevance. The pilot results guided the changes needed to the questionnaire before the final deployment. The last questionnaire was administered through the online data collection system, ensuring that it obtained practical data from all the population-based potential participants identified from the world without geographical or logistical barriers.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

The study was based on a structured survey that had been designed in such a manner that it could capture the distinctions of insights into the dynamics of Transformational leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). The first steps were carefully crafted to be sure the instrument covered a good range of questions (Rashid et al., 2019). These questions examined pertinent themes, such as leadership style and OCB dimensions. The survey design was done in a manner that explicitly laid the inquiry way relevant to the settings in the Omani public sector.

After creation, the next step was to distribute the survey electronically using Google Forms. The tool was chosen due to its effectiveness, easy access, and powerful capabilities in tracking responses (leaning,2019). SME Development Authority employees were approached through WhatsApp. These emails, apart from including the link to the survey, contained a very brief but highly informative summary of the purpose of the study. Respondents were also briefed that their responses would be confidential and maintained anonymous, and the study would rely on every participant's contribution for success. Reminders were sent to receive a high response and notify the participant about how valuable their responses were for organization development.

## **Results**

The following analysis summarizes the survey responses from the participants working at various SMEs in Oman. It provides insight into the relationship between transformational leadership, OCB, and the effectiveness of innovation strategies. The summary result is presented in the following tables.

Theme 1: Exploring the Impact of the Problem (Questions 1-3)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Behaviours Impacting OCB

Question Number	Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1	Idealized Influence	2 (5%)	3 (7.5%)	10 (25%)	15 (37.5%)	10 (25%)	3.75	0.89
Q2	Inspirational Motivation	1 (2.5%)	4 (10%)	8 (20%)	20 (50%)	7 (17.5%)	3.80	0.78
Q3	Intellectual Stimulation	0 (0%)	6 (15%)	12 (30%)	14 (35%)	8 (20%)	3.75	0.85

The analysis of the first three items of the survey is of significant importance, as it indicates that a substantial majority of participants (75%) view the indicator of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation as prominent within the Oman SME Development Authority. This high level of agreement towards levels 4 and 5 (To a great extent and a great extent), with an overall mean of 3.77 and a standard deviation of 0.84, underscores the relevance of these leadership behaviors within the organization. The analysis of the SD further points out that most respondents' answers are collected around the mean, indicating a consistent perception. The mean score of the first variable (Idealized Influence) was the highest ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ,  $n$  for all means = 40), followed closely by variable two – Inspirational Motivation – ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ). Variable three, Intellectual Stimulation, scored a Mean at 3.75 and an SD at 0.85. The lowest mean was for the fourth variable, the Influence of leadership behaviors on OCB engagement, with a mean of 3.8 and an SD of 0.8. Variable five (Impact of leadership behaviors on team dynamics) scored a Mean of 3.7 and an SD of 0.85.

The statistical results of question one reflect a deep understanding of the participants' perspectives. They indicate that the highest means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which leaders at the SMEs Development Authority act as role models and uphold high ethical standards. The lowest means were related to participants' perceptions of how these leadership behaviors tangibly impact team productivity and performance. These findings, which align with the emphasis on ethical leadership within the organization, demonstrate a respectful acknowledgment of the participant's views. The finding of variable three is also expected; participants, by and large, believe that leaders at the Authority encourage creativity and innovation.

Theme 2: Addressing Consequences (Questions 4-6)

Table 2. Responses to Questions on OCB Engagement, Team Dynamics, and Team Productivity

Question Number	Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
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Q4	OCB Engagement	3 (7.5%)	5 (12.5%)	17 (42.5%)	10 (25%)	5 (12.5%)	3.3	0.8
Q5	Team Dynamics	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	14 (35%)	12 (30%)	4 (10%)	3.2	0.85
Q6	Team Productivity	2 (5%)	8 (20%)	12 (30%)	13 (32.5%)	5 (12.5%)	3.4	0.75

Research question theme two, "Addressing Consequences," measured participants' perceptions of how leadership behaviors influence Organizational Citizenship Behavior and team dynamics. Descriptive statistics of items Q4, Q5, and Q6 indicate that a substantial proportion of participants believe that leaders at the SME Development Authority foster a strong sense of engagement and productivity within teams. The finding of variable four could be attributed to respondents' recognition of the nuanced ways that leadership behaviors can extend beyond official job descriptions to influence broader organizational citizenship. Similarly, the finding of variable five indicates that leadership's supportive and motivational aspects are crucial to fostering positive team dynamics.

Table 2 demonstrates that the three variables' overall mean score was 3.3, and the SD was 0.8. The mean score of the team productivity variable was the highest ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), whereas the mean score of the team dynamics was the lowest ( $M = 3.2$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ). This finding aligns with the reviewed literature, which considers the impact of transformational leadership on enhancing organizational citizenship behavior and team cohesion. Various studies indicate that leaders who exhibit transformational traits such as idealized Influence and intellectual stimulation tend to create more engaging and productive work environments. The lowest mean was for the variable related to the extent to which team dynamics are affected by leadership behaviors. This finding indicates that while leadership behaviors have a positive impact, additional factors may influence team dynamics that are not captured solely by transformational leadership traits.

### Theme 3: Solution and Effect of Variables (Questions 7-9)

Table 3. Responses to Questions on Cultural Influence, Strengthening Leadership, and Additional Training/Resources

Question Number	Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q7	Cultural Influence on Leadership Perception	2 (5%)	4 (10%)	11 (27.5%)	16 (40%)	7 (17.5%)	3.65	0.72

Q8	Strategies to Strengthen Leadership	1 (2.5%)	3 (7.5%)	9 (22.5%)	18 (45%)	9 (22.5%)	3.85	0.68
Q9	Training/Resources for Leadership Efficacy	1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)	8 (20%)	19 (47.5%)	10 (25%)	3.95	0.60

Theme three, "Solution and Effect of Variables," measures how Omani cultural values and resources impact leadership effectiveness. Descriptive statistics of the three variables of this question (Q7-Q9) indicate that 62.5% of the respondents believe that cultural values and resources enhance leadership within the SME Development Authority. Table three shows that the grand mean of the variables scored 3.82. The mean scores for sub-variable Q9 – Training/Resources for Leadership Efficacy – and sub-variable Q8 – Strategies to Strengthen Leadership – were the highest ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.60$  and  $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ,  $n$  for all means = 40). The lowest mean was for sub-variable Q7 – Cultural Influence on Leadership Perception – ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ). This finding indicates that respondents perceived the cultural Influence and the availability of training as valuable to enhancing leadership effectiveness. This could be attributed to the strong emphasis within the organization on continuous development and the alignment of leadership practices with local cultural values.

The study's qualitative findings show that the respondents have a positive attitude toward the impact of transformational leadership on organizational citizenship behavior and the overall organizational culture.

## Discussion

This research shows a positive, linear relationship between transformational leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), supporting the original hypothesis beyond a reasonable doubt. It is particularly noticeable that the factors of "inspirational motivation" and "intellectual stimulation" have a high correlation factor, which is the exact definition of what is most important in driving employees' motivation towards OCB (Tian et al., 2020). This correlation factor means that the SME leaders who are effective at inspiring and intellectually challenging their employees in Oman would develop grown behaviors that go beyond formal job responsibilities, such as proactive involvement and solid organizational commitment. "Idealized Influence" and "Individualized Consideration" have, on the other hand, positive relationships with IWBs. However, Idealized Influence" and "Individualized Consideration affect the same to a lesser extent, thus behind the most relevance in leaders being ethical role models and listeners to employees' needs. Such findings wobbly underline the cultural context of Oman, especially the values and impact derived from community, respect, and loyalty concerning his leadership styles and effectiveness (Qalati et al., 2022). The findings here present an SME leadership development guide in Oman, focusing on motivational communication and intellectual involvement as the most vital aspects that shall increase worker productivity and contribute to SME development and success.

## Conclusion

These bring forth the consequential attraction between transformational leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) among employees in SMEs in Oman. This critical finding flushes out the dominant impact of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation on enhancing beneficial behaviors among employees. This study has highlighted the importance of transformational leadership traits to encourage OCB, showing both the organizational effectiveness and adaptability of SMEs working in a culturally specific and fast-emerging business environment like Oman. This study thus clearly admits its limitations, opening pathways for future research to carry this investigation to further lengths through more diversified methods and larger samples. Such insights from the study would contribute to the academic discussion on leadership in SMEs and offer practical advice to business leaders who seek to cultivate productive and collaborative work environments in Oman and similar settings.

## Recommendations

The research results confirm the already existing body of knowledge in leadership, especially within the SME context and countries like Oman, where research could be more extensive. Implications for organizational strategies and organizational culture in SMEs, therefore, would suggest that the selective use of particular leadership abilities would be instrumental in serving to see the organizational success more so in the light of an ever-evolving business environment that has a focus on getting the most out of the human resource potential.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my academic advisor, Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy, and extend my gratitude to the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS).

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## Application of the Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention Method for Disruptive Behaviors in The Classroom


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**Abstract:** In this research work, an action procedure was developed that interferes with improving the cognitive and behavioral state in the classroom through all subjects in the face of disruptive behaviors. Although our research is based on the different intervention models developed in various behavioral and constructivist learning theories and their different approaches, we sought to apply a methodology that takes as a motivating axis the students, the education in values, and the orderly conduction of the behavior. Two case studies were analyzed, obtaining information from various sources under the principle of participatory observation. First, the principal axes are explored where it is pointed out to know the frequency of the event and the intensity of disruptive behaviors; it is also sought to understand academic performance. The qualitative results express the significant differences between the intervention phases of the two axes proposed at the group level.

**Keywords:** Qualitative research, disruptive behaviors, behavioral models, cognitive-behavioral model, value-based education

**Citation:** Alvarez-Cedillo, J.A., Alvarez-Sanchez, T., Sarabia-Alonso, T., & Sandoval-Gomez, R.J. (2024). Application of the cognitive-behavioral intervention method for disruptive behaviors in the classroom In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2442-2454), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

The cognitive-behavioral educational intervention model currently represents a useful multidisciplinary tool to

analyze disruptive behaviors based on principles, foundations, and methods. Behavior is defined as the way or way of behaving that an individual has. Given the previous concept, disruptive behaviors give a trait that means breaking abruptly, savagely, or unconsciously. It indicates that a relevant or determining change has been generated, which has nothing to do with the physical.

Disruptive behavior is a violation of the rights of others or the norms and social rules appropriate to the age of the educational system. It refers to that which interrupts the harmony of learning, which can be manifested in different degrees of intensity, such as disordering, shouting, getting up without permission, fighting, challenging the teaching figure, and some results of postmodernity.

In the literature, several authors converge on the following aspects that tend to manifest disruptive behavior:

1. Actions that disrupt ongoing activities
2. Behaviors that distort the normal development of tasks and
3. Behaviors force the teacher to invest much of the time allocated to the teaching-learning processes in coping.

Disruptive behavior can occur in the classroom in a timely or persistent manner. Adequate preparation will allow teachers to detect the persistence of behaviors in a particular student.

This type of persistent behavior generates different kinds of disorders:

1. Destructive impulse control disorders.
2. Conduct disorders.
3. Oppositional defiant disorder.
4. Intermittent explosive disorder and
5. Antisocial personality disorder.

Disruptive behaviors in the classroom are focused on Conduct Disorder; this type of behavioral disorder is defined as the identification of a repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior in which the fundamental rights of others are not respected, group norms are not followed, or do not respect the social rules of age.

Several philosophies qualify behaviorism in them stand out:

1. The Behaviorism of B. F. Skinner: The Theory of Skinner (1994) was a methodological contribution and philosophical; in Operant Conditioning, learning from both positive and negative consequences, given an individual's response, was the primary mechanism of behavior modification. Design a direct technique, that is, extinguish an undesirable behavior and replace it with a desirable one with the help of reinforcement.
2. Constructivism: Coll (1999) defines constructivism as " an epistemological perspective from which one tries to explain human development as well as social, formal, and informal practices; facilitators thereof. Moreover, it serves to understand the learning processes.
3. Jean Piaget's Theory of Developmental and Learning Psychology: Piaget proposed the four stages of cognitive development that human beings go through sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete



operations, and formal operations.

## Theoretical framework

Users in the literature contribute theories that show important aspects regarding behavior, references that base this research, and present in the proposed educational intervention model.

Behaviorism is a theory of learning established in the study of intelligence and mind, constructed by observing behaviors or reactions to the exposure of external stimuli. All that action performed by the individual is considered behavior, and everything that has to do with behavior is possible to learn and modify.

In the twentieth century, this Theory evolved and became a strategy in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which current psychologists use in all kinds of psychological problems; our field of study is an essential tool in its application to children.

Constructivism is approached as an epistemological perspective from which it tries to explain human development and social, formal, and informal practices. This Theory focuses on learning and reinforces it with the creation of meanings from experiences; learning represents a construction through self-regulation processes. Its primary operating principles are:

- a. It focuses on the teaching-learning process, letting it know what it can learn and do.
- b. Part of the student's previous knowledge before a new beginning of learning allows them to understand concepts, conceptions, and mental representations based on their experience.
- c. Learning to learn considers learning a continuum. In the same way, meaningful learning consists of attaining knowledge by oneself in different situations and circumstances.

For his part, Jean Piaget: Piaget demonstrates in the application of his Theory that the human body evolves, and the mind performs the same process quickly from childhood to maturity, going through a series of specific phases and its characteristics, the changes that it entailed, when overcoming each stage and entering the next, Not only were they based on new acquisitions of skills more complex than the previous ones, but also on a reorganization of the cognitive map, the degree of learning cannot be reversed.

This foundation is essential because the research focuses on the primary Basic Education stage, at ages three to twelve, in the concrete operations phase, characterized by developing logical and critical thinking. For Piaget, these operations represent decreased egocentric thinking and obedience to logical rules.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the influence of social and cultural spheres on the retention and assimilation of knowledge, leaving aside mental activity as a natural development throughout maturity through routes by discovery: construction of meanings, instruments for cognitive development, and the zone of proximal

development.

The psychologist and pedagogue Jerome Bruner (1988) developed the Theory of learning by discovery, whose main characteristic is that it promotes students' knowledge acquisition by themselves. Considering that learning must be achieved through guided and motivational discovery.

It is a scaffolding development in which learners build new ideas or concepts based on past and present knowledge. This performance will lead to further learning and decision-making, based on a cognitive structure of reciprocal help to learn from each other, so his Theory states that interaction is a central feature of education. David Ausubel (1968) proposed the idea of meaningful learning as: "true learning that is conceived only when new information connects with the knowledge already possessed."

The pedagogue points out that learning means that new knowledge connects with what has already been acquired previously, not because they are the same, but because they have to do with each other to create a new meaning. Consequently, recent learning makes those before this more stable and complete, integrating both.

Because society is subject to constant change, it is urgent to adapt teaching practices. Overcoming this way, the traditional educational paradigm, in which the teacher is the protagonist, transcends to a scenario where the students assume the leading role, demonstrating their abilities, virtues, and strengths, thus changing the educational environment completely.

In this panorama, enter the innovative methodologies that currently catch the interest of students and demonstrate improvements in academic results, which also respond to the following foundations:

- a. Cooperative learning is not an activity, instrument, or working method applicable to a classroom situation. Instead, it is a work methodology based on collectively constructing knowledge and developing varied skills. The main characteristic is structuring the students into groups of three to six people to unite the contributions of the members who wish to achieve a common goal.
- b. Gamification: Karl Kapp defines gamification as using the mechanisms, aesthetics, and thinking of games to engage people, incite action, promote learning, and solve problems.
- c. Flipped classroom: Bergmann and Sams (2012) coined this term to describe theoretical learning as a work transferred outside the school and the classroom as a practical or experiential context to develop meaningful learning activities and to facilitate and enhance other concepts acquisition and knowledge in students.
- d. Thinking-based learning: Benjamin Bloom (1956) classified different objectives to be achieved through formal education, conducted in a hierarchical and organized way based on whether the activity requires complex processing.
- e. Competency-based learning: It is possible to replicate the progress of the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm, from an education system based on the transmission of knowledge to an education system that places learning at the center of its educational activities.

- f. Learning based on values: Values are those qualities possessed by individuals, families, or social groups, things, or ideas with which they acquire knowledge, appreciation, and acceptance. Human values significantly impact the individual's formation since they guide all activities and attitudes in life. This point is crucial for behavior modification because if the values that have been learned are left intact, the changes will not last; in the process of personality formation, the values are those axes that are part of the internal configuration and definition of the general orientation of the behaviors of each person.

## Methodology

Grounded Theory is a methodology for conducting scientific qualitative research developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s (Glaser et al.; A. L., 1967); Glaser et al., 1992).

Its objective is to generate new theories from data collected directly from the field of study without starting from a pre-existing approach (Alveiro Restrepo-Ochoa, D., 2013).

The present qualitative research is based on its methodology of phenomenology, which has the object of studying behavior in the classroom. It designs and applies the model of a cognitive-behavioral intervention for disruptive behaviors in the school. The proposed model is intended for application in students with different degrees of intensity and frequency of disruptive behaviors, covering characteristics of risk factors for a conduct disorder. Furthermore, the theoretical principles of behaviorism and constructivism allow us to implement ideas that focus on learning as a vital context of behavior modification, thus intervening in the environment of the students and not on the individual.

The pedagogical praxis of this intervention consists of methodological approaches that allow the students to be subdued or within the natural dynamics of the classroom without the possibility of negating themselves, motivating them, capturing their interest, or grabbing their attention.

If we apply a program based on education in values, the foundation of interdisciplinarity forces us to develop research that contemplates different subjects. Figure 1 shows the proposed methodology.

The model contemplated three phases of intervention and continuous and transversal evaluation throughout its development. Look at Table 1.

The objective of the research is to create a model that allows for improving the behavior of two arbitrarily selected cases. It is possible to evaluate whether there is an improvement in general academic performance and reconfiguration of behavior.

It is important to note that the primary method developed is experimental; it is desired to emphasize the validity of research through proximity to empirical reality. The study was used for the second grade in both cases; these groups were selected because they have forty students each, a total of forty students, of which sixty percent are girls, aged between seven and eight. Both groups present students who suffer frequent disruptive behaviors and potential problems of coexistence.

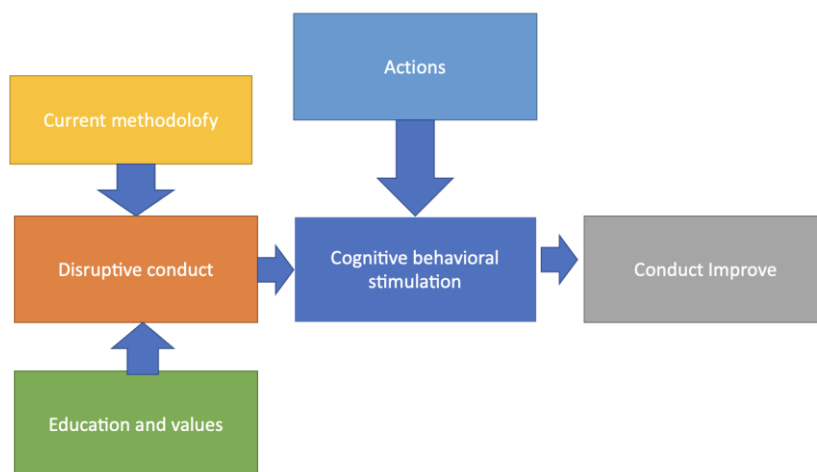


Figure 1. Schematic of the intervention model in the face of disruptive behaviors.

Table 1. Summary of the phases of the cognitive-behavioral intervention model and interdisciplinary program.

First Contact: Obtain Data & Information, evaluation, and Decision making	Phase 1: use of innovative technologies, setting standards, and introduction to values	Phase 2: Intervention with the practice of values, feedback
1. Initial analysis of the Case 2. <b>Psych pedagogical</b> evaluation 3. primary evaluation	1. Reorganization of the classroom 2. Implementation of innovative technologies 3. Establish behavioral rules 4. analysis of the values and data 5. Implementation of custom preset values 6. First assessment	1. Behavior tracking 2. reinforcement of innovative technologies 3. academic reinforcement 4. the daily practice of values 5. Application of a securities monitoring program 6. Second evaluation

Participatory observation has been used for data collection. This method elaborates a visual record of what happens, and experiences related to the problem addressed are noted in Table 1. The advantage of this instrument is that it allows us to collect qualitative data, observe students closely, and observe their behaviors,

characteristics, or external factors.

Another instrument used was the in-depth interview; the interview with the tutor before and after the intervention helped us obtain a vision or objective and provided extra information on aspects of the family environment of the subjects in the study. Finally, the EDAH evaluation (Evaluation of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is used to evaluate a case of Conduct Disorder, specifically Area II: Conduct Disorder.

During the intervention, a record of positives and negatives in behavior was conducted, forming part of the behavior modification strategies. However, positives and negatives were also introduced in the follow-up of the realization of the system. On the other hand, during the values program, a record of the implementation of values and their benefits was conducted with the collection of the student experience.

Finally, at the end of the intervention, a survey of students was conducted, which became a method of determining the subjects' attitudes and opinions about the intervention.

## Results

This section will present the results obtained in each phase of positive and negative behaviors and the follow-up of the duties performed. However, it is possible to get a study of equitable outcomes; the registry was developed with twenty-five spontaneous occasions in each phase.

On the other hand, the first phase of the intervention lasted from January 31, 2018, to March 28, 2018, with a total of 40 school days. The second phase continued from April 9, 2018, to May 25, 2018, with thirty-four school days.

Case I: During the first phase of the intervention, by direct observation, an evolution of durability and intensity of disruptive behaviors were noted; as the intervention progressed, the recorded record of negatives decreased; disruptive behaviors.

However, the subject's hard work of internal reconfiguration is reflected in the data collection in the second phase of the intervention. The issue is that those who previously were not interested in following the classroom's progress did not miss a day of homework performance, with 0% negative for reading in the second phase, when in the first phase, 12% of negatives were due to a lack of task.

The work on values and the learning of social competencies derived from it influenced the frequency of high-intensity disruptive behaviors, which decreased until reaching a total of 8.57% in the second phase. See Figure 2.

Between the initial phase, the number of times of positive behavior, and the final stage, the change of

improvement is 84.62%. Moreover, the decrease from the initial number of high-intensity disruptive behaviors to the last number, noted during the second phase, is considered an 80% decrease.

The subject's program of education in values improved assertive communicative skills, impulses, and academic performance, including bringing homework, writing things down in class, and taking out books during class change.

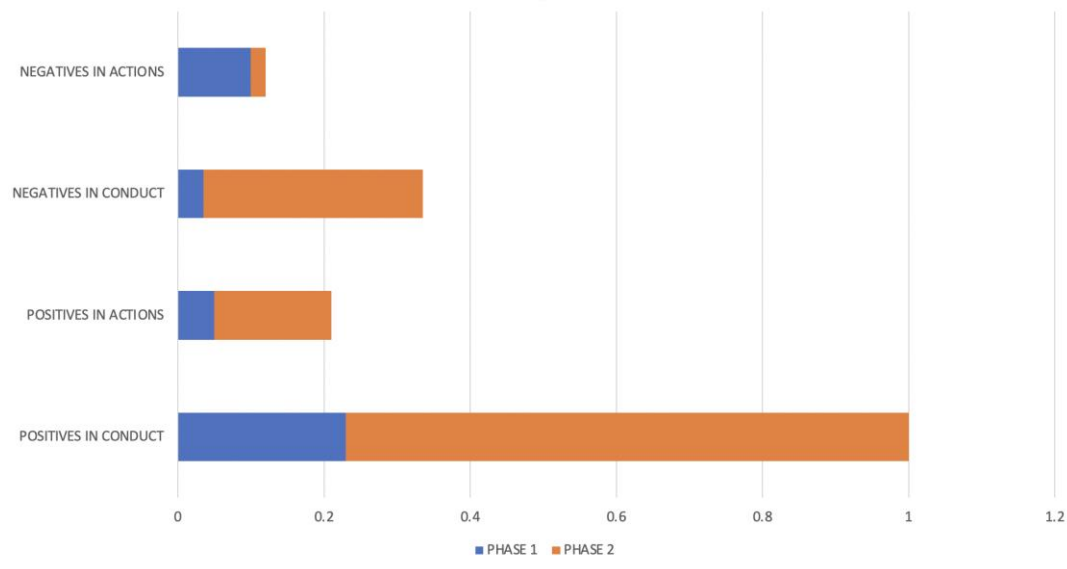


Figure 2. Schematic of the intervention model in the face of disruptive behaviors.

Case II:

The subject from the beginning of the first phase to the end of the second does present a clear improvement in behavior, that is, an increase in appropriate conduct of 66.67%. And a decrease in disruptive behavior of high intensity of 54.55%. See Figure 3.

However, it was a case with more difficulties due to the permissibility, lack of attention, and work of the family environment, and in multiple situations, he assumed an attitude depending on his interest or personal benefit. According to the results obtained, the reduction of negatives for homework is perceived as up to 4%; when presenting the subject cognitive gaps, this event influences academic improvement. Furthermore, throughout the intervention, the subject was very participatory in the program of values, learning each value, practicing them, and disseminating them, especially during playground time when playing between peers, thus reducing disruptive behaviors and encouraging assertiveness and dialogue.

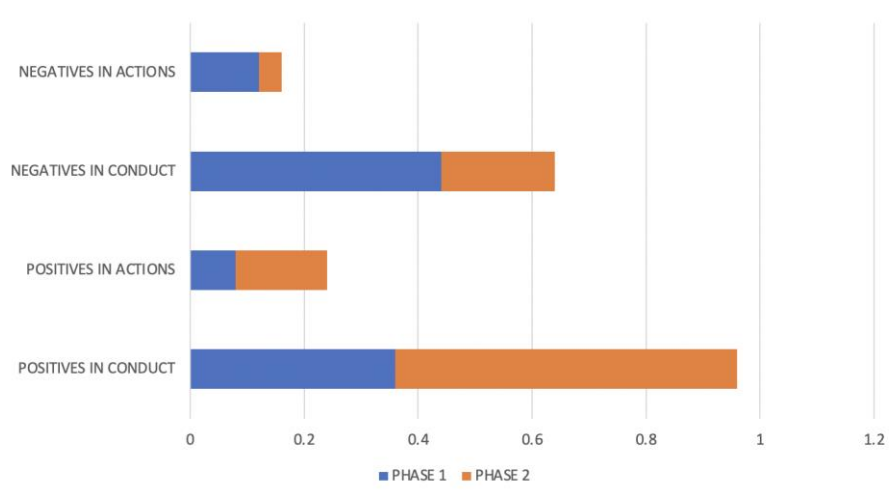


Figure 3. The graph shows the results obtained from behaviors and follow-up of duties in the first and second phases of the intervention in Case II.

Before the intervention, the twenty-four subjects in the classroom followed a more traditional methodology with a different teacher. Therefore, firstly, the evaluation of the results is based on the average grade, the sum of all rates divided by the total number of students before and after implementing innovative methodologies in the core subjects, and constant feedback based on transcendental values. Figure 4 shows the creative methods to improve students' learning of content.

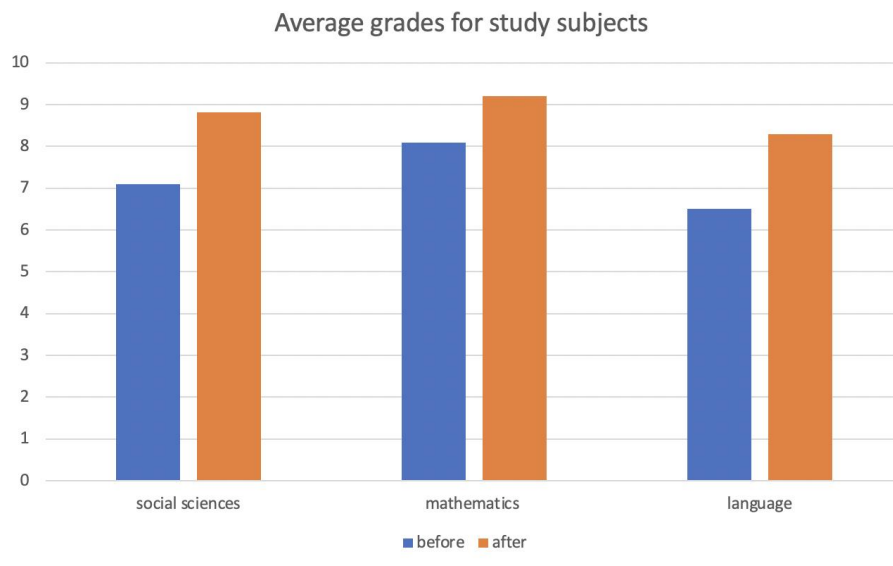


Figure 4. Diagram representing the different subjects' average pre- and post-intervention grades.

The methodologies proposed in the intervention model increased learning in Social Sciences by 80.59%, Mathematics by 88.04%, and Language by 78.31%.

A significant effect of innovative methodologies is the number of failed equivalents to 0% in all three areas and the higher frequency of outstanding grades.



The lowest quality ranges from 5 to 6; cases are restricted to two students due to a series of special educational needs they present. Finally, the outstanding frequency is between 29.1% and 58.3% of cases. Figure 5 concentrates on these general data.

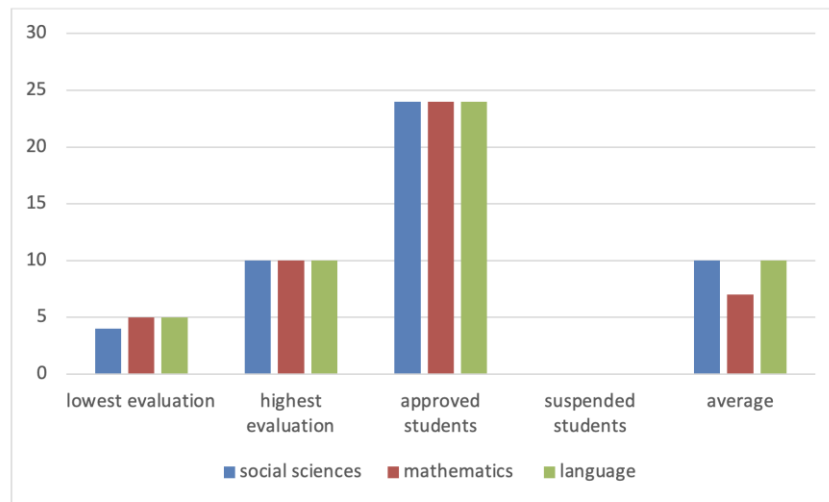


Figure 5. Detailed table of post-intervention notes by areas.

In general, the number of disruptive behaviors in the classroom has decreased with the passage of the intervention—precisely 41.43% of the initial value. See Figure 6.

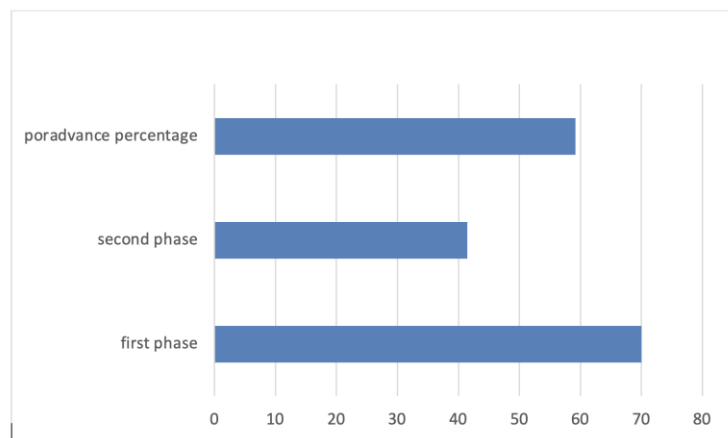


Figure 6. Graph the number of disruptive behaviors throughout the classroom between the first and second phases of the intervention.

## Conclusions

This research aims to determine if it is possible to respond to disruptive behavior without focusing on a single student within the classroom and improve academic performance in parallel.

At the same time, it offers a new product to the Educational Community: an innovative model for dealing with disruptive behaviors, which coordinates innovative methodologies, education in values, and reinforcement strategies for redirection and cognitive-behavioral stimulation.

Therefore, considering the results collected, in the first place, on the specific cases of high intensity and frequency of disruptive behaviors, it can be concluded that an apparent behavior modification is achieved. In both cases, a significant decrease in the frequency and intensity of disruptive behaviors and increased appropriation/positive behaviors are completed. Also, improved social and civic skills, assertiveness, and adequate communication were achieved through the program values.

In both the first and second cases, innovative methodologies rekindle their interest, motivation, and attention. For example, getting significantly involved in the dynamics in the classroom, doing homework daily, and, in Case I, demonstrating a dramatic improvement in calligraphy.

When the group, in general, disruptive behaviors decrease, to the point of reducing those of lower intensity, such as getting up without permission, talking while the teacher explains, and forgetting books or homework. The innovative methodology ensures that everyone participates in learning dynamics without possibly refusing. This improves the academic performance of each subject, as shown in the results.

In general terms, the work of values not only reconfigures behavior but also provokes students to think and consider an issue with attention and care so that they can study it, understand it well, form an opinion about it, or make a decision.

It is interesting to observe that when checking the result when the intervention model was applied, it is possible to affirm that their learning is positive and their behavior acceptable.

Given this evidence, it is expected to want to transmit the experience to the educational community, especially to teachers. However, disseminating this research and model depends on the predisposition to change in academic performance.

In this question, it is preferable to expose it in a clear, visual, and synthetic way as a first step to catch the interest. Therefore, an infographic is an excellent striking resource since it is a current communication tool that allows visual explanations of the complex processes of the model in graphic pieces of easy understanding, where the text gives way to defining visual elements.

Based on the interest generated around the intervention model for behavior modification, a conference should be proposed to inform and officially launch this product, as well as a discussion or exchange of ideas to accommodate a proposal for improvement.

## Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the facilities granted for the realization of this work to the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), the Secretariat of Research and Postgraduate Studies (SIP) with the SIP 20210388 project. To the Interdisciplinary Unit of Engineering and Social and Administrative Sciences and Center for Research and Development of Digital Technology. Also, the Program to Stimulate the Performance of Researchers (EDI) and the Commission for Operation and Promotion of Academic Activities of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (COFAA) and the master's degree in SMEs of UPIICSA.

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Vygotsky, L. S. (1996). The development of higher psychological processes. Barcelona: Review. Wells, G. (2001). Dialogic inquiry. Barcelona: P

# Mihail Bakhtin's Concept of The Grotesque and The Contradiction of The Grotesque Font

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**Abstract:** The grotesque as a concept was first theorized by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin in 1965. The theory exhibits a scope that accepts and embraces the biological processes of life in all their positive and negative aspects. Every living form is subject to processes such as eating and drinking, getting fat, getting thin, getting sick, dying, decaying, deteriorating and wearing out, and the theory opposes the ignoring of these processes by idealist artistic styles. In the artistic sense, the grotesque structure contains many complex processes and exaggerations, while the grotesque font is a contradiction in that it is the first font to appear without serifs. While grotesque in the plastic arts is considered in terms of simplicity and plainness, it is used as a category in the field of typography for fonts that are serifless, simple and as plain as possible. In this study, which was conducted with the literature review technique, the concept of grotesque was discussed and the contrasts between the fonts categorized as grotesque fonts and the grotesque theory were examined.

**Keywords:** Grotesque, Typography, Font Design, Graphic Arts.

**Citation:** Çakır, E. & Ünal, M. (2024). Mihail Bakhtin's Concept of the Grotesque and the Contradiction of the Grotesque Font. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2455-2461), Antalya, Türkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the leading Russian literary philosophers, introduced the concept of the grotesque, which plays an important role in literary theory. Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque challenges traditional ideas of perfection by celebrating all the actions the body performs, including overeating, defecation, and many other situations depicting biological processes (Stone and Murakami, 2021). As Bakhtin argues, the grotesque is not only a negative state of caricature, but also has complex forms and functions that make it difficult to interpret it as merely pejorative (Myers, 2022). Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body exists intertwined with the world as an incomplete metamorphosis of existence, reflecting a mixture of biological and ontological categories in everyday objects (Zhonga, 2021).

Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque is closely related to the carnivalesque, where the grotesque realism of the carnival is opposed to the norms of the dominant culture, symbolizing a temporary liberation from established orders and hierarchies ("A Night with The Narcissist and the Nasty Boys: Interpreting the World Wrestling Federation", 2000). The grotesque in the carnivalesque is the same. It is also associated with scenes of violence and excess characterized by exaggeration and exaggeration (Casas-Cortés and Cobarrubias, 2023). Moreover, Bakhtin's ideas about the carnivalesque and the grotesque have been applied in various contexts, including literature, anthropology, and public discourse (Boutieri, 2021). While Bakhtin's dialogism has been studied extensively in literary contexts, there is increasing interest in applying his concepts such as heteroglossia and internal persuasive discourse to research practices (Frank, 2005). Bakhtin's dialogic principles have been used to explore his interest and contributions to understanding human communication and interaction (Leiman, 2011).

The relationship between Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque and font design can be seen in studies examining the impact of typeface on readability and perception. For example, studies have shown that the use of different fonts, such as humanistic and grotesque, can affect reading experiences and gaze times (Reimer et al., 2014; Pan et al., 2020). Additionally, studies on fonts have expanded to discover that calligraphic lettering is more aesthetically pleasing in design contexts than traditional grotesque or antique fonts (Галишич et al., 2020). Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque offers a rich framework for understanding the complexities of human existence, challenging traditional norms of perfection, and celebrating the materiality of the body. His ideas about the carnivalesque and the grotesque intertwined with dialogue have influenced fields ranging from literature to art, psychology to design, highlighting the enduring validity and versatility of his theoretical contributions.

### **Grotesque Font**

Grotesque fonts are fonts with straight lines and clean cuts, usually with a modern and minimalist design. They first appeared in Germany in the late 19th century and later spread to the rest of Europe and the world. These fonts, unlike traditional fonts, are simple and functional, free of ornaments. Typically, grotesque fonts are of a type called sans-serif; That is, there are no decorative additions at the ends of the letters. Grotesque fonts are considered one of the cornerstones of modern typography and are widely used not only in print but also on digital platforms. Due to their clean appearance and readability, they are preferred in advertising, corporate identity design and many other fields. For example, fonts such as Helvetica and Arial are classic examples of grotesque fonts.

The concept of a grotesque font, also known as a sans-serif font, is a font that lacks small protruding features called "serifs" at the end of the strokes. The term "grotesque" in font classification refers to early sans-serif fonts that were considered somewhat unconventional and even grotesque when they were first introduced in the 19th century. Grotesque fonts have a simple and straightforward design, often shared by uniform stroke widths and the absence of decorative elements, giving them a modern and clean look. The emergence of grotesque fonts can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution, when there was a shift towards more practical and functional fonts

that could withstand the demands of mass printing and technological advances. Grotesque fonts have been seen as a departure from the flashy and detailed serif typefaces of the past, reflecting a new aesthetic sensibility that prioritizes clarity and readability in communication.

When “sans serif” fonts, called sans serif fonts, first began to appear in the early nineteenth century, there was uncertainty about what they should be called. In order to categorize this font, people have labeled them as "grotesque", although they are not sure. The term stuck and sans serif faces, designed in the same style as the oldest examples, is still referred to today as Grotesque Sans (See Figure 1). Characters exhibit moderate contrast with upright emphasis and generally present a more complex structure than other sans serifs (Seddon, 1965, p:92).



Figure 1. Grotesque Font Example (Seddon, 1965, p:92).

A grotesque font in its concept can convey a sense of modernity, simplicity and neutrality. Grotesque fonts are often preferred for their clean and minimalist design, making them suitable for a wide range of applications, from branding and advertising to web design and print media. The absence of serifs in grotesque fonts can improve readability on digital screens and at small sizes, making them popular choices for body text in digital interfaces. In this context, it can be said that it differs conceptually from the expression "grotesque". Because grotesque structures generally have features that are complex and involve different processes. The form has protruding limbs, exaggerated appendages and distorted different nodes. Overall, the grotesque typeface represents a departure from traditional typographic conventions by adopting a more functional and utilitarian approach to design. Its simplicity and clarity make it a versatile choice for a variety of design contexts, and it embodies a modern aesthetic that remains relevant in contemporary typography.

### *Grotesque in an Artistic Term*

In an artistic sense, "grotesque" denotes a slightly different concept. Here, “grotesque” refers to elements that



deviate from the norm, are perceived as disturbing, ugly, or disgusting. Grotesque art has a style that evokes emotions such as irony, absurdity, or tragedy, often moving away from traditional standards of beauty. The origins of this style date back to the Renaissance period. At that time, frescoes and decorative arts inspired by the ancient Roman and Greek periods contained grotesque elements. These were complex patterns, often filled with fantastic beasts, distorted human figures, and plant elements.



Figure 2. Quentin Matsys's "The Ugly Duchess", 1513 (The National Gallery, 2023)

In modern art, the grotesque style refers to works that question traditional perceptions of beauty by using unusual or striking elements, often disturbing the viewer. For example, movements such as dadaism and surrealism frequently use grotesque elements. Works made in this style can be designed to question social norms, make irony or create an absurd perception of reality. Figure 2 shows "The Ugly Duchess", which is perhaps the most mentioned work in the sources in this regard. The work contains figure features that disregard many of the traditional and classical beauty teachings and criteria.

There are distinct differences between grotesque fonts and the concept of "grotesque" in an artistic sense. Grotesque fonts generally refer to modern typefaces with a clean, minimalist design, while in an artistic sense, "grotesque" refers to a style that focuses on deviations from normal and perceptions of ugliness. The differences between grotesque fonts and the artistic concept of "grotesque" represent different dimensions of aesthetics and meaning. Grotesque fonts are examples of modern typography designed with a minimalist and functional approach. These fonts are characterized by straight lines and clean cuts and usually have a sans-serif structure.

On the other hand, in an artistic sense, the term "grotesque" refers to a striking or ironic style that deviates from traditional standards of beauty and disturbs the viewer. This style is often characterized by fantastic or distorted figures, absurd details or tragic images. So, while grotesque fonts offer cleanliness and readability in the world of typography, in an artistic sense the term "grotesque" provides the expression of striking and sometimes disturbing works that question social norms.

## Method

The literature review method was used as a method in the study, and in this context, written, electronic or printed sources were used.

## Results

It has been observed that contradiction, as a concept, is included in the sources as "the state of being contradictory and opposite to each other". Contradiction is the situation in which a proposition or situation is inconsistent within itself in many fields. The word "grotesque" refers to two different concepts that are used both in the field of typography and in the field of art and have quite different meanings. This leads to an apparent contradiction between the concepts of "grotesque font" and "artistically grotesque". In typography, grotesque fonts describe plain, simple, simple and flat-format fonts, while in an artistic sense, grotesque refers to complex, exaggerated, non-regular and often overly detailed forms. This contradiction requires in-depth examination to understand how both concepts evolved in their respective contexts and why they differ so much.

Grotesque fonts emerged as early examples of sans-serif fonts in the early 19th century. These fonts have straight lines and simple designs, free of ornaments and complexity. The use of the word grotesque in typography originally stemmed from the perception of these fonts as more "strange" and unusual compared to other decorative and ornate fonts. Over time, grotesque fonts have become symbols of modernism and functionality, preferred by designers seeking minimalism and simplicity. In the artistic sense, grotesque is a term that has been used since the Renaissance period and has its origins in the wall paintings of the Ancient Roman period. Grotesque art is characterized by extremely detailed and exaggerated forms, sometimes frightening and disturbing, often containing supernatural and fantastical elements. In such works of art, human and animal figures mix together, creating surreal and strange forms.

The contradiction of these two concepts creates an interesting situation both terminologically and aesthetically. While grotesque fonts represent a simple and functional design approach, artistically grotesque exhibit exactly the opposite characteristics. While the plainness and simplicity of grotesque fonts are shaped by the influence of modernism and industrial design, artistic grotesque forms stand out as the expression of a chaotic, complex and boundary-pushing aesthetic, and as an art style, they open up a space for artists to benefit from this complexity. While grotesque fonts in the typographic field tend towards simplicity with the modernization brought about by

industrial developments, grotesque expressions in plastic arts have become complex, sometimes to criticize and sometimes to evoke chaotic themes and emotions in the audience.

The contradiction between grotesque fonts and artistically grotesque concepts, when analyzed in depth in the context of both typography and art history, reveals that periodic influences differ between the modernizing art world and industry. While simplification in the field of typography is a result of this process, chaos and confusion in artistic fields show that different results emerge from this process. This contradiction is not only a terminological difference, but also a reflection of two different aesthetic understandings and cultural tendencies. Therefore, when these two different meanings of the concept of grotesque are examined in their own context, it is seen that each has its own logic and aesthetics.

## Conclusion

The contradiction between grotesque fonts and artistically grotesque concepts, beyond aesthetic and terminological differences, reveals the different tendencies of modernizing society and understanding of art. Grotesque fonts emerged as sans-serif typefaces in the early 19th century and over time became symbols of modernism and functionality. These fonts represent a plain and simple aesthetic approach, free of ornaments. This situation is a reflection of the search for simplification and functionality brought about by the industrial revolution. In the artistic sense, grotesque is an aesthetic approach characterized by complexity, exaggeration and irregular forms, with roots dating back to the Renaissance period and the murals of Ancient Rome. Grotesque art aims to surprise and make the viewer think with sometimes disturbingly detailed and chaotic forms that contain supernatural and fantastic elements. This artistic style offers a critical perspective to the modernization process as a form of expression that includes both individual creativity and social criticism.

The contradiction between these two concepts reveals the simple and functional nature of typography on the one hand, and the complex and critical nature of art on the other. While the simplicity and plainness of grotesque fonts are shaped by the influence of industrial design and modernism, artistically grotesque forms push the boundaries of art with their chaotic and exaggerated aesthetics. This shows how the same term in the languages of two different fields can acquire completely opposite meanings. This contradiction also reveals the influence of cultural and historical contexts on terminology. While simplification and functionality in typography emerged as a result of modernization and the industrial revolution, the artistically grotesque embraces complexity and exaggeration as a form of critical and creative expression. These two different uses provide a striking example of how the same word can evolve into different meanings.

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## Impact of Employee Engagement on Organizational Performance: The Case of Higher Educational Institute in Oman

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**Abstract:** Purpose: This study explores the factors impacting employee engagement on organizational performance at higher education institutions in Oman. It aims to explore the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance at these institutions. By providing valuable insights and recommendations, this research aims to develop effective strategies that can boost employee engagement and enhance organizational performance. Design/ methodology /approach: A positivist research paradigm guides the assumption of this experiment study. This paradigm is characterized by the belief that reality is objectively observable and can be quantifiably measured and analyzed using statistical methods. Quantitative data was collected through a survey from individuals who were randomly selected from HEIs' field to participate in the study. The study utilized a quantitative research approach, employing descriptive statistical tools. Findings: The findings suggest that employee engagement improves organizational performance. The study highlights the varying impact of vigor, dedication, and absorption on organizational performance in a higher education institution in Oman, which may expose the generalizability of the findings. It also revealed new possibilities for further research in similar locations, which will help to validate the results obtained so far. Originality/value: This research provides quantitative insights into the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance. Exploring this relationship and offering valuable suggestions to enhance organizational performance in Oman's higher education institutions contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement, Organizational Performance, Higher Education Institutes.

**Citation:** Al Sabbagh, M. (2024). Impact of Employee Engagement on Organizational Performance: The Case of Higher Educational Institute in Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2462-2480), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

#### Research Background

In today's rapidly evolving academic landscape, higher education institutions are increasingly focusing on fostering environments that promote effective engagement among their staff. Employee engagement, characterized by Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption, has been recognized as a pivotal factor influencing organizational outcomes (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2021). In Oman's higher education context, engaging academic

and administrative staff is crucial for enhancing educational quality, student satisfaction, and institutional reputation. Given Oman's unique cultural, economic, and educational dynamics, understanding how engagement impacts performance in this sector is essential (Al-Busaidi & Al-Shihi, 2022). The concept of employee engagement emerged and has been discussed among academics and practitioners. Employee engagement is considered a crucial factor in determining the success of any organization, including higher education institutions. The literature shows engaged employees are more productive, innovative, and committed to the organization's goals. Understanding the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance is critical for enhancing the quality of education and the overall effectiveness of these institutions within Oman.

Dynamic shifts and continuous changes within the organization and its environment are essential to achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. Hence, organizations constantly seek ways to improve performance and gain a competitive edge. Employee engagement has attracted attention from various stakeholders, such as Government policymakers (e.g., MacLeod and Clarke 2009), HR practitioners (e.g., Harter et al. 2002), and academics (e.g., Kan 1990; May et al. 2004; Schaufeli et al. 2002).

To understand the components of employee engagement, it is important to highlight various elements, such as motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment. According to this approach, this research tries to know how employee engagement affects the organizational performance of higher education institutes in Oman; and also to find out what are the factors that enhance or block employee engagement in higher education institutes in Oman

#### Research Problem Statement

Higher employee engagement has been identified as an essential factor in the success of organizations, however, there are limited studies that explore higher education institutes, especially in Oman (Kumar & Pansari, 2020). The majority of these institutes struggle with keeping the level of employee engagement high, which affects job satisfaction, increases turnover rate, and in turn reduces organization's performance. This study seeks to fill the gap by examining the extent to which employee engagement, directly and indirectly, impact the performance of higher education institutes in Oman.

#### *Significance of the Study*

Moreover, it is of significance, promising to provide useful information about the predictors of employee engagement sector-wise (higher education institutes and online) and where additional data has been collected. Through the findings, the underlying dynamics will be identified, and these in turn could be used to assess institutional leaders and policymakers in Oman in enacting context-sensitive interventions to increase engagement levels and contribute to the economy of scale and the research agenda on employee engagement in the Middle East as a benchmark for comparative studies and regional analyses.

Omani HEIs, mainly governmental, risk falling behind in a competitive global educational landscape if these problems are not addressed. Disengaged employees contribute to a stagnant learning environment, hindering



student development and reflecting on organizational performance. Hence, they impact Oman's human capital growth.

This research bridges the knowledge gap regarding employee engagement, specifically in Oman HEIs, by providing contextually relevant insights and equipping the stakeholders with valuable information to cultivate more engaged employees with various strategies. This, in return, enhances organizational performance.

#### *Scope of Research Limitation*

The research on "Impact of Employee Engagement on Organizational Performance: The Case of Higher Educational Institute, Oman" has several limitations that must be acknowledged to understand the scope and applicability of the findings:

The targeted participants are in Muscat Governorate only in Oman. In addition, the sample size covers only 40 participants, and it limited research time.

#### *Research Aims and Objectives*

This research aims to bridge the knowledge gap by exploring the factors that drive employee engagement within Omani HEIs across all staff categories. By recognizing these factors, HEIs can develop strategies to foster more engaged employees, ultimately enhancing organizational performance.

- To explore employee engagement factors in HEIs and their impact on organizational performance.
- To measure the employee engagement level of faculty, administrators, and support staff in HEIs.

## **Literature Review**

### **Definitions and Theoretical Frameworks**

Khan (1990) defines employee engagement as "the harnessing of organization members slaves to their work role in engaging people employee and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance." In addition, As mentioned by (Baumruk, 2004; Richman 2006 and Shaw 2005), employee engagement has been defined as an emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization. (Frank et al., 2004) stated the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their jobs. It is acknowledged that the employee engagement concept is a multifaceted construct as suggested by (Khan, 1990). Truss et al., ( 2006) define employee engagement in simple words as its passion for work, and this reflects the psychological state which is seen to encompass the three dimensions of employee engagement discussed by (Khan, 1990) and captures the common theme running through all definitions.



(Shrestham, 2019) defines employee engagement as employees' emotional commitment and active involvement in their work, the organization, and its goals. Organizational performance represents the organization's overall effectiveness, productivity, and success. Considering this definition, the focus is on the emotional and psychological bounds between employees and their work, the organization, and objectives. In contrast, organizational performance measures how well an organization successfully reaches its intended goals and desired outcomes.

Employee engagement definitions vary based on various themes, for instance, energy and motivation, where researchers internal drive and effort employees bring to work (Kahn, 1990; Demerouti et al., 2001; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001); emotional investment theme definitions highlight positive fulfilments fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vague or dedication and absorption ( Bakker & Schaufeli (2000), Pierce et al. (2014), Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001), this focus on emotional connection and positive feelings toward work. While (Truss et al. (2003), Organ (1988), and Lehman & Lewis (2007), have focused on reflecting dedication and effort invested in work. They defined the emotional and behavioural states directed toward work as characterized by high levels of effort and resistance as behavioural outcomes.

As mentioned by (Gyensare et al., 2017), employee engagement positively impacts organizational performance by enhancing team performance, boosting productivity, promoting employee retention, minimizing turnover, and mitigating burnout. On the other hand, the view arises with (Fetriah & Hermingshil, 2023), where perceived organizational support shows a negative and insignificant effect on employee performance yet a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. This suggests organizational support is crucial for engagement but does not directly translate to performance. Various studies in the research as revealed by ( AMIN, 2020; Fetriah & Hermingsih, 2023; Fristin et al., 2019; Garg, 2017; Kurniawati & Raharja, 2022; Olakunle, 2021; Prajapati, 2022; Rembulan et al., 2022; Zakaria, 2022)) which reflected that the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance is complex and multifaceted. While there is a common consensus on the positive impact of employee engagement on performance. Factors influencing the relationship can vary and may not always directly lead to improved performance. In addition, studies reported by (Afkar & Sayekti, 2020; Fetriah & Hermingsih, 2023; Fristin et al., 2019; Garg, 2017; Olakunle, 2021; Rembulan et al., 2022) stated that organization and support motivation, leadership style, communication, and culture play a significant role in shaping engagement, but their effects on performance can be indirect and mediated by other variables such as employee satisfaction and commitment.

These aspects are crucial in the academic context, where faculty and staff engagement directly influence teaching quality research output and student satisfaction levels. As a result, there is room for further investigation to focus on a holistic approach that fosters engagement through various strategies, recognising that its translation into performance may require additional supportive measures and exploring the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance in Higher Education Institutions. While retrieving the literature, there is much research on the Western context; however, limited Omani context within Higher Education Institutes found, also studies focused on exploring employee engagement among faculty

members; yet, there is an opportunity to explore employee engagement factors among administrative and support staff members.

Employee engagement is not just about being happy at work. Employees feel deeply connected to their colleagues, work, and mission (GUO & Hou, 2022). Engaged employees are emotionally invested and motivated to go the extra mile. This engagement is fuelled by factors like positive workplace culture, clear communication from leadership, and a sense of trust and respect (Stewart et al., 2019). Engaged employees understand the organization's goals and actively collaborate to improve performance (Hui et al., 2020).

The benefits of a highly engaged workforce are clear: increased profitability and better employee performance. One key drive of engagement is offering opportunities for career development (Aboramadan et al., 2020).

When employees see the growth path, they feel more valued and motivated. The sense of purpose translated to greater loyalty and commitment to the organization's success. In addition, career development equips employees with the skills they need to excel in their current roles and prepares them for future advancement within the organization.

As stated by (Goud and Tiwari, 2022), Leaders are the backbone of a thriving workforce. By fostering A supportive and motivated work environment, they unlock the potential for high employee engagement. This translates to a happier, more productive team that consistently achieves goals. Effective leadership goes beyond giving orders. It is about clear communication, providing constructive feedback, and empowering employees to make decisions. This combination creates a ripple effect: engaged employees drive better organizational performance. (Dubrin, 2022). In contrast, poor leadership can significantly damage engagement retention and the organization's bottom line (Abdulrahman & Taqi Addin, 2020).

### *Organizational Performance*

Organizational performance is the scorecard of organizational success. It measures how well an organization achieves its goal across various aspects like productivity, profit, customer satisfaction, and innovation (Robinto et al., 2020). High performance is the key to long-term survival and thriving in a competitive market. Engage employees contributes to organizational performance; organizations that invest in employee development and recognition significantly boost engagement ( Sepahvand & khodashhri, 2021). This means that offering opportunities for employees to learn new skills to advance their careers and benefit from mentorship programs by showing employees their gross matters organization fosters a sense of value and purpose.

Organizational performance involves comprehensive metrics that assess how effectively an organization meets its strategic goals. According to Robinto et al. (2020), this encompasses financial outcomes and factors like innovation, customer satisfaction, and internal process efficiency. Robust organizational performance is frequently regarded as a pivotal indicator of an organization's vitality and enduring sustainability, reflecting its capacity to vie in the marketplace effectively. Employee engagement stands as a closely intertwined factor with

organizational performance. Engaged employees typically exhibit elevated levels of motivation, fostering heightened organizations that allocate resources toward nurturing their employees' potential through development initiatives and acknowledgment endeavours that often witness amplified levels of engagement. Investments in employee development may include training, mentorship, and career progression opportunities that align with organizational objectives (Sepahvand & Khodashhi,2021).

High organizational performance is a key indicator of an organization's health and long-term success, reflecting its ability to compete effectively in the market.

Employee engagement is intimately linked to organizational performance. Engaged employees show higher motivation levels, which translates into better productivity and efficiency (Sepahvand & Khodashhri, 2021).

Furthermore, organizations that invest in their employee's potential through development programs and recognition initiatives tend to experience a high level of engagement. These investments may include training programs, career advancement opportunities, and mentorship programs which enhance skills in imbue employees with a sense of worth in alignment with organizational goal. (Sepahvand & Khodashhri, 2021).

## **Theories Underpinning the Research**

### **Organizational Support Theory (OST)**

According to the organizational support theory, employees tend to develop beliefs regarding their organization's level of concern for their well-being and how much it values their contribution. If employees perceive that their organization provides a higher level of support, they tend to feel emotionally connected to the organization, have higher job satisfaction, and exhibit more engagement. (Eisenberger et al.,1986). Employees who feel supported are more inclined to surpass their basic job expectations, thereby contributing to improving organizational performance.

The theory holds significant importance in comprehending employees' sociological state concerning their perception of support from their employers. It elucidates that white initiatives aimed at enhancing employees' perception of organizational support can lead to increased engagement and subsequently yield better organizational outcomes.

### *The JD-R Model*

The JD-R Model is a framework that explains how working conditions impact employee behavior. According to the theory, job demands can deplete employee resources and lead to burnout. In contrast, job resources can help employees achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and promote personal growth, learning, and development. Physical, psychological, social, or organizational resources are essential for fostering employee engagement

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Engaged employees are more likely to contribute positively to organizational performance through improved service delivery, innovation, and productivity (Bakker, 2011).

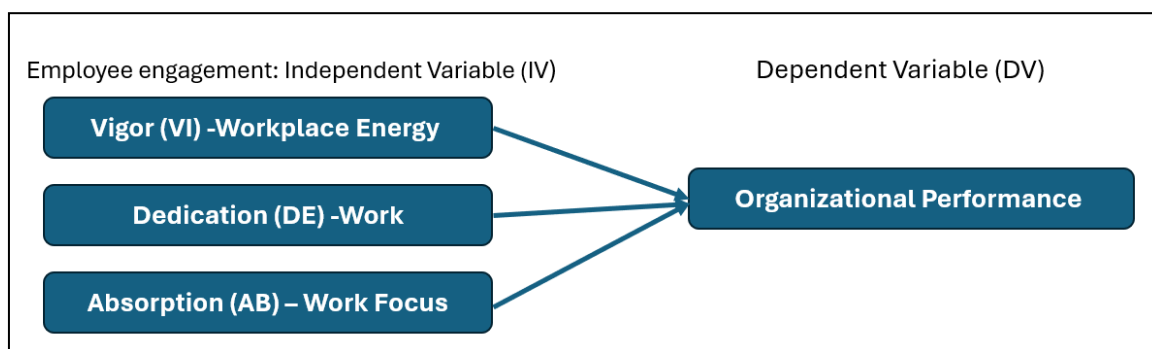
The research uses the JD-R model because it is instrumental in identifying specific factors within the workplace that can hinder or enhance employee engagement. By understanding these factors, organizations can strategically develop interventions that reduce job demands and augment job resources, boosting engagement and performance.

*Conceptual Framework*

Employee Engagement: Independent Variable

Organizational Performance: Dependent Variable

Conceptual Framework



*Research Question:*

To what extent do employee engagement factors influence organizational performance in HEIs in Oman?

H1: Workplace energy significantly impacts on organizational performance.

H2: Work commitment significantly impacts organizational performance.

H3: Work focus significantly impacts organizational performance.

**Research Methodology**

Research Design: This study examines the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance through quantitative research. The study involves gathering and analyzing numerical data to test hypotheses about the connection between engagement levels and various performance metrics in organizations. The quantitative approach is preferred as it provides unbiased results that can be applied across different contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This research will employ a quantitative approach to systematically evaluate hypotheses regarding the associations between employee engagement and organizational performance. Quantitative methods are deemed suitable as they enable the meticulous measurement and statistical examination of data obtained from a sizable sample, thereby allowing for the extrapolation of findings to a broader population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Data Collection Method:**

in this research, data collection will involve the dissemination of a carefully structured survey incorporating a rating scale. The survey will be distributed electronically online to employees in higher education institutes. Participant selection will adhere to a random sampling technique, thereby enhancing the likelihood of simply reflecting the population at larger and consequently increasing the general liability of findings to a broader audience. (Bryman, 2016).

#### *Sampling And Sample Size*

This study's sampling strategy was randomly selecting a sample from a large group of people. This method is considered adequate because it helps avoid favoritism and ensures that everyone in the population gets a fair chance to be part of the sample. It is crucial because it means we can apply our findings to everyone in the population, not just a few.

Sample size: In this research, the sample of 40 participants might seem small in quantitative research terms, but it is chosen based on what is needed for this study and the resources available due to the limited duration and scope. Even though it is not a huge group, having 40 participants can give some important earlier insights and help us support the trend in the data.

#### *Data Collection*

In this research, data collection will be facilitated through the utilization of a structure online questionnaire primarily selected for its cost effectiveness convenience and capacity to rapidly engage in diverse array of participants(Bryman, 2016). The a structured online questionnaire will be used to collect data and then will be tested on a small group of participants of 40 to ensure its clarity reliability and validity.

#### *Measurement Instrument*

In this research questionnaire is used and divided into sections:

Employee engagement: The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) has been modified to assess vigor, dedication, and absorption levels on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

Organizational performance: Participants will be asked to rate their perception of their performance in areas such as overall productivity, profitability, customer satisfaction, and innovation. Each item will be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

In this research, data will be collected, coded, and analysed using the statistical software SPSS. Statistics will be used to summarize the main study variables. The analysis examined the relationship between employee engagement and perceived organization and performance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

*Data Analysis and Findings*

Table1.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
Employee Engagement Vigor (VI) (Workplace Energy) EEV1-6	1. I look forward to going to work when I wake up in the morning.	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.897	1.021
	2. I feel very energetic at work.	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.923	0.900
	3. I keep trying at work, even when things get tough	SD	D	N	A	SA	4.282	0.793
	4. I can work for a long time without stopping	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.846	1.089
	5. I stay strong under pressure at work	SD	D	N	A	SA	4.103	0.852
	6. I feel strong and full of energy at work	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.718	0.944
Grand Mean							3.962	
Grand Standard Deviation							0.200	

*Data Analysis of Employee Engagement Survey*

The analysis of the first six items of the survey indicates that most participants view the current status of their work engagement and energy levels as positive, with the overall scores being higher than average. The analysis results demonstrate an agreement directed towards a high level of job satisfaction and commitment, with an overall mean of 3.962 and a grand standard deviation of 0.200. This low standard deviation points out that most respondents' answers are closely clustered around the mean, indicating consistency in responses across the sample.

The mean score for the third item, "I keep trying at work, even when things get tough," was the highest (M =

4.282, SD = 0.793), highlighting that resilience and perseverance are notably strong among the employees. This is closely followed by the fifth item, "I stay strong under pressure at work" (M = 4.103, SD = 0.852), which further illustrates the employees' ability to manage stress effectively.

In contrast, the lowest mean was observed for the sixth item, "I feel strong and full of energy at work" (M = 3.718, SD = 0.944), suggesting some variability in perceived energy levels, which could indicate areas where additional support might be beneficial.

The statistical results of section one indicates that the highest means were observed for participants' perceptions of their ability to keep trying and stay strong under pressure, suggesting these are more practiced than other aspects of engagement. The lowest mean related to energy levels indicates a perceived inconsistency in maintaining physical and mental Vigor at work. These findings reflect the need for more engagement in wellness programs to enhance energy levels and sustain high performance.

Participants believe that resilience (Item 3) and coping under pressure (Item 5) are managed and executed better than maintaining energy throughout the workday (Item 6), though there is still some scope for enhancement.

Overall, the survey results underscore a highly engaged workforce with great resilience and capability to work under pressure. However, the slight inconsistency in energy levels across the board suggests a potential area for improvement through targeted interventions to enhance physical and mental well-being. Such initiatives could help maintain high engagement levels and improve overall job performance and organizational commitment.

Table 1.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
Dedication (DE) - Work Commitment DE 1-5	To me, my job is challenging.	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.744	0.966
	My job inspires me	SD	D	N	A	SA	4.231	0.742
	I am enthusiastic about my job	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.949	0.972
	I am proud of the work that I do	SD	D	N	A	SA	4.231	0.872
	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	SD	D	N	A	SA	4.051	1.099
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
Grand Mean							4.041	
Grand Standard Deviation							0.206	



*Data Analysis of Employee Engagement Survey: Dedication and Work Commitment*

The analysis of the first five items of the survey focused on dedication and work commitment indicates that most participants view the current status of their employee engagement as highly positive, with the overall scores being above average. The analysis results demonstrate a strong alignment directed towards a high level of job inspiration and commitment, with an overall mean of 4.041 and a grand standard deviation of 0.206. This low standard deviation indicates that most respondents' answers are closely clustered around the mean, suggesting consistency in positive responses across the sample.

The mean score for the second item, "My job inspires me," was the highest ( $M = 4.231$ ,  $SD = 0.742$ ), emphasizing that inspiration derived from work is notably strong among the employees. The fourth item parallels this score, "I am proud of the work that I do" ( $M = 4.231$ ,  $SD = 0.872$ ), illustrating the employees' pride in their contributions and satisfaction with their roles.

In contrast, the lowest mean was observed for the first item, "To me, my job is challenging" ( $M = 3.744$ ,  $SD = 0.966$ ), suggesting some variability in how challenging employees find their work, which could indicate areas where more engaging or complex tasks might be beneficial.

Statistical results of this section indicate that the highest means were observed for participants' perceptions of inspiration and pride in their work, suggesting these aspects are more resonant than others in fostering work commitment. The lower mean related to job challenge indicates a perceived inconsistency in how stimulating the work is. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining challenging and meaningful work to keep engagement levels high.

Participants believe that feeling inspired by and proud of their work (Items 2 and 4) are aspects managed and executed better than finding the work challenging (Item 1), though there is still some scope for enhancement to ensure all employees find their roles stimulating.

Overall, the survey results underscore a workforce that is highly committed and finds deep meaning in their work, showing great dedication and satisfaction. However, the slight inconsistency in perceived challenge across the board suggests a potential area for improvement through targeted interventions aimed at increasing the complexity and engaging aspects of work. Such initiatives could help in maintaining high dedication levels and further improve overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Table 3.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
Absorption (AB) –	When I am working, I forget						3.897	0.995

Work Focus AB 1-6	everything else around me.							
	Time passes quickly when I am working	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.436	1.021
	I lose track of time when I am working	SD	D	N	A	SA	4.026	0.903
	It is hard for me to stop thinking about work	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.769	1.158
	I get deeply involved in my work	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.667	1.084
	I feel happy when I work hard	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.658	0.938
Grand Mean							3.742	
Grand Standard Deviation							0.206	

*Data Analysis of Employee Engagement Survey: Absorption and Work Focus*

The analysis of the first six items of the survey, which assesses the level of absorption and focus on work, indicates that most participants experience a considerable degree of immersion in their job activities, with the overall scores being above average. The results demonstrate a pronounced commitment to work, with an overall mean of 3.742 and a grand standard deviation of 0.206. This low standard deviation signifies that most respondents' answers are closely clustered around the mean, indicating participants' uniform perception of work absorption.

The mean score for the third item, "I lose track of time when I am working," was the highest ( $M = 4.026$ ,  $SD = 0.903$ ), highlighting a strong sense of flow and engagement among the employees. This indicates that when engaged in work tasks, employees are likely to become fully immersed, to the extent that they lose awareness of the passage of time.

Conversely, the lowest mean was observed for the second item, "Time passes quickly when I am working" ( $M = 3.436$ ,  $SD = 1.021$ ), suggesting some variability in how quickly employees perceive time to pass during work. This lower score may point to differing levels of task engagement or the nature of the tasks, which could vary in their capacity to captivate attention.

Statistical results of this section indicate that the highest means were observed for participants' perceptions related to losing track of time, signifying that these moments of deep focus are more pronounced than the general speed at which time passes during work activities. The lower mean related to the perception of time passing quickly underscores an area where increasing task engagement could further enhance absorption.

Participants believe that their ability to lose track of time (Item 3) and their difficulty in disengaging from work thoughts (Item 4,  $M = 3.769$ ,  $SD = 1.158$ ) are managed well, reflecting a high level of work immersion. However, the variations in how absorbed they feel in routine work activities (Item 5,  $M = 3.667$ ,  $SD = 1.084$ ) and their happiness associated with hard work (Item 6,  $M = 3.658$ ,  $SD = 0.938$ ) suggest room for enhancing how work is structured and the motivational factors involved.

Overall, the survey results demonstrate a workforce that is capable of deep work focus and absorption, indicative of high levels of employee engagement. However, the variability in how time perception and overall happiness during hard work are experienced suggests potential areas for improvement. By fostering an environment that enhances the captivating aspects of tasks and aligns motivational incentives with the nature of the work, the organization can strengthen this immersion, thereby boosting productivity and overall job satisfaction.

Table 4.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
Organizational Performance OP 1-5	I can freely give my opinion about the institute's management	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.769	0.902
	No one leaves our institute because of internal issues	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.513	1.144
	Employees are very dedicated to the institute.	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.692	0.950
	The management team gives helpful feedback on complaints	SD	D	N	A	SA	4.051	0.999
	I am satisfied with my institute's management team	SD	D	N	A	SA	3.59	1.163
Grand Mean							3.723	
Grand Standard Deviation							0.208	

*Data Analysis of Employee Engagement Survey: Organizational Performance*

The analysis of the five items of the survey related to organizational performance and employee perceptions of management indicates that overall, participants have a moderately positive view of the institute's management, with the overall scores being above average. The analysis results demonstrate a general agreement with positive sentiments about management practices, with an overall mean of 3.723 and a grand standard deviation of 0.208. This low standard deviation indicates that responses are relatively consistent across the sample, suggesting a uniform perception among participants.

The mean score for the fourth item, "The management team gives helpful feedback on complaints," was the highest ( $M = 4.051$ ,  $SD = 0.999$ ), highlighting effective communication and responsiveness from the management as a strong aspect of the organization. This reflects a management style perceived as supportive and responsive to employee concerns, facilitating a positive work environment.

In contrast, the lowest mean was observed for the second item, "No one leaves our institute because of internal issues" ( $M = 3.513$ ,  $SD = 1.144$ ), suggesting some concerns about internal stability and employee retention. This variability in scores could indicate areas where improvements in organizational culture and internal conflict resolution could be beneficial.

Statistical results of this section indicate that the highest means were observed for participants' perceptions of the management's responsiveness and effectiveness in handling complaints, suggesting that these areas are strengths within the organization. The lower mean related to employee retention and satisfaction with management's handling of internal issues highlights potential areas for improvement.

Participants believe that the management's feedback on complaints (Item 4) is managed and executed better than their handling of internal issues that could lead to employee turnover (Item 2), though there is still some scope for enhancement in this area.

Overall, the survey results underscore a generally positive outlook towards the management at the institute, with high scores for management responsiveness to complaints. However, the slight inconsistency in perceptions related to internal stability and satisfaction with management suggests potential areas for improvement. Enhancing communication strategies, addressing internal conflicts more effectively, and ensuring a transparent approach to management decisions could help in maintaining high levels of organizational performance and further improve overall job satisfaction and employee retention.

## **Discussion**

The survey findings on employee engagement and organizational performance within the context of HEIs in Oman reflect the broader theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review. This study supports the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Organizational Support Theory (OST) by confirming employee engagement's crucial role in improving organizational performance.

### **Alignment with Organizational Support Theory**

The survey findings show that employees have rated management's responsiveness positively ( $M = 4.051$ ,  $SD = 0.999$ ). This aligns with Organizational Support Theory, which suggests that when employees perceive higher levels of organizational support, they tend to have higher job satisfaction and engagement (Eisenberger et al.,

1986). Employees who perceive management feedback as supportive tend to have a strong emotional attachment to the organization, leading to increased willingness to contribute to organizational goals as per the OST effectively.

The survey also revealed concerns about internal stability and employee retention ( $M = 3.513$ ,  $SD = 1.144$ ), which might highlight a possible area where perceived organizational support could be lacking. Enhancing internal conflict resolution strategies could thus be a crucial area for development to prevent turnover and increase overall organizational commitment.

#### *Integration with the JD-R Model*

Further, the findings related to employee vigor and dedication correlate with the JD-R model, which emphasizes the role of job resources in fostering employee engagement by mitigating job demands and promoting personal growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The high scores for employee perseverance ( $M = 4.282$ ,  $SD = 0.793$ ) and pride in work ( $M = 4.231$ ,  $SD = 0.872$ ) reflect significant job resources that help employees achieve work goals and stimulate engagement. However, the variance in perceptions of energy levels and the challenge of work (lowest mean at  $M = 3.744$ ,  $SD = 0.966$ ) indicate an area where additional resources might be needed to enhance engagement fully. Providing more challenging and engaging tasks could serve as additional job resources that reduce burnout and increase job satisfaction, aligning with the JD-R model's recommendations for enhancing employee productivity and organizational performance.

#### *Implications for Practice and Policy*

The strong link between employee engagement and organizational performance observed in this study is consistent with the assertions of (Gyensare et al.,2017), who noted that engaged employees are more likely to contribute positively to organizational outcomes such as productivity, innovation, and customer satisfaction.

The study aims to enhance understanding of Oman Higher Education Institute's context, proposing that targeted strategies like communication, leadership development, and conflict resolution can be effective.

#### *Theoretical and Practical Contributions*

Expands on established theories while also providing fresh perspective on how to apply these theories within a particular cultural and institutional context it eliminates the intricate process of fostering employee engagement within higher education institutions in Oman, offering insights for similar organizations encountering comparable obstacles. In addition, by looking at administrative and support staff, this builds on previous research that has predominantly looked at academic staff, to provide a much fuller picture of levels of employee engagement in higher education institutions.

## Limitations of the Study

Despite being an important insight into the relationship of the engagement of employees and the performance of higher education institutions in Oman, it is important to recognize its limitations. One of those limitations is that the study was carried out in a specific cultural and institutional context where it is not clear to what extent the findings can be generalized to other locations or other sorts of organizations. Aside from the lack of external validity of the study, there is the sample size.

The sample size in the present research was adequate to conduct the preliminary analysis. However, it is a small sample size relative to other studies and other reports, and this could undermine the robustness of the conclusion reached and its statistical power. Another limitation of the study was the reliance on self-reported data, which could lead to bias in the data set of either social desirability or just plain old response bias, which would make the respondents inclined to report their engagement levels inaccurately.

Furthermore, while the quantitative approach may lead to more systematic, replicable data sets, it can also miss interpersonal dynamics and idiosyncratic individual differences that the qualitative method could uncover.

## Significance of the Findings

The findings of this study have significant implications for practical applications and theoretical advancement in the field of organizational behavior. Specifically, the study sheds light on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance in the Middle Eastern educational sector, focusing on Higher Educational Institutes in Oman. The research adds to the existing literature on employee engagement by providing quantitative evidence that vigor, dedication, absorption, and commitment significantly impact performance metrics in this sector.

The study emphasizes the vital role that engagement factors play in improving communication, dedication, and operational effectiveness. These factors are crucial in achieving educational and institutional objectives. The study proves that targeted engagement strategies should be integrated into organizational development programs. Academic institutions in regions like Oman can benefit from promoting a highly engaged workforce. Doing so can boost job satisfaction, increase retention, and enhance institutional effectiveness.

Aligning employee motivations with organizational goals is crucial for success. educational institutes can improve outcomes by creating an engaged work environment that enhances performance, loyalty, and commitment. This is essential for maintaining competitiveness in the evolving global education sector.

Furthermore, the knowledge acquired from this research could be of tremendous value to administrators, policymakers, and human resources experts seeking to establish leadership development programs and boost

performance by prioritizing engagement strategies. As academic establishments continue to acknowledge the significance of their workforce in realizing strategic objectives, the capacity to foster and elevate employee engagement may emerge as a critical competitive edge.

The present study addresses a significant gap in the literature by providing valuable insights into a non-Western educational situation. The researcher offers actionable guidance to academic leaders who aspire to enhance their institution's performance by implementing deliberate improvements in employee engagement measures. This study's findings are of particular importance to researchers and practitioners seeking to broaden their understanding of effective leadership practices in diverse cultural contexts.

## Conclusion

This research study underlines how crucial employee engagement is for higher education institutes in Oman. Items to that engaged employees positively impacted organizational performance and pinpoint areas for improvement the research aims to offer insights for leaders and policymakers to share HR strategies that nature high engaged and high-performing workforce by identifying factors influencing employee engagement this is study could boost institutional performance and innovate education quality the findings could inform the development of effective HR policies and practices that encourage employee engagement and ultimately result in improved organizational outcomes.

This research study shows how employee engagement influences organizational performance. The findings showed that energy commitment and focus positively affect organizational performance. This study stresses the pivotal role of employee engagement in fostering communication, teamwork, and reaching organizational goals. It also highlights how a higher engagement level enhanced job satisfaction and organizational performance in higher education settings.

This study demonstrates the need to invest in employee engagement initiatives in educational institutions for improved productivity and outcomes. Implementing programs to enhance job satisfaction and commitment can bring significant benefits in the evolving educational landscape. While there are limitations like sample size and self-reported data, the research has implications for both researchers and practical application. Further investigation with participants is essential to understand the broader relevance of the findings. In addition, incorporating objective metrics for employee engagement and organizational performance could enhance credibility.

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# The Relationship Between Socially Responsible HRM and Environmental Citizenship Behaviors for Industrial Companies in Egypt: The Mediating Role of Moral Reflectiveness


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**Abstract:** Egypt's 2030 vision places significant emphasis on sustainable development across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, while also recognizing the rights of future generations. Consequently, organizations are increasingly compelled to integrate social and environmental considerations into their strategies. This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of moral reflectiveness among employees in the relationship between socially responsible Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and environmental citizenship behavior. Drawing upon Social Cognitive Theory and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, we conducted a survey questionnaire to gather primary data from 327 employees working in industrial companies located in the new Damietta city. Our findings reveal that socially responsible HRM practices positively influence employees' environmental citizenship behavior, with moral reflectiveness serving as a complete mediator in this relationship. These results contribute to the expanding body of literature on the determinants of sustainable behavior among workers, offering novel insights into the linkages between environmentally conscious HR practices and environmental citizenship. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of moral reflectiveness in shaping employees' environmentally responsible behavior within organizations. Theoretical implications underscore the relevance of integrating moral considerations into HRM frameworks aimed at fostering sustainable practices. From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that organizations can enhance environmental citizenship behavior among employees by implementing socially responsible HRM initiatives. Future research could further explore the mechanisms through which moral reflectiveness influences employees' engagement in sustainable behaviors, as well as investigate additional contextual factors that may moderate these relationships.

**Keywords:** socially responsible HRM , moral reflectiveness , environmental citizenship behaviors

**Citation:** Abouraia, M.K., Galal, H.M., Al Morsy, R.M.(2024). The relationship between socially responsible hrm and environmental Citizenship behaviors for industrial companies in Egypt: the mediating Role of moral reflectiveness. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2481-2514), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Over the last fifteen years, there has been a discernible increase in the interest of organizations in incorporating social and environmental factors into their pursuit of sustainable development principles and goals. As a result of the growing focus on sustainability's social and environmental aspects, businesses are involving internal stakeholders in the creation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) frameworks. Regarding these stakeholders, human resources are regarded as essential, and companies have a duty to meet their needs (Luu, 2020; Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2022). The relationship between corporate social responsibility and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices has therefore attracted increasing scholarly attention (Heikkinen et al., 2020; Omid and Dal Zotto, 2022).

The emergence of Socially Responsible Human Resource Management (SRHRM) signifies a critical response to ongoing developments in organizational dynamics, representing a pivotal breakthrough in HRM practices. With organizations increasingly recognizing human resources as their most valuable asset, enhancing the social responsibility and operational efficacy of HRM becomes imperative to sustain its contribution over time (Abu Al-Rous & Al-Qassas, 2021).

Within HRM literature, SRHRM is acknowledged as a relatively nascent domain, with proponents advocating its necessity for driving organizational cultural transformations (Sancho et al., 2019; Shao and Peng, 2022a). The foundational works of SRHRM pioneers have significantly influenced corporate social responsibility studies, albeit receiving limited attention in Arab contexts. Nevertheless, it is posited that employees' environmental conscientiousness is significantly influenced by their moral reflectiveness, as per the Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that individuals' perceptions shape their behaviors (Liao et al., 2022).

Employing the degree of moral reflectiveness as a metric allows for discerning various levels of ethical conduct among individuals, reflecting their adherence to cultural norms and values (Chu et al., 2021). Consequently, it is expected that HRM practices infused with moral reflectiveness will catalyze employees' engagement in social responsibility initiatives within organizations. Building upon the works of Littman-Ovadia (2020) and Freidlin (2020), it is evident that individuals who consistently contemplate ethics exhibit a heightened propensity for fostering positive social behaviors within their professional spheres.

Research on environmental citizenship behavior is highly esteemed among scholars engaged in international projects. However, investigations into this behavior within Arab contexts are still nascent. Environmental

citizenship behavior, defined as voluntary or discretionary actions by employees aimed at enhancing the environment, not mandated or rewarded by their organizations, is gaining prominence (Ren et al., 2020; Mi et al., 2021; Islam et al., 2022). Consequently, there is an increasing imperative to focus on studying employees' pro-environmental behaviors as an indicator of their future environmental actions.

Despite the extensive attention within organizational behavior literature to discerning contextual factors and psychological mechanisms that foster environmental citizenship behavior, applied studies have predominantly adopted a partial perspective. This perspective often characterizes environmentally supportive behaviors as individually beneficial to society. However, this approach lacks comprehensive theoretical insights at the organizational level. Therefore, there is a critical need to incorporate factors influencing environmental citizenship behavior at the organizational level to develop a more nuanced understanding. One such influential factor is Human Resource Management (HRM) practices.

This study aims to bridge the gap between the holistic perspective offered by organizational behavior research and the partial perspective of HRM by examining the link between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior within the industrial sector. By doing so, it seeks to enhance integration between these two perspectives, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of environmental citizenship behavior in organizational settings.

The current study presents four principal contributions to the extant literature. Firstly, it enhances the breadth of inquiry into the domain of Environmentally Directed Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) by elucidating the pivotal role of socially responsible Human Resource Management (HRM). This research underscores the significance of employees' perception of their organization's commitment to socially responsible HRM as a robust predictor of their engagement in environmental citizenship behavior.

Secondly, it introduces the concept of the Ethical Reflection Role, grounded in Social Cognitive Theory, as a mechanism mediating the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior. Drawing from social cognitive theory, the study posits that employees' moral reflection serves as a critical link in aligning the principles of socially responsible HRM with their environmental actions.

Thirdly, the study expands the research horizon by delving into the antecedents and underlying mechanisms of environmental citizenship behavior. By uncovering the psychological and social mechanisms at play, particularly the mediating role of employees' moral reflection, it offers deeper insights into the pathways through which socially responsible HRM influences environmental citizenship behavior. Lastly, the research provides nuanced perspectives on the mechanisms underlying the impact of socially responsible HRM. By elucidating why and under what conditions socially responsible HRM fosters employees' ethical motivations and environmentally supportive behaviors, it enriches our understanding of the intricate dynamics between organizational practices and individual behaviors within the context of environmental sustainability.

## Literature review

### Socially Responsible Human Resource Management (HRM),

The concept of socially responsible Human Resource Management (HRM) introduced by Orlitzky and Swanson (2006), represents an innovative approach within the HRM domain aimed at fostering greater employee engagement in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. According to Shao and Peng (2022), socially responsible HRM is regarded as a pivotal element of corporate social responsibility programs, fundamental to their effective implementation. This encompasses a diverse array of activities, including the integration of morality and personal attributes into hiring processes, the provision of instruction on social responsibility initiatives, the alignment of employee remuneration and benefits with social dimensions, and the adaptation of performance appraisal systems to advance social objectives. Moreover, it entails the development of a coherent vision and the delineation of specific values pertinent to the CSR strategy (Zhang et al., 2021).

The burgeoning interest in evaluating corporate social responsibility through the lens of human resource management (HRM) has given rise to a robust research field, significantly enriching scholarly discourse on the topic (Rawshdeh et al., 2019; Omidi and Dal Zotto, 2022). Nonetheless, despite notable advancements, the literature in this field continues to offer fertile ground for theoretical exploration and practical applications.

Celmaa et al. (2018) assert that environmentally responsible human resource management endeavors to enhance employees' well-being while concurrently supporting their personal and societal aspirations. Effective management of resources and capabilities assumes paramount importance as organizations strive to fulfill their overarching objectives. The existing HRM literature underscores the imperative of devising a strategic HRM framework that prioritizes the attainment of both organizational and societal goals (Santana et al., 2020).

Socially responsible human resource management confers numerous advantages, including the promotion of work-life balance, the provision of ongoing education and training, and the adoption of inclusive hiring practices (Tuan et al., 2021). According to He and Kim (2021), socially responsible HRM facilitates the application of corporate social responsibility to the workforce, encompassing social considerations in hiring, promotion, performance evaluation, rewards allocation, staff retention, and social issue training. It is characterized by proactive efforts to enhance employees' experiences and ethically fulfill their social and personal expectations (Vesely& Klöckner, 2020).

Bombiak and Marciniuk-Kluska (2019) conceptualize this notion as grounded in investments in human capital, the provision of employment opportunities, and the establishment of safe and healthy work environments. It encompasses the resolution of societal issues for the betterment of communities and the fostering of individual satisfaction. De Stefano et al. (2018) articulate it as a suite of human resource management (HRM) strategies initiated by organizations to enhance incentives for employee engagement in corporate social responsibility (CSR) endeavors, thereby benefiting external stakeholders. These strategies encompass the recruitment and

retention of socially responsible personnel, provision of CSR training, consideration of employees' societal contributions in promotion decisions, and incorporation of CSR performance evaluations.

Studies by He and Kim (2021) suggest that organizational pursuit of socially responsible HRM is an effective means to boost employee morale and productivity. Al-Amin et al. (2021) define it as an integral component of corporate social responsibility initiatives and a critical tool for their successful implementation. Additionally, He et al. (2021a) define it as a set of practices aimed at enhancing the social responsibility, motivation, and opportunities of responsible employees, often including humanistic goals and benefits, such as appointing and retaining socially responsible employees, providing corporate social responsibility training, evaluating employees' social responsibility performance, and offering compensation and advancement opportunities.

Social identity theory, as defined by Nie et al. (2018), elucidates individuals' inclination to maintain perceived superiority within a group, suggesting that individuals identify more with organizations possessing favorable reputations, thereby enhancing their self-esteem (Newman et al., 2016). Social exchange theory posits that organizational commitments to social responsibility prompt employees to reciprocate with positive work-related behaviors (López-Fernández et al., 2018; Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2022).

#### *Moral Reflectiveness*

Zhao and Zhou (2021) posit that moral reflection involves shifts in cognitive processes or rational judgment regarding what is considered acceptable or unacceptable at different stages of moral development. In other words, moral reflectiveness pertains to how individuals arrive at specific determinations of right or wrong, distinct from ethical values, which represent personal beliefs about conduct.

Afsar and Umrani (2020) define moral reflection as variations in individuals' engagement in ethically oriented contemplation concerning the extent of their ethical considerations in daily decisions. Social cognition theory suggests that individual behavior is shaped by both personal and environmental factors, with interactions within ethical contexts particularly attuned to ethical issues. These behaviors may be influenced by environmental interactions (Li et al., 2022). Additionally, Cai et al. (2022) propose that workers may be driven to assess themselves and their actions through internal motivations. Internal motivation, stemming from a desire for activities that bring satisfaction, can manifest in moral reflection or contemplation among workers.

The concept of moral reflectiveness, gaining increasing attention in contemporary research, pertains to individuals' cognitive processes and rational judgment regarding moral considerations. This review explores recent scholarship on moral reflectiveness, covering its role in ethical decision-making, leadership, employee behavior, organizational dynamics, and its interaction with factors such as ethical climate and corporate social responsibility.



Kim and Park (2023) conducted a thorough review and integration of literature, emphasizing the pivotal role of moral reflectiveness in ethical decision-making processes. Their analysis underscores the importance of individuals' moral deliberation in navigating complex ethical dilemmas within organizational contexts. Wong and Chiu (2023) found moral reflectiveness to be a key determinant of ethical leadership effectiveness. Their study suggests that leaders with higher levels of moral reflectiveness demonstrate greater ethical consideration in decision-making, fostering a culture of integrity and trust within organizations.

Gao and Jiang (2023) explored the impact of moral reflectiveness on employee prosocial behavior, discovering a positive association between the two constructs. Their study suggests that individuals with heightened moral reflectiveness are more likely to engage in behaviors benefiting others, contributing to a supportive and ethical work environment. Chen and Li (2024) conducted a longitudinal analysis investigating the relationship between moral reflectiveness and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Their research highlights moral reflectiveness as a predictor of CSR engagement, emphasizing its role in driving ethical initiatives and sustainable business practices over time.

Zhang and Liu (2024) examined the moderating effect of moral reflectiveness on the relationship between ethical leadership and employee job satisfaction. Their analysis indicates that moral reflectiveness enhances the positive impact of ethical leadership on employee well-being, fostering a sense of fulfillment and commitment among organizational members. Nguyen and Le (2024) studied the effects of ethical climate on employee moral reflectiveness, employing a multi-level analytical approach. Their findings suggest that organizational environments characterized by strong ethical climates facilitate the development of moral reflectiveness among employees, promoting ethical awareness and behavior throughout the organization.

Huang and Wang (2024) conducted a meta-analytic review exploring the mechanisms underlying moral reflectiveness, providing insights into its cognitive and affective dimensions. Their synthesis of existing research sheds light on the psychological processes involved in moral reflection, offering valuable implications for understanding and fostering moral development in individuals. Zhu and Liu (2024) conducted a case study examining the role of moral reflectiveness in managerial decision-making, particularly among Chinese managers. Their research highlights the importance of moral deliberation in guiding managerial actions and shaping organizational outcomes, noting cultural variations in the manifestation of moral reflectiveness.

Wu and Hu (2024) investigated the role of moral reflectiveness in fostering ethical behavior among healthcare professionals through qualitative analysis. Their study underscores the significance of moral reflection in promoting ethical awareness and responsibility within healthcare settings, with implications for patient care and organizational ethics. Lastly, Yang and Chen (2024) explored the moderating effect of moral reflectiveness on the relationship between ethical climate and organizational commitment. Their cross-sectional study suggests that individuals with higher levels of moral reflectiveness are more likely to align with organizational values and goals, enhancing commitment and engagement among employees.

In summary, recent research on moral reflectiveness underscores its multifaceted role in ethical decision-making, leadership effectiveness, employee behavior, and organizational dynamics. These studies collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of moral reflectiveness and its implications for fostering ethical awareness, responsible leadership, and sustainable organizational practices across diverse contexts.

### *Environmental citizenship behavior*

The concept of environmental citizenship behavior was initially outlined by Daily et al. (2009), who defined it as individual and proactive social conduct exhibited by employees aimed at enhancing organizational environmental management (Ullah et al., 2021). Gurmani et al. (2021) further elaborate on this concept, defining environmental citizenship behavior as voluntary actions undertaken by employees that embody additional efforts directed towards benefiting the natural environment and bolstering the organization's environmental performance. This construct closely aligns with organizational citizenship behavior but is uniquely oriented towards environmental concerns, as emphasized by Neessen et al. (2021).

Ren et al. (2020) conceptualize environmental citizenship behavior as a subset of organizational citizenship behavior, encompassing individuals' voluntary and proactive behaviors contributing to enhancing organizational effectiveness, particularly within the environmental realm. High scorers in environmental citizenship behavior demonstrate a readiness to engage in positive environmental endeavors (Islam et al., 2022), underscoring its relevance in contemporary discourse surrounding environmental management practices (Yin et al., 2021). Particularly in industrial settings, environmental citizenship behavior entails actions such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and the adoption of eco-friendly practices (Zhao and Zhou, 2021).

Asghar et al. (2022) stress the pivotal role of voluntary employee engagement in environmental activities for organizational progress in environmental sustainability. Employees can contribute through various environmentally oriented behaviors, actively participating in the implementation of environmental standards. Ojedokun (2021) characterizes environmental citizenship behavior as employees' responses to corporate environmental social responsibility initiatives and practices within the organizational framework. Khan et al. (2021) echo this sentiment, defining it as proactive efforts by employees to foster environmental stewardship and effective environmental management practices.

While scholars such as Ismail and Al-Bardan (2018) perceive environmental citizenship behavior as discretionary actions by employees towards environmental improvement, Malik et al. (2021) emphasize its role in conscientious environmental management. Aslam et al. (2021) further elaborate, describing it as voluntary, unmandated behavior aimed at fostering organizational and community sustainability.

In essence, environmental citizenship behavior comprises voluntary actions undertaken by employees, yielding environmental benefits for both the organization and the broader community. Gurmani et al. (2021) characterize

it as actions driven by employees' environmental concerns and alignment with the organization's environmental management strategy, including advocacy and encouragement of environmental protection efforts among peers.

Despite variations in definitions, scholars generally converge on two key attributes: environmental citizenship behavior is beneficial to both the environment and society, and it transcends formal work requirements within an informal organizational context. This study adopts the premise that environmental citizenship behavior embodies employees' spontaneous environmentally and socially beneficial actions in the workplace, influenced by organizational strategies and employees' psychological orientations. From these diverse perspectives, environmental citizenship behavior is construed as voluntary environmental initiatives by employees, not mandated by organizational directives, aimed at improving environmental performance and fostering sustainable environmental responsibility.

Recent studies have continued to explore and provide insights into the concept of environmental citizenship behavior, shedding light on its dimensions, antecedents, and outcomes. Building upon previous research, these investigations contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of individuals in promoting environmental sustainability within organizational contexts. Wang and Chen (2023) conducted a longitudinal study examining the relationship between environmental citizenship behavior and organizational sustainability performance in a multinational corporation. Their findings revealed a significant positive association between employees' engagement in environmental citizenship behavior and various indicators of organizational sustainability, including reduced carbon footprint and enhanced eco-efficiency.

In a cross-cultural examination, Li et al. (2023) compared environmental citizenship behavior across different national contexts, focusing on the influence of cultural values on employees' environmental engagement. Their study highlighted the importance of cultural factors in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors towards environmental stewardship, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive approaches to promote environmental citizenship behavior in diverse organizational settings.

Expanding the theoretical framework of environmental citizenship behavior, Smith et al. (2024) proposed a multi-level model that integrates individual, organizational, and contextual factors in explaining variations in employees' environmental engagement. Drawing on insights from social psychology and organizational behavior, their model offers a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying environmental citizenship behavior and its implications for organizational sustainability.

In a qualitative inquiry, Garcia et al. (2024) explored the role of leadership in fostering environmental citizenship behavior among employees in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Their study identified transformational leadership behaviors, such as visioning and empowerment, as critical drivers of employees' environmental initiatives, highlighting the pivotal role of leadership in cultivating a culture of environmental responsibility within SMEs.

Echoing the importance of organizational culture, Zhang et al. (2024) investigated the influence of organizational climate on employees' environmental citizenship behavior in the hospitality industry. Their findings underscored the significance of supportive organizational climates, characterized by environmental values, norms, and practices, in fostering employees' pro-environmental behaviors and enhancing organizational environmental performance.

In a novel approach, Jones et al. (2024) examined the role of technology-mediated interventions in promoting environmental citizenship behavior among remote workers. Their experimental study demonstrated the effectiveness of virtual platforms and gamification strategies in incentivizing and sustaining employees' engagement in environmentally friendly practices, highlighting the potential of digital tools in advancing environmental sustainability agendas in the era of remote work.

Collectively, these recent studies contribute to a growing body of literature on environmental citizenship behavior, offering valuable insights into its determinants, mechanisms, and outcomes within diverse organizational contexts. By elucidating the complex interplay between individual, organizational, and contextual factors, these investigations inform the development of evidence-based strategies for promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability in the workplace.

#### *Hypothesis development*

##### *Socially Responsible HRM and Moral Reflectiveness*

According to Afsar and Umrani (2020), moral reflectiveness pertains to the extent to which individuals contemplate moral issues in their daily encounters and decisions, as well as the depth of morally guided reflection they undertake regarding these experiences. Personality traits and individual differences have been identified as factors influencing the relationship between employee work outcomes and perceived corporate social responsibility (Nejati & Shafaei, 2023). Previous studies on personality have demonstrated that individual traits largely account for behavioral variations among individuals and shape their inclinations towards ethical conduct (Chen et al., 2023; Berniak-Woźny et al., 2023; Silva et al., 2023).

Employers are urged to foster employee engagement in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, ensuring that the emphasis is not solely on meeting stakeholder expectations or legal requirements. Instead, they should communicate that the objective of CSR initiatives is to safeguard the environment, promote societal well-being, and foster sustainable development (Mughal et al., 2023). Consequently, employees perceive these CSR endeavors as morally and ethically sound (Mansour et al., 2023).

The inclination towards moral uprightness delineates the behaviors of individuals characterized by moral reflectiveness (Murshed et al., 2023). Moral reflectiveness is posited to encourage pro-environmental behavior, as individuals prioritize morally correct actions aligned with their personal values, irrespective of tangible benefits. For instance, actions such as turning off lights when leaving the office or opting for stairs over the

elevator are discretionary actions that contribute to environmental conservation, driven by a sense of purpose and responsibility towards future generations. Individuals with a strong moral compass prioritize ethical considerations in decision-making, leading to a propensity for pro-environmental behaviors at the workplace (Ng et al., 2023). Shaaban and Rabie (2023) underscore the significant impact of social responsibility HRM on overall organizational sustainability, emphasizing its nexus with sustainable development (SD) and its relevance to broader HRM and CSR discourse.

Zhao and Zhou (2021) found that social responsibility HRM positively influences hospitality employees' organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment, with moral reflectiveness mediating this relationship. Moreover, the study highlighted that lower levels of responsible leadership were associated with a heightened effect of social responsibility HRM on moral reflectiveness, thereby indirectly influencing organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment. These findings elucidate the mechanisms through which social responsibility HRM influences organizational citizenship behavior, offering insights into macro-level factors shaping the environmental intentions of hospitality employees. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize:

H1: Socially responsible human resources management has significant positive impact on the moral reflectiveness of employees.

#### *Moral Reflectiveness and Environmental citizenship behavior*

Li et al., (2023) demonstrated that environmentally specific transformational leadership positively predicts employee organizational citizenship behavior for the environment, and moral reflectiveness mediates this relationship. Further, leader group prototypicality strengthens the positive relationship between environmentally specific transformational leadership and subsequent moral reflectiveness. they extend the understanding of environmentally specific transformational leadership in the context of manufacturing companies and has practical implications to help employees accelerate their organizational citizenship behavior for the environment.

According Potakey, et al., (2023) the students' environmental values made them more likely to behave in a way that supported the environment. High biospheric and altruistic values are prerequisites for environmental citizenship behaviors, and the students possessed these values in abundance. According to the study, school administrators should use environmental literacy to increase students' environmental engagement. The Ghana Education Service should also assist school environmental clubs in order to foster a love of the natural world and to provide a forum for environmental activism in the public domain. Pham et. al., (2023) found common good HRM directly and positively influences ethical employee behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors toward individual OCBI, and indirectly positively influences these two types of behavior via value commitment. Interestingly, the relationship between common good HRM and ethical employee behaviors was found to be significantly stronger when combined with high levels of spiritual leadership. Unexpectedly, however, spiritual leadership was not found to moderate the common good HRM - OCBI relationship.

Jiang et al. (2023) presented an integrative model examining the double-edged sword effect of unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) from the perspective of the actors. Drawing on the moral self-regulation perspective and psychological entitlement literature, we propose that employees who engage in UPB may experience an increase in moral deficits and psychological entitlement, resulting in increased organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and decreased work effort, respectively. We further propose that moral attentiveness strengthens the positive relationship between UPB and moral deficits but weakens the positive relationship between UPB and psychological entitlement. Moreover, the strength of the indirect effects of employee UPB on OCB and work effort is also contingent upon employees' moral attentiveness. Priyadarshini et al. (2023) found that green transformational leadership promotes green empowerment and organizational citizenship behaviors toward the environment (OCBE) among the employees. It also reveals that environmental passion plays a key role in promoting eco - initiative and eco-helping behavior among the employees when they are empowered for green practices. Also, the influence of resource commitment fosters eco-civic engagement among the employees. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize:

H2: moral reflectiveness of employees has significant positive impact on Environmental citizenship behavior.

#### *Socially Responsible HRM and Environmental Citizenship Behavior*

Li et al. (2023) explained that environmentally specific transformational leadership significantly predicts employees' organizational citizenship behavior for the environment, with moral reflectiveness serving as a mediating mechanism. Moreover, the study highlighted that leader group prototypicality amplifies the positive association between environmentally specific transformational leadership and subsequent moral reflectiveness, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of this leadership style within the manufacturing sector and offering practical insights to facilitate employees' engagement in organizational citizenship behavior for the environment.

According to Potakey et al. (2023), students' environmental values play a pivotal role in shaping their pro-environmental behaviors. The presence of high biospheric and altruistic values among students serves as a foundation for environmental citizenship behaviors. The study suggests that educational institutions should leverage environmental literacy initiatives to enhance students' environmental engagement. Additionally, the Ghana Education Service is encouraged to support school environmental clubs to cultivate a reverence for the natural world and provide a platform for environmental advocacy in the public sphere.

Pham et al. (2023) found that common good HRM exerts a direct and positive influence on ethical employee behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors towards individuals, with value commitment mediating this relationship. Interestingly, the study revealed that the relationship between common good HRM and ethical employee behaviors is significantly enhanced in the presence of high levels of spiritual leadership. However,



spiritual leadership was not found to moderate the relationship between common good HRM and organizational citizenship behaviors towards individuals.

Jiang et al. (2023) proposed an integrative model exploring the nuanced effects of unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) on employees. Drawing upon the moral self-regulation perspective and psychological entitlement literature, the study posits that engagement in UPB may lead to moral deficits and increased psychological entitlement among employees, consequently influencing organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and work effort, respectively. The study further suggests that moral attentiveness moderates the relationship between UPB and moral deficits, as well as UPB and psychological entitlement, with the strength of indirect effects on OCB and work effort contingent upon employees' level of moral attentiveness.

Finally, Priyadarshini et al. (2023) demonstrated that green transformational leadership fosters green empowerment and organizational citizenship behaviors towards the environment among employees. The study highlighted the pivotal role of environmental passion in promoting eco-initiative and eco-helping behaviors among empowered employees. Furthermore, the study underscored the influence of resource commitment in nurturing eco-civic engagement among employees. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize:

H3: Socially Responsible HRM has significant positive impact on Environmental citizenship behavior.

#### *The Mediating Role of Moral Reflectiveness*

The predominant focus of applied research in recent years has been on investigating the societal implications of responsible Human Resource Management (HRM) on employee attitudes and behaviors. Studies have predominantly explored dimensions such as social identity (Kundu and Gahlawat, 2015) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Newman et al., 2016) among employees. However, despite this extensive examination, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the exploration of whether socially responsible HRM correlates with employees' ethical attributes, notably ethical identity and moral reflection concerning societal impacts. The exploration of ethical dimensions is paramount due to their intrinsic connection with ethical decision-making processes (Türegün, 2018). Notably, Pham et al. (2018) have suggested a relationship between socially responsible HRM and employees' ethical awareness, underlining the importance of such investigations.

Moral reflection, as conceptualized by Chu et al. (2021), refers to the deliberate contemplation by individuals of their experiences through an ethical lens. This perspective is rooted in the social cognitive theory, which posits that individual behavior is shaped by the interplay of personal and environmental factors, with ethical contexts being particularly influential in guiding behaviors (Liao et al., 2022). The social impact of responsible HRM on employees' moral reflection is perceived to manifest through shifts in their environmental concerns, especially in contexts where opportunities for ethical engagement are abundant.

Socially responsible HRM endeavors to facilitate the strategic integration of corporate social responsibility



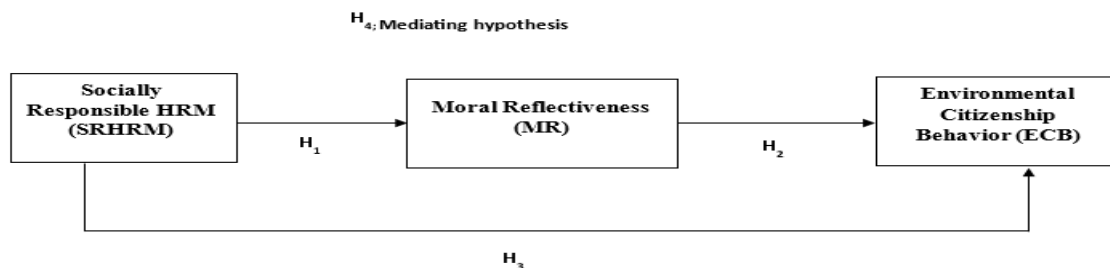
principles within organizational frameworks, thereby fostering a supportive and secure environment for employees. This approach encompasses various HRM initiatives, including providing comprehensive training on corporate social responsibility and incorporating contributions to corporate social responsibility in performance evaluations and promotions (Shen and Benson, 2016). Consequently, these ethical initiatives are likely to cultivate ethical frameworks within the organizational culture.

According to the social cognitive theory, exposure to ethical structures within the organizational context, such as ethical committees and training programs, influences employees' ethical perceptions and experiences. Applied research has demonstrated a positive correlation between moral reflection and employees' positive social behaviors in the workplace, underscoring the pivotal role of ethical considerations in shaping behavioral choices (Zhao and Zhou, 2021). Individuals inclined towards ethical behavior are more likely to engage in environmental citizenship behaviors, thereby contributing to the cultivation of a sustainable organizational environment.

Based on the synthesized analysis of existing literature and empirical findings, it is hypothesized that moral reflection positively mediates the relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and environmental citizenship behavior among employees. Responsible HRM practices have the potential to serve as catalysts for fostering employees' moral reflection and promoting environmental organizational citizenship behavior, thereby facilitating the development of sustainable organizational ecosystems. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis of the study can be proposed as follows:

H4: There is an intervening mediation of employees' moral reflectiveness in the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior.

The proposed framework (1) illustrates the impact of socially responsible HRM on environmental citizenship behavior, and the mediating role of moral reflectiveness in the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior.



**Figure 1. Research model**

## Method

### Population Sampling

The study population comprises all employees within the companies situated in the industrial area of New Damietta City. Obtaining precise statistics on the total number of employees within these companies proved challenging, primarily due to companies' reluctance to disclose such information, citing concerns regarding social insurance costs. Furthermore, the transient nature of much of the workforce adds to the complexity of obtaining accurate employee counts. Consequently, the researchers were unable to ascertain the exact population size.

Nevertheless, researchers managed to acquire data regarding the number of companies categorized by industrial sector, totaling 512 companies, as detailed in Table 1 of Appendix A. Consequently, the researchers treated the study population as an unknown population. Given this uncertainty regarding population size, researchers employed a form of non-probability sampling, specifically quota sampling, deemed appropriate for such circumstances.

The researchers stratified the population based on industrial sector and employed a proportional allocation method to draw samples from each stratum (i.e., sector type). Utilizing the equation for determining sample size in unknown populations, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of  $\pm 5\%$ , the researchers arrived at a sample size of 384 individuals, which is deemed ideal for unknown populations. The sampling units encompassed both supervisory and non-supervisory employees within the study companies, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the workforce.

### *Measures*

The research variables were assessed utilizing established scales from previous literature, which have demonstrated reliability and validity regarding the constituent items (refer to Appendix B of the study). Employing a Likert scale with five levels, the researchers ensured a comprehensive measurement framework for the variables under investigation.

### *Data Collection*

The study utilized survey methodology to gather data from primary sources, employing a questionnaire to measure research variables. The questionnaire design aimed to maintain consistency with original scales while adapting certain items to align with the characteristics of the research community. Rigorous evaluations through validity and reliability tests were conducted on the questionnaire list to ensure the robustness of data collection measures.

Efforts were made to secure participation from industrial companies in New Damietta City, facilitated by communication with multiple companies and collaboration with colleagues. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed across various industrial sectors, resulting in the retrieval of 327 valid responses, indicating an 85% response rate. To mitigate methodological biases, data collection occurred at three distinct time points throughout the study.

#### *Methods of analysis*

Statistical analyses were performed to describe study variables, utilizing measures such as mean and standard deviation. Confirmatory Factor Analysis, executed through AMOS V.23 software, was employed to assess the validity and reliability of study measures. Additionally, Hierarchical Regression and the PROCESS macro method, facilitated by SPSS V.26 software, were utilized to test study hypotheses. These methodological approaches ensured a comprehensive investigation into the research objectives, enhancing the rigor and reliability of study findings.

## **Results**

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Through descriptive statistical analysis, the researcher can elucidate the most important demographic characteristics of the study sample, as shown in Table (2) see table2 in Appendix A. Approximately 67.7% of the respondents were male (n=221) and 32.4% were female (n=106). Around 41.9% of the respondents were in the age group 25-35 (n=137), 30.3% were younger than 25 (n=99), 20.2% were between 35 and 45 (n=66), and 7.6% were over 45 (n=25). About 45.9% had work experience between 3 and 5 years (n=150), 31.2% between 5 and 10 years (n=130), 11.0% more than 10 years (n=36), and 3.4% less than 3 years (n=15). Regarding the job level, approximately 58.7% of the study sample worked in middle management positions (n=192), 30.6% worked in executive management (n=144), and finally, 58.4% worked at the executive management level (n=100).

#### *Measurement Model Evaluation*

The results in Table (3) indicate that all standardized factor loadings for items of the research variables are greater than 0.50. This suggests that the variance explained by each item of the study's variables is attributed to the assumed variable. Additionally, using the t-test demonstrates the significance of all factor loadings at ( $P < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, all values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are greater than the statistically acceptable minimum of 0.50, according to Fornell and Larcker's recommendations (1981). This supports convergent validity and indicates the strength of consistency among items of each variable.

Moreover, all values of Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) exceed the statistically acceptable minimum of 0.70. This suggests that the study measures have a high level of reliability. As for discriminant

validity, it can be verified by calculating the square root of the extracted average variance (AVEs) for each variable. Then, comparing it with the correlation coefficients of this variable with other variables in the measurement model. The results in Table (4) show that the square root values of each extracted variance average (AVEs) exceed the correlation coefficients for each variable. These values ranged between 0.571 and 0.719, while the correlation coefficients ranged between 0.848 and 0.386. Additionally, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was used to measure discriminant validity. The results in Table (4) indicate that HTMT values between study variables are less than 0.85, confirming the distinction of dimensions and the absence of item overlap. Regarding the assessment of Multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIFs) was used for each variable. The results in Table (3) indicate that the Variance Inflation Factor is less than 3, suggesting that the data does not suffer from multicollinearity according to Bagozzi et al.'s recommendations (1991). As for testing the normal distribution of the data, the results in Table (3) indicate that the skewness and kurtosis values ranged between ( $\pm 1.96$ ), confirming the absence of a problem related to the normal distribution of the data (George and Mallery, 2010).

Finally, the measurement model showed indicators suggesting the adequacy of the proposed model for the study. Where the value of  $X^2 (0.435) = 1290.73$  was significant at the level of  $P < 0.001$ ;  $df/X^2 = 1.86$ ;  $CFI = 0.904$ ;  $IFI = 0.930$ ;  $TLI = 0.932$ ;  $RMSE = 0.082$ . These statistics met the criteria for the quality of the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) with values of 0.90 or higher. Additionally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) had a value of 0.08 or less, and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) had a value of 3 or less (Hair Jr et al., 2016).

Table 3. Statistics of the validity and reliability assessment of the study variables scale.

Statement Code	Standard Loading	CR	VIF	Alfa Cronbach $\alpha$	AVE	Mean	SD	T	Skewness	Kurtosis
Socially Responsible Human Resources Management (SRHRM)										
SRHRM1	0.82	0.91	1.499	0.83	0.681	4.55	0.51	26.30	0.36 -	3.22
SRHRM2	0.90					4.43	0.62	24.65	0.74 -	1.28
SRHRM3	0.79					3.60	0.56	24.47	0.46 -	1.38
SRHRM4	0.85					4.35	0.64	24.39	0.53 -	0.39
SRHRM5	0.80					4.50	0.58	26.41	0.75 -	1.12
SRHRM6	0.84					4.51	0.60	27.43	0.79 -	1.36
Moral Reflectiveness (MR)										
MR1	0.95	0.94	2.146	0.76	0.719	4.35	0.67	24.37	0.78 -	0.54
MR2	0.97					4.42	0.70	25.07	1.34 -	2.51
MR3	0.84					4.50	0.59	27.65	0.90 -	1.20
MR4	0.85					4.71	0.53	27.83	1.68 -	1.93
MR5	0.90					4.25	0.74	26.15	0.80 -	0.72
Environmental Citizenship Behaviors (ECB)										

ECB1	0.84	0.89	2.076	0.79	0.592	4.26	0.72	24.20	0.83 -	0.87
ECB2	0.77					3.39	0.74	27.75	1.27 -	1.93
ECB3	0.81					4.46	0.66	26.47	0.95 -	1.31
ECB4	0.82					3.31	0.74	24.30	0.84 -	0.24
ECB5	0.75					4.20	0.81	23.09	1.07 -	1.33
ECB6	0.85					3.25	0.78	25.47	1.06 -	1.69
ECB7	0.69					4.29	0.76	27.89	1.05 -	1.53

Table 4. Correlation coefficients between study variables and discriminant validity coefficients.

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
(SRHRM)	**0.825		
(MR)	**0.593	**0.848	
(ECB)	**0.517	**0.487	**0.506
- Correlation coefficient is significant at the level of significance ( $P < 0.001$ ). - a Diagonals: Square root of AVE from the observed variables by the latent variables			

*Direct relationships between variables:*

The results indicate the validity of the assumptions of direct study as illustrated in Table 5. The results show a significant positive impact of socially responsible HRM on ethical reflection, supporting the validity of the first assumption. Additionally, the study results indicate that ethical reflection has a significant positive effect on environmental citizenship behavior, supporting the validity of the second assumptions. Furthermore, the results indicate a significant positive effect of socially responsible HRM on environmental citizenship behavior, supporting the validity of the third assumption of the study.

Table 5. Path coefficients for direct effects between variables.

Hypotheses	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Direct path coefficient	P-Value	hypothesis test result
H1	(SRHRM)	(MR)	0.161	0.001>	Accept hypothesis
H2	(MR)	(ECB)	0.120	0.003	Accept hypothesis
H3	(SRHRM)	(ECB)	0.111	0.006	Accept hypothesis

*Mediation Analysis:*

Regarding the test of the mediating role of ethical reflection in the relationship between socially responsible

HRM and environmental citizenship behavior, the results indicate the validity of the indirect study assumptions as illustrated in Table 6. The results suggest that ethical reflection partially mediates the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior, supporting the validity of the fourth assumption of the study.

Table 6. Path coefficients for direct, indirect, and total effects between variables.

Hypotheses	Independent variables	Mediator variable	Dependent variables	Direct path coefficient	Indirect path coefficient	Total path coefficient	hypothesis test result
H4	(SRHRM)	(MR)	(ECB)	***0.193	***0.110	***0.303	Accept hypothesis

## Discussion

### Relationship between socially responsible HRM and employees' moral reflection,

The results of our research align with study conducted by Shaaban & Rabie, (2023) found that social responsibility HRM significantly affects organizational sustainability overall. Also, Zhao & Zhou (2021) support the results of our research they found that social responsibility HRM positively impacted hospitality employee's organizational citizenship behavior for the environment; moral reflectiveness mediates the relationship between social responsibility HRM significantly and hospitality employee's organizational citizenship behavior for the environment. There is also research support the effect of socially responsible HRM on morale reflection like study of (Nejati & Shafaei,2023) that found Personality traits and individual differences have been found to influence the relationship between employee work outcomes and perceived corporate social responsibility. Also researches by (Chen et al.,2023, Berniak-Woźny et al.,2023, Silva, et al.,2023) support our research results because they have shown that individual personality can account for most behavioral differences between people and shape the things that people are interested in and care about ethical behavior. According to study of (Ng et al.,2023) support our research because they found that decisions made with ethics as their primary consideration are associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in pro-environmental behaviors at work. This includes behaviors that go beyond obligatory requirements and involve discretionary actions aimed at benefiting the environment. Researchers concludes that the more HRM can implement socially responsible practices towards employees, the more considers moral issues in their daily experiences and decisions, as well as the amount of morally guided reflection they engage and motivate in regarding those experiences.

### *Relationship between employees' Moral reflection and environmental citizenship behavior,*

the results of our research correspond with the results of study conducted by Li et al., (2023) They showed that leadership characterized by a focus on environmental concerns predicts a positive outcome in terms of employees' commitment to environmentally friendly organizational behavior. Moreover, the presence of strong

moral reflection serves as an intermediary factor in this correlation. Additionally, when leaders embody the ideals of the group they represent, it further enhances the link between environmentally focused leadership and subsequent moral reflection. Also study of Pham et. al., (2023) support our research because they discovered that common good HRM(HRM) directly and positively impacts ethical employee behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors towards individual OCBI. This influence is also indirectly positive through value commitment. Notably, they found that the association between common good HRM and ethical employee behaviors is notably stronger in conjunction with high levels of spiritual leadership. Surprisingly, however, spiritual leadership did not moderate the relationship between common good HRM and OCBI.

The results of our study are also consistent with the study of Jiang et al. (2023) which introduced an inclusive model that investigates the dual impact of unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) as perceived by the individuals involved. Rooted in the moral self-regulation perspective and psychological entitlement literature, their proposition suggests that individuals engaging in UPB may encounter heightened moral deficiencies and psychological entitlement, leading to increased organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and decreased work effort, respectively.

Additionally, they suggest that moral attentiveness reinforces the positive correlation between UPB and moral deficits but diminishes the positive correlation between UPB and psychological entitlement. Furthermore, they argue that the intensity of the indirect consequences of employee UPB on OCB and work effort is subject to variation based on employees' level of moral attentiveness. Also, the study of Priyadarshini et al. (2023) support the results of our research They discovered that green transformational leadership enhances green empowerment and encourages employees' organizational citizenship behaviors towards the environment (OCBE). Additionally, the study found that environmental passion plays a crucial role in stimulating eco-initiative and eco-helping behaviors among employees when they are empowered to adopt green practices. Furthermore, the impact of resource commitment promotes employees' engagement in environmental civic activities. The researcher concludes that the more employees' moral reflection the more it provides motivational opportunities to engage them in environmental citizenship behavior, pro-environmental behavior, in public and private, driven by a belief in fairness of the distribution of environmental goods, in participation, and in the co-creation of sustainability policy.

#### *Relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior,*

Our research findings align with those of studies conducted by Zhao and Zhou (2021) and Liao et al. (2022), indicating that socially responsible HRM positively influences environmental citizenship behavior. Therefore, it can be argued that socially responsible HRM enhances values oriented towards altruism, there by promoting environmental citizenship behavior and encouraging employees to engage in environmentally supportive behavior. Additionally, it can be said that socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior are positive responses to overcoming challenges to achieving sustainable development. The researcher concludes that the more HRM can implement socially responsible practices towards employees, the more it



provides motivational opportunities to engage them in environmental citizenship behavior.

*Mediating role of moral reflection in the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior,*

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of studies conducted by Shen and Benson (2016) and Zhao and Zhou (2021). They suggest that moral reflection plays an intermediary role in the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior. Thus, it can be argued that moral reflection positively influences the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior, confirming that socially responsible HRM practices serve as a source to stimulate employees' moral reflection and enhance their organizational environmental citizenship behavior.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, the conversation emphasizes how moral reflection among staff members, environmentally conscious behavior, and socially conscious human resource management (HRM) all interact within businesses. The results, which support earlier studies, show a strong relationship between socially conscious HRM practices and organizational sustainability. Studies also show that moral reflection serves as a mediating factor, strengthening the connection between environmental citizenship behavior and socially conscious HRM.

Additionally, employees' dedication to eco-friendly behavior is positively correlated with leadership that prioritizes environmental issues, especially when combined with a strong moral reflection. Furthermore, ethical employee behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors are positively impacted by common good HRM, and this relationship is strengthened by spiritual leadership. In addition, inclusive models emphasize how employees' moral attentiveness moderates the dual effects of unethical pro-organizational behavior on work effort and organizational citizenship behavior. Our study also highlights the contribution that green transformational leadership makes to employee empowerment and the promotion of environmentally conscious behavior. It makes the case that encouraging eco-initiative and eco-helping behaviors is greatly aided by a strong commitment to the environment and a passion for the environment.

Overall, the results point to the promotion of environmental citizenship behaviour by socially conscious HRM practices in addition to improving employees' moral reflection. As a result, businesses can use these procedures to motivate staff members to adopt eco-friendly actions, which will ultimately aid in sustainable development.

## **Recommendation**

The current study aimed to contribute to knowledge and address some research gaps regarding the influence of socially responsible HR Mon environmental citizenship behavior, and the mediating role of employees' moral

reflection in the relationship between socially responsible HRM and environmental citizenship behavior. This was in response to recommendations from previous literature, allowing for the generalization of the findings, which can be detailed as follows:

Firstly, expanding the scope of research on environmental citizenship behavior of employees by identifying one of the predictors, represented by socially responsible HRM. Many researchers have emphasized the importance of uncovering environmentally friendly behaviors among employees within organizations, which can alleviate the rigidity of technical and sustainable systems and assist in creating value for organizations' green protection. By attempting to integrate organizational and individual variable analyses, the researcher suggests that when employees perceive socially responsible HRM practices within their organizations as positive signals for sustainable development, they are likely to adopt environmentally oriented citizenship behavior for the organization. Therefore, the researcher expanded the scope of research in studying organizational citizenship behavior literatures of employees by investigating how and when socially responsible HRM enhances employees' environmental organizational citizenship behavior. This result also aligns with the findings of previous studies, which confirm that HR management initiatives in organizations can encourage employees to support the organization's environmental management systems and engage voluntarily in environmentally oriented organizational citizenship behavior.

Secondly, based on social perception theory, the current research expanded the current research scope in the environmental context, whereas previous studies primarily focused on the direct links between HRM practices and environmentally friendly behavior or performance. This research contributes to developing an understanding of the indirect influence of employees' ethical reflection and environmental passion on the relationship between socially responsible HRM and employees' environmental organizational citizenship behavior. In addition, some individuals are more interested in environmentally friendly management systems, indicating that individuals' behaviors are determined through the interactive influence of their characteristics and environments. Furthermore, the current research complements previous literature regarding the relationship between socially responsible HRM and employees' ethical-related personal characteristics.

The current research results indicate that socially responsible HRM motivates employees and encourages them to adopt environmental citizenship behavior, indicating a relationship between organizational practices and individuals' environmentally friendly behaviors in the workplace. Therefore, companies should focus on formulating socially responsible HRM practices to demonstrate organizational values aimed at environmental management. Consequently, some recommendations can be provided to company officials to support the adoption and implementation of socially responsible HRM practices, as follows:

Enhancing the level of employees' environmental citizenship behavior through increasing socially responsible HRM practices can be achieved by following the steps below: Industrial companies should provide a range of initiatives that create a supportive environment for environmental citizenship behavior. This includes providing incentives to achieve environmental citizenship goals by fostering employee participation in expressing their

ideas and opinions regarding environmental issues and improving environmental practices. Establishing mandatory standard conditions ensuring the minimum acceptable level for both environmental citizenship behavior and socially responsible HRM practices. Industrial HR management should propose projects and plans related to their social responsibility towards the environment for the coming years to establish standard procedures for training employees and encouraging them towards environmental citizenship behaviors, in addition to creating systems to incentivize voluntary work and environmental behaviors. Encouraging HR managers in industrial companies to encourage employee volunteerism and incorporate environmental practices as an integral part of performance evaluations. Implementing all practical measures to ensure the achievement of environmental management systems to protect the environment from harmful effects resulting from industrial companies.

To apply socially responsible HRM practices, the following steps can be followed: Developing recruitment plans that include attracting, selecting, and hiring employees based on environmental awareness and religious motives for environmental preservation. Designing training and development plans based on employees' environmental awareness and religious values. Designing training programs aimed at changing employees' environmental citizenship behaviors. Developing environmentally friendly practices such as using clean energy sources, water treatment and reuse, and water conservation. Using environmental performance indicators in performance management systems and employee evaluations. Creating an atmosphere of mutual learning among employees to encourage their environmental citizenship behaviors and raise awareness of their importance and role in environmental conservation. Disseminating a culture of social responsibility and environmental management in the industrial sector through official and unofficial communication channels. Involving employees in solving environmental issues and developing plans to improve their environmental citizenship behaviors.

### **Limitations and suggestions for future research**

The current research's limitations should be acknowledged and addressed in future research. Firstly, the impact of the Egyptian industrial sector culture on research variables was investigated, but specific variables that illustrate cultural differences between the Egyptian context and other Arab and foreign contexts were not considered. Therefore, future research could consider other variables such as collectivism and power distance. Secondly, the current research relied on a cross-sectional study approach that focused on collecting data from the sample once during a single time. Future research could thus conduct longitudinal studies that involve collecting data at two different time periods to verify whether there are unexpected or contradictory results, providing more accurate results despite the significant internal differences in social responsibility policies and HRM practices among targeted industrial companies. Thirdly, there is a pressing need for further research on leadership styles that influence environmentally directed organizational citizenship behavior. These include, for example, servant leadership, ethical leadership, and responsible leadership. Furthermore, the impact of factors that distinguish between different cultural contexts on the relationship between leadership behavior and HRM

should be considered. These factors include variations in the level of variables, theoretical foundations, and project development stages.

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## Appendix A

Table 1. Distribution of Sample Size of Companies According to Industrial Sector

Sector	Number of Companies	Relative Importance	Sample Size	Valid Surveys	Response Rate
1. Wood Industries	158	30.85%	118	107	86%
2. Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industries	24	4.69%	18	15	86%
3. Food Industries	63	12.30%	47	37	88%
4. Textile Industries	12	2.43%	9	5	55%
5. Plastic Industries	44	8.59%	33	28	85%
6. Electrical and Engineering Industries	6	1.71%	5	4	80%
7. Paper Industries	3	0.60%	2	1	50%
8. Building Materials Industries	26	5.08%	20	15	75%
9. Metal Industries	26	5.08%	20	17	85%
10. Miscellaneous Industries	150	29.30%	112	98	87%
Total	512	100%	384	327	85%

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the New Damietta Development Authority report for the year 2021.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=327)

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	221	67.6
	Female	106	32.4
Age	Under 25	99	30.3
	25-35	137	41.9
	35-45	66	20.2
	Over 45	25	7.6
Years of Experience	Under 3	11	3.4
	3-5	150	45.9
	5-10	130	39.8
	Over 10	36	11.0
Job Level	Top Management	35	10.7
	Middle Management	192	58.7
	Executive Management	100	30.6



## Appendix B

### Measures of study variables

Variable	Measurement Items	Measurement Source
<b>Socially Responsible Human Resources Management</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is alignment between my personal identity and the social responsibility identity of the company in recruitment and selection.</li> <li>2. My company provides appropriate training on corporate social responsibility to enhance it as a core organizational value.</li> <li>3. My company provides training on social responsibility to develop employees' skills in engaging with and communicating with stakeholders.</li> <li>4. My company cares about the social performance of employees in promotions.</li> <li>5. My company considers the social performance of employees in performance evaluations.</li> <li>6. My company links the social performance of employees to rewards and compensation.</li> </ol>	Adapted from: Orlitzky and Swanson (2006).
<b>Moral Reflectiveness</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. I regularly think about the ethical consequences of my decisions.</li> <li>8. I think about the ethics of my actions almost every day.</li> <li>9. I often find myself thinking about ethical issues.</li> <li>10. I frequently think about the ethical aspects of my decisions.</li> <li>11. I enjoy thinking about ethics.</li> </ol>	Adapted from: Reynolds (2008).
<b>Environmental Citizenship Behaviors</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. I suggest new practices that could improve my company's environmental performance</li> <li>13. I encourage my colleagues to adopt more environmentally conscious behaviors</li> <li>14. I stay informed about the environmental efforts made by my company</li> <li>15. I make suggestions on more effective ways to protect the environment</li> <li>16. I volunteer in projects or activities that address environmental issues in my company</li> <li>17. I spontaneously allocate my time to help my colleagues consider the environment</li> </ol>	Adapted from: Raineri and Paillé (2016).



	18. I take environmental actions that contribute to improving the public image of my company.	
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## The Impact of Expert Systems and Big Data Analytics Capabilities on Decision-Making in Private Higher Educational Sector in Egypt

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**Abstract:** To broaden the scope of innovation that leverages contemporary technologies, education sectors worldwide are depending more and more on creative technological tools. On the other hand, not much research has been done on how these tools are adopted and used, or how they can improve decision-making in non-Western contexts. As a result, the goal of this study was to describe the fundamental elements, applications, and domains of impact expert systems (ESs), or Big Data Analytics Capabilities (BDAC), a kind of decision support tool that has recently gained popularity in business. It also investigates how ESs might increase the efficacy of decisions made by administrators in the private education sector. An empirical explanation of how ESs support decision-making in Egypt's private education industry is provided by the study. Plan, procedure, and approach: The theoretical part of the study's design is descriptive, while the empirical part uses a quantitative approach. Using both the systems method and the analytical technique, the study theoretically illustrated key concepts and relationships. It then carried out an empirical investigation to look at the correlations in practical settings. The Egyptian private sector ought to implement the valuable perspectives and suggestions presented in the paper to guarantee effective and superior choices utilizing contemporary technologies. This work adds a great deal to the relevant literature review, which has important implications for theory and practice overall.

**Keywords:** expert systems, big data analytics capabilities, decision making, digital transformation

**Citation:** Al Morsy, R.M., Abouraia, M.K., Galal, H.M., & Elgamal, N.H., (2024). The impact of expert systems and big data analytics capabilities on decision-making in private higher educational sector in Egypt. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in*

*Education and Science* (pp. 2515-2542), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

One important area of artificial intelligence and its applications that is widely recognized is expert systems. They are essential to achieving artificial intelligence's goals, which include simulating human intelligence through computer hardware and software that replicates human cognition and behavior (Gupta & Nagpal, 2020; Galiev et al., 2023). Expert systems based on computer software offer responses similar to those of experts (Sayed, 2021). wide knowledge bases being used by human resources. Today, ES is widely used in both personal and professional settings to make a variety of decisions, like diagnosing one's own health condition or purchasing a laptop for work-related purposes. Over time, its usage has increased (Alshare et al., 2019). A few variables, including the company environment, the expert system domain, top management support, perceived relevance, and ES familiarity, affect how quickly businesses and individuals adopt ES. Management support and perceived relevance are two examples of external factors that impact the expert system's expectancy, quality, and reliability as well as its acceptability among users (Varlamov, 2021).

An expert system helps raise students' educational and learning standards and is associated with system thinking. Higher-order thinking skills are the foundation of system-based thinking (STEM). (STEM)Education is a way of study that is defined by its focus on science, technology, engineering, mathematics, which explains much of its effectiveness. It combines critical and creative thinking to support students in developing their analytical skills. STEM subjects help students develop their problem-solving abilities and maintain their focus on the material. Adopting the system thinking approach, however, is not a practical substitute because students find it difficult to understand. Because most students think that system thinking is static and separate (Supriyanto et al., 2019).

Large-scale datasets that become so large that interacting with them through conventional database management systems becomes difficult have recently been dubbed "Big Data". According to Wang et al. (2023) these are data sets whose sizes are too large to manage, store, analyze, and collect in a reasonable amount of time using widely available software tools and storage systems. Large data sets will continue to grow in size. A single data collection may include several petabytes (PB) or several dozen terabytes (TB) of data. As a result, gathering, storing, searching, sharing, analyzing, and presenting data are some of the challenges associated with big data. Businesses are currently searching through massive amounts of highly precise data to find previously unknown information. Big data analytics, then, is the process of applying sophisticated analytical methods to massive data sets. Analytics that leverage and emphasize business transformation are based on large data samples. However, as data grows, managing it gets harder (Sabharwal & Miah, 2021).

According to Acciarini et al. (2023) big data is information whose volume, dispersion, diversity, and/or timeliness necessitate the use of cutting-edge technical frameworks, analytical techniques, and instrumentation

to produce insights that open new revenue opportunities. Big data is defined by three fundamental elements, sometimes known as the "three V's": volume, variety, and velocity. The velocity of data is the rate at which it is created or changes, while the volume of data defines its size and enormity. Lastly, diversity encompasses a variety of data formats and kinds in addition to a variety of data analysis tools and methods (Ojha & Pani, 2020, Bose et al., 2023).

The main characteristic of big data is its volume. Phase boundaries (PBs), twin boundaries (TBs), and even the quantity of tables, files, transactions, and records can be used as metrics for measuring big data. Furthermore, the sources of big data are diversifying; clickstreams, social media, and logs are just a few of the sources that are contributing to its enormous volume. In addition to standard structured data, analytics also use semi-structured data, such as Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds or Extensible Markup Language (XML), and unstructured data, which can be difficult to categorize because it comes from devices like audio, video, and others. Furthermore, information can be transformed into multi-dimensional information (Acciarini et al., 2023). The velocity or speed of big data can also be used to characterize it. In essence, this is a reference to the speed at which data is created or sent. Real-time data collection from websites, known as streaming data, is the cutting-edge in big data (Ojha & Pani, 2020, Wang & Yi, 2023). Several organizations and researchers have suggested adding veracity, or the fourth V. The primary factor determining veracity is the quality of the data. Because of data ambiguity, incompleteness, latency, dishonesty, and approximations, big data quality is consequently classified as excellent, awful, or undefinable (Aslett et al., 2023)

An expert-based approach assists students in evaluating independent learning and performance, as well as selecting competencies, to make career-related decisions (Supriyanto et al., 2019). An expert system is also used to create a knowledge-based network system since it effectively leverages adaptive rule-based applications. It involves building query nodes and action nodes, two different types of nodes. The input connections that are the foundation of the question node are altered by a successful search and inquiry. Every input connection has two output connections, which overlap to form an action node and then another inquiry node. A pertinent query and an answer key are presented in a query node. A question is examined, and the answer cost is calculated based on the subsequent activation if a message activates a question node during a cognitive process (Sottocornola et al., 2023).

An action node may also include one or more input connections, each weighted and with varying values based on the favorable or unfavorable comments made by people. One or more of the actions that make up an assignment node activate messages sent by question nodes. Furthermore, this type of knowledge-node network includes an initial body of knowledge (a collection of intriguingly connected query and action nodes). When interacting with ethnic users, its preliminary body of knowledge might also prove insufficient considering changing circumstances. The dictation either adds new knowledge nodes or changes the advantage nodes that already exist in response (Dev, 2020).

The increasing complexity of operations faced by universities and private higher education institutions necessitates the use of contemporary technologies to enhance decision-making abilities. Although they have the potential to revolutionize decision-making in many institutions, expert systems (ES) and analytical big data analytics capabilities are still not widely used in higher education (Evans et al., 2021). Research on the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) in private universities has been scant, especially in Egypt. This study presents a framework for integrating intelligent systems into Egypt's private higher education sector and demonstrates the current decision-making processes through a mixed methods approach involving institute leaders and IT administrators.

Our study contributes to the body of knowledge on the use of analytics and artificial intelligence in university decision-making by offering new theoretical and practical perspectives. Stakeholders in the university can improve admissions, advising, academic programs, and overall results by doing this. This research gap inspired the study's authors to investigate how expert systems, big data analysis, and decision-making relate to one another in the context of education. The following is one way to frame the research problem as the questions the study aims to answer:

RQ1: What are the shortcomings and problems with the existing procedures for making decisions in Egypt's private education sector?

This question pinpoints the issues, shortfalls, or roadblocks that call for improved decision support. Based on early observations, surveys, or prior evidence, the background section can go into further detail about these shortcomings; some examples include a lack of data, an overreliance on intuition rather than facts, inefficient procedures, etc.

RQ2: How can intelligent systems, such as expert systems and big data analytics capabilities, improve these institutes' and universities' decision-making processes for important areas?

This establishes the parameters for putting forth a clever decision-support solution proposal. Sub-disciplines might encompass learning outcomes, academic advising, recruitment, and admissions. Opportunities can be brought to light by literature reviews and comparable initiatives at other universities.

RQ3: Considering the capabilities, culture, and change management requirements of the private education sector, what framework merging expert systems and big data analytics can be put into place?

This describes the implementation and feasibility aspects that will guide the system design, change management strategy, and roadmap, considering the focus institutes' limitations. In the analysis and findings chapters that follow, these questions can be investigated through mixed methods data collection utilizing surveys, and interviews.

The research is structured as follows: First, Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Testing. Then, detailed descriptions of samples and research methods are presented. Lastly, the empirical results of our study are provided, along with the theoretical contributions and practical implications in results, discussion, recommendations and future research.

## **Theoretical foundation**

### *Expert Systems*

One use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is the development of expert systems. AI is a branch of computer science that studies the capabilities of hardware and software to enable them to carry out tasks that would normally require human intelligence (Folkourng & Sakti, 2022; Iatrellis et al., 2023). In a nutshell, intelligence is the capacity to learn, form logical connections between things, pinpoint the root causes of issues, and comprehend and respond appropriately. As such, it entails providing expertise to address issues encountered in that domain and simulating human capabilities in a particular field (Nayeri et al., 2022; Rafiei et al., 2022; Nazarian-Jashnabadi et al., 2023).

Since a precise definition of expert systems has not yet been established, we present several in order to determine the most practical one. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) defined expert systems as computer programs that mimic the human thought processes of experts in solving problems in specialized fields in a 1987 report (Issa et al., 2016). Singh et al.'s (2022) definition of an expert system is a computer program that uses human expert knowledge stored in a knowledge base to solve problems that typically require expert intervention. This definition helps to further clarify the concept of expert systems.

Expert systems are defined as computer programs that apply human reasoning to solve problems in the same way that humans do (Saibene et al., 2021). Expert systems are based on the idea of providing computer programs with the expertise and know-how of human experts. According to Regueras et al. (2022), they can also be defined as computer-based programs or systems that try to replicate human expertise in a particular field by incorporating these experts into the systems to make decisions about non-routine tasks that are limited to human performance in that domain.

Researchers deduce from the definitions that expert systems are a subset of information systems that use collective knowledge and experience to address issues within a particular field. These systems generate knowledge bases, infer knowledge, extract suggested solutions, choose the best solutions, and mimic the thought processes and behaviors of experts. Expert systems are intelligent computer programs that make use of conditions and outcomes in a particular domain that are derived from human expertise. When these conditions or results are matched with a specific condition or outcome related to a problem that needs to be solved, they use methods of derivation and inference to extract and infer reasoned results.

### *Big Data Analytics Capabilities*

Large volumes of digital data from a variety of sources and at different speeds, depending on the demands of government application domains, are referred to as big data and are present in government organizations. For the intended government organization, these big data from the government must guarantee authenticity (Khine & Shun, 2017). Within the field of information technology, big data refers to strategies, instruments, and processes for handling large amounts of diverse, structured and unstructured data in order to produce outcomes that are understandable to humans (Chen & Liang, 2023).

The largest feature that distinguishes big data is its enormous volume. According to Ekambaram et al. (2018), velocity is the flow of data, or a continuous stream of information. According to Wang et al. (2019), veracity is related to data accuracy, which is related to quality. This has led to the development of more advanced data analysis software that can handle the explosion of information based on its access, search, processing, and management methods.

De Mauro et al. (2018) state that the six primary components of big data analytics are data generation, acquisition, storage, advanced analytics, visualization, and value-creation decision-making. Standard tools, methods, technologies, and application domains are also included. According to Rialti et al. (2018), it describes datasets that are too complex for traditional data analysis software to handle or analyze effectively. Big data analytics facilitates large-scale dataset integration; it also aids in decision-making regarding personnel management and evaluates cost-effectiveness in healthcare facilities (Demirdöğen, et al., 2023).

The process of analyzing massive amounts of data to extract value for companies and workers is known as big data analytics (Batistič et al., 2019). Big data analytics encompasses an organization's capacity to gather, process, and analyze data in order to derive insights, as well as to develop its talent, technology, and data through organizational-wide roles, processes, and structures (Mikalef et al., 2020). In addition to mobilizing and deploying data analytics-related resources in conjunction with marketing resources and capabilities within an organization, it entails having the capacity to gather, store, process, and analyze vast amounts of data (Wang et al., 2019). (Shuradze et al., 2016). According to Gupta and George (2016), big data capability refers to the need for businesses to have a mix of intangible, human, and tangible resources to develop big data analytics capability.

### *Decision-Making*

According to Driscoll et al. (2022) and Al-Mafriji et al. (2023), the decision-making process is regarded as a crucial component of management. It is the primary instrument utilized for carrying out all management functions, including organizing, planning, directing, coordinating, communicating, and controlling. Because decision-making is a dynamic process that occurs at all organizational levels and is exercised at all levels, including executive work that permeates the entire organization, it represents the general content of management activity at all organizational levels (Putra & Ali, 2022).



The ability and excellence of administrative leaders to make wise and successful decisions in organizational life is always a key indicator of their performance success (Burton et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021). The process of making decisions is where managers have the most responsibility, particularly when those decisions are crucial to the organization's operations or require significant, long-term commitments. Consequently, the ability of a manager or leader to make choices that accomplish the desired outcomes becomes the determining factor in whether the project succeeds or fails (Kliestik et al., 2022).

A further dimension to the idea of decision-making is that each of our actions can be separated into two main categories: one that results from conscious and deliberate thought and calculation, and another that is automatic and intuitive. The word "decision" refers to the final judgement and specific management by the decision-maker regarding what should and shouldn't be done to achieve a specific and outcome (Joseph & Gaba, 2020; Wang & Li, 2020). Because it serves as the foundation for all daily activities and events in organizational life and because ceasing it causes work disruption and a decrease in organizational activities, the decision-making process is crucial to the administrative process (Putra & Ali, 2022).

As a result, managers' work is dominated by the decision-making process, which is seen as the core of the administrative process. As a result, the ability and effectiveness of decision-makers to make wise choices is critical to the organization's success (Zhang and Li, 2021; Bousdekis et al., 2021). Furthermore, this is a challenging process requiring scientific and technical skills and abilities. As organizations grow in size, their goals and tasks become more complex, and these tasks are linked to the interests of society, this process becomes increasingly significant, challenging, and complex (Joseph & Gaba, 2020; Al-Mafriji et al., 2023).

#### *Expert Systems and Decision-Making*

Al-Mafriji et al. (2023) posit that expert systems have a noteworthy impact on augmenting the quality of strategic decision-making. Expert systems are information systems that combine advanced programming techniques with specialized knowledge in a particular field to allow the computer to think, deduce, make recommendations, and gain expertise. Expert systems are based on knowledge-based systems. Furthermore (Sayed, 2021).

Expert systems involve decision-making processes, which effectively mechanism human thought. Among the many advantages they provide are increased productivity and better decision-making processes. Managers must understand, though, that these advantages are unlikely to occur unless the organizational integration of specialized systems is given careful consideration. The effective application of expert systems may be threatened by problems like knowledge erosion, data manipulation, and expensive maintenance. The efficacy of these systems may be gravely jeopardized in the absence of appropriate managerial awareness and action (Wang, et al.,2023).

The importance of creating expert systems for decision-making in project management and complicated technological implementations is highlighted by (Sarker et al.,2021). Similarly, as expert systems become more commonplace in business and have the potential to improve administrative decisions in the public sector, Fahim et al. (2018) highlight the necessity of defining the elements, tasks, and main application areas of these systems.

Expert systems are artificial intelligence-based computer systems that are widely used to simulate decision-making processes involving experts and humans (Zaliskyi et al., 2022). Their study evaluates the effectiveness of expert systems in assisting with decision-making in the aviation sector by examining different probabilistic learning strategies. Expert systems, according to Al-Mafriji et al. (2023), help improve the quality of banking services by reducing both financial and non-financial errors and quickly identifying cases of error. Expert systems, in contrast to humans, are known for their quick command execution, which shortens the time needed to make decisions.

According to Kvesko et al., (2018) expert systems are essential for decision-making in knowledge-based societies, Furthermore, Shafiee et al. (2024), found that using expert systems helps to personalize financial decisions. Rossi et al., (2021). examine the potential benefits and drawbacks of expert systems for decision-making processes based on ethical issues in organizations. Their study highlights the ethical flaws in expert systems, such as their bias, lack of morality, emotional intelligence deficit, and lack of human intelligence. Using quantitative analysis and surveys distributed to various managerial positions, they come to the conclusion that these characteristics negatively affect organizational ethical standards, leading to moral dilemmas and impeded decision-making. They recommend going above and beyond to make sure that the people developing and supervising expert systems are being held to a high standard of ethics.

Also Asabere & Amoako, (2021) stress that expert systems improve decision-making, professional guidance, consultation, and problem-solving for higher education students in Ghana. Lastly, Casal-Guisande et al., (2022) argue that expert systems, as computer-based tools, aid in decision-making processes by simulating human behaviours during such decisions. Therefore, we formulate the hypothesis that:

**H1.** Expert Systems have significant impact on Decision-Making in Private Educational Sector.

### *Big Data Analytics Capabilities and Decision-Making*

According to Huynh et al. (2021), big data analytics (BDA) is a ground-breaking method for helping businesses make wise decisions. By examining the mediating role of data-driven insights in the relationship between BDA capabilities and decision-making, Awan et al. (2021) sought to determine the relationship between BDA capabilities and performance. 109 Czech manufacturing companies provided data, which was then analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modelling. According to the study, businesses that excel at making decisions use BDA capabilities. The findings show that BDA capability and decision-making quality are positively correlated, and that this relationship is stronger when data-driven insights are applied. Additionally,

the findings show that BDA capabilities—rather than data-driven insights—are what matter most in influencing the quality of decision-making within organizations.

To better understand the relationship between big data Analytics and relational governance and decision-making performance regarding big data in Chinese companies, Shamim et al. (2020) conducted a study looked at how data-driven culture influences the relationship between decision-making performance and capabilities at Delta Asia Bank. To test the theories, 108 Chinese enterprises involved in big data-related activities provided data, and structural equation modelling was employed. The study's findings show that, through the mediation of BDA capabilities, there is a direct and mediated relationship between decision-making performance and big data contractual and relational governance.

Furthermore, Nisar et al. (2021) looked at the relationship between big data-driven decision-making capabilities and decision-making quality, as well as how these capabilities affected environmental performance and decision-making quality in Chinese public and private hospitals. They also looked at the somewhat mitigated effect of big data governance on this relationship, which has been largely disregarded in earlier research. This study found that organizational culture, technology, talent management, and leadership all pose challenges to big data analytics capabilities. By utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling with initial data from 108 Chinese companies, the study examined the factors that precede big data-driven decision-making abilities and how they affect the quality of decisions made. the findings suggest that big data management challenges are important predictors of big data decision-making abilities. Furthermore, the latter is essential for the quality of big data-related decision-making.

Information is a critical success factor impacting decision-makers' performance, especially the quality of their decisions, according to Huynh et al. (2023) Organizations can currently analyze enormous amounts of data. Assuming its availability, data is regarded as the 21st century's raw material, with 15 billion connected devices already on the Internet. Therefore, it is essential to research and offer solutions for handling these data sets and deriving insights and knowledge from them. Furthermore, decision-makers need to be able to use Big Data Analytics to extract meaningful insights from these constantly shifting, massive, fast-moving, varied, genuine, and valuable data sets.

Elgendy and Elragal (2016) conducted a study with the goal of figuring out how to incorporate Big Data Analytics capabilities into the decision-making process. Based on this, the "Big Data Analytics and Decision-making" (B-DAD) framework was created using a design science methodology to outline the big data tools, structures, and analyses for different stages of decision-making. The study comes to the conclusion that by incorporating big data analytics into the decision-making process, organizations' decision-making processes are improved and supported. As a result, a framework test was carried out in the retail industry. The outcomes showed that incorporating Big Data Analytics into the decision-making process added value. As a result, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H2.** Big Data Analytics Capabilities have significant impact on Decision-Making in Private Educational Sector.

The following figure represents the study’s model, designed to test the research relationships in interest:

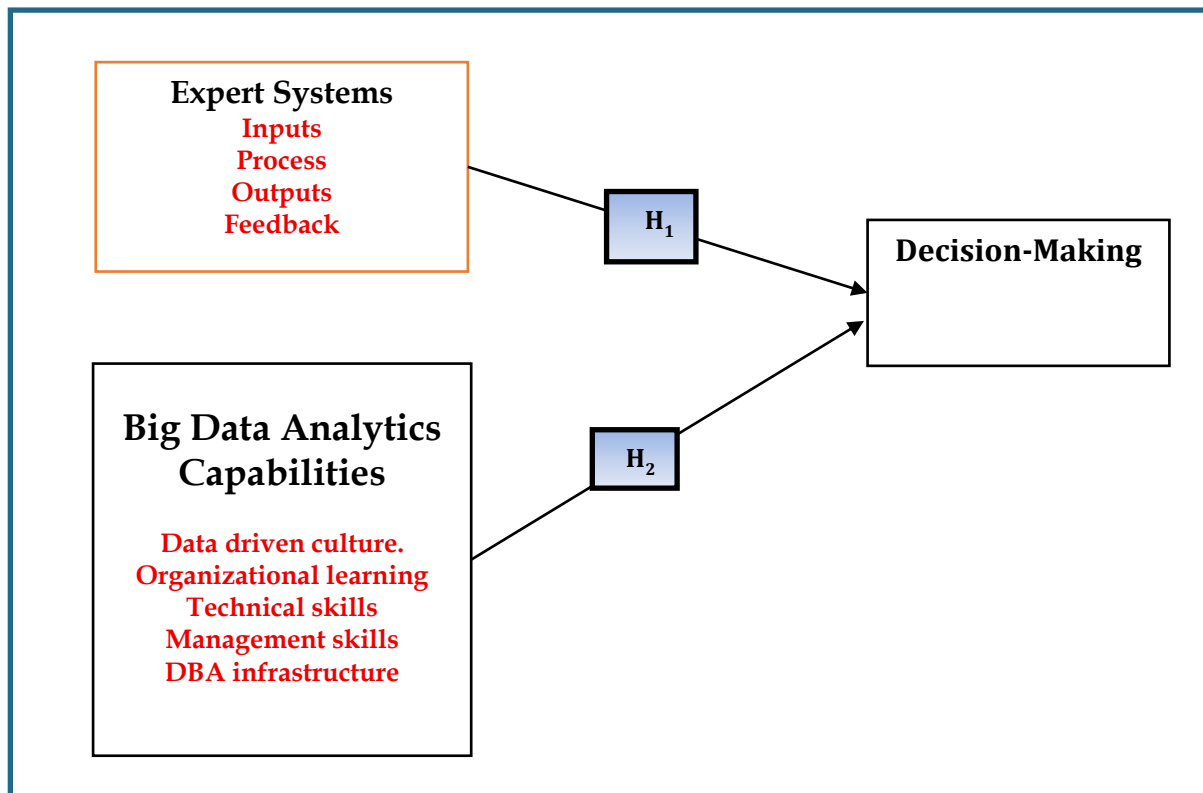


Figure 1. The research framework

**Method**

The methodology includes the research population and sample, the research instrument and data collection technique, the study's research variables and how to measure them, the types of data and the sources from which they were obtained, and the statistical techniques used in the investigation. The methodology used in this study includes:

**Sample**

Population and sample of the study. The study population consists of all faculty members in private higher institutes and private Universities at the level of the Arab Republic of Egypt, numbering (189) institutes distributed over specialized academic sectors as follows: (12) social service institute, (2) agricultural institute, (18) computer institute, (52) engineering and technology institute, (2) applied arts institute, 1 literary institute, 35 commercial institutes, 14 tourism and hotels institutes, 9 language and translation institutes, 5 media institutes, 35 universities in different cities in the Arab Republic of Egypt and these data according to the

statistics of the Central Agency for Mobilization General and Statistics and Table (1) shows the distribution of staff members in the various disciplines of private higher institutes and private universities . sampling unit was represented by staff member in private higher institutes and universities.

The researchers used an appropriate allocation method based on the number of private higher institutions that specialize in education and private universities to draw a sample from each stratum (private university and higher institution type). The population was divided into strata based on the type of institutional education. We calculated the sample size using a formula appropriate for unknown or very large populations by applying the formula for determining sample size in unknown populations with a confidence level of 95% and standard error of  $\pm 5\%$ . The equation that guided the method of choice was:

$$n = P(1 - P) \left( \frac{Z}{E} \right)^2$$

where 'n' represents the required sample size. In order to serve our objectives, we chose a default proportion (p) of 0.5, which denotes a 50% predicted prevalence of the relevant characteristic and a 95% confidence level, or 1.96 Z-value. The standard error (E) of 5% was selected. The sample size that was calculated using these values was approximately 385.16, rounded to the closest whole number for convenience. With a margin of error of no more than 5% and a 95% confidence level, this sample size ensures that the study's findings are reliable and representative.

The researchers gathered information for the field study from its primary sources using an electronic questionnaire created with Google Forms. They distributed the survey to colleagues at private higher education institutions via WhatsApp and Facebook. Based on scales used in previous studies, this survey included a series of closed-ended questions to assess respondents' perceptions of research variables on a Likert five-point scale from strongly agree (five points) to strongly disagree (one point).

The researchers used the simple random sample because it met two requirements: it had to be present or absent as a community framework, and it had to be uniform among research community members with respect to the attributes under investigation. Three draws and re-distributions of the questionnaire list were made in order to attain a certain level of randomness. A total of 425 lists of questionnaires were collected. After forty invalid lists were removed from the analysis, there remained 385 valid lists for statistical analysis, which had a response rate of 90.6% at a 95% confidence level and a 5% standard error.

Table 1. Distribution of staff members population and sample to private higher institutes and universities

Private Higher Institutes	Staff member	Relative weight%	Sample
Higher Social Work Institutes	380	1.61	6
Higher Institutes of Agriculture	171	0.7	3
Higher Computer Institutes	1170	5	19

Higher Engineering and Technology Institutes	4726	20.1	77
Higher polytechnics	327	1.4	5
Higher Literary Institutes	47	0.2	1
Higher Institutes of Commerce	1374	5.8	22
Higher Tourism and Hotel Institutes	360	1.5	6
Higher Language and Translation	245	1.04	4
Institutes Higher Media Institutes	269	1.14	4
<b>Private universities</b>	<b>Staff member</b>	<b>Relative weight%</b>	<b>Sample</b>
Arab Urban	41	0.17	1
Nile	181	0.8	3
Heliopolis	186	0.8	3
Badr	670	2.8	11
Darayah	211	0.9	3
Japanese	404	1.7	7
New Giza	677	2.9	11
Hours	126	0.53	2
Egyptian Chinese	133	0.56	2
King Salman	109	0.46	2
Algalala	78	0.33	1
New Mansoura	33	0.14	1
Zewail	250	1.1	4
Sphinx	106	0.45	2
Merritt	104	0.44	1
Peace	57	0.24	1
El Alamein	145	0.62	2
Branch of foreign universities and international agreements	207	0.9	3
October for modern science and literature	1023	4	15
Egypt international	424	1.8	8
Egypt science and technology	1217	5.2	20
6 of October	1052	4.5	17
American	429	1.8	8
Canadian pyramids	537	2.3	10
British	989	4.2	16
France	60	0.3	2

Pharos	634	2.7	10
Egyptian Russian	457	1.9	7
Modern technology and information	720	3.1	11
Sini	655	2.8	10
German	1044	4.1	15
The Future	531	2.3	9
Renaissance	405	1.7	8
Delta for science and technology	471	2.2	9
Egyptian E-learning	134	0.4	3
Total staff member	23569	100%	385

**Source:** Annual Bulletin of Enrolled Students - Faculty Members of Higher Education (2021/2022), Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, November 2022 Issue.

Table 2. Study Sample

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	100	25.97
Female	285	74.03
Total	385	100
Age	Frequency	Percent
20-30	185	48.05
31-40	110	28.57
41-	90	23.38
Total	385	100
Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Assistant Staff Member	189	49.09
Staff Member	146	37.92
Administrative Leadership	50	12.99
Total	385	100
Academic discipline	Frequency	Percent
Information Systems	149	38.70
Other	236	61.30
Total	385	100

Source: prepared by researchers depend on the results of statistical analysis

As is clear from Table 3, the number of the random sample is 385, 100 of them are males, 285 are females, 158 of them are between the ages of 20 and 30 years, 110 are between the ages of 31 to 40, 90 are over 41 years old, and 198 work as an assistant staff, 146 work as faculty members, 50 work as administrators.



### *Measures*

#### *Expert System*

**ESs** was used as an independent variable in the current study and measured with a 31-item scale developed and validated by (Fahim, 2018). Each dimension of **ESs** was measured by four items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “1-strongly disagree” to “5-strongly agree”. A sample item of Inputs was “ES utilizes smart/modern technology.” The Cronbach’s alpha for Inputs was 0.859. A sample item of Processes was “ES is used frequently.” The Cronbach’s alpha for Processes was 0.716. A sample item of Outputs was “ES provides clear/accurate professional recommendations.” The Cronbach’s alpha for Outputs was 0.813. A sample item of Feedback was “ES is simple/easily used” The Cronbach’s alpha for Feedback was 0.787 as shown in table 5.

#### *Big Data Analytics Capabilities*

**BDAC** was used as an independent variable in the current study and measured with a 31-item scale developed and validated by (Mikalef et al., 2020). Each dimension of **BDAC** was measured by four items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “1-strongly disagree” to “5-strongly agree”. A sample item of Data-driven culture, The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.732. A sample item of Organizational learning, The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.802. A sample item of technical skills The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.723. A sample item Management skill, The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.852. A sample item BDA infrastructure The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.715 as shown in table 5.

#### *Decision-Making*

**DM** was used as an independent variable in the current study and measured with a 31-item scale developed and validated by (Fahim, 2018). items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “1-strongly disagree” to “5-strongly agree”. A sample item of decision making The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.778 as shown in table 5.

#### *Data Analysis Methods*

Measures of the study variables were tested for validity using confirmatory factor analysis (CAF). and variance and correlation analysis to evaluate the measures of the variable's discriminatory validity. In addition to testing the reliability of study scales using Cronbach Alpha and Composite reliability.

The study hypotheses were also tested using the path analysis method. It is a type of statistical analysis known as multiple regression that looks at the relationships between two or more independent variables and a dependent variable in order to assess causal models. This approach allows for the estimation of the magnitude and significance of causal relationships between variables.

## Results

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis test was conducted, which is used to test whether the structural equation modelling is consistent with research understanding of the nature of the construct. In other word how well, the measured variables represent the number of constructs. Thus, if the validity of the survey statements is verified using confirmatory factor analysis, it can be judged that the survey questions have high reliability and a correct structure. There are several conditions that must be certain to judge the reliability of the questions when using confirmatory factor analysis, which are as follows:

- The results showed that the multifactor model fits the data [ $\chi^2/DF = 1.871$ ;  $RMR = 0.039$ ;  $IFI = 0.957$ ;  $TLI = 0.952$ ;  $CFI = 0.9556$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.045$ ]. indicating that no serious threat of common method bias exists in the study.
- Factor loading values more than 0.50 and this usually indicate that strong correlations between the item and the factor for all variables of our study.
- The composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach alpha values should be greater than (0.7). (Hair Jr et al., 2019). The results of the study showed that both values are greater than 0.70, therefore the reliability of the data loading and validity are accepted.
- The convergent validity was also tested, which specify that the average variance extracted (AVE) values of the constructs must be greater than (0.50) Thus, the results showed adequate evidence refers to the convergent validity (Formell, 1981).

As can be seen from the table (3) which expresses the validity and reliability of the study measures.

Table 3. Validity and reliability of the study measures.

Constructs	Dimension	Item Code	Factor loadings (FL)	Reliability		Convergent Validity
				( $\alpha$ )	(CR)	(AVE)
Expert Systems (ESs)	<b>Inputs</b>	In1	0.884	0.859	0.914	0.665
		In2	0.742			
		In3	0.878			
		In4	0.823			
		In5	0.701			
	<b>Process</b>	Pr6	0.765	0.716	0.817	0.553
		Pr7	0.896			
		Pr8	0.768			
		Pr9	0.756			
		Pr10	0.871			
	<b>Outputs</b>	OP11	0.761			
		OP12	0.815			

		OP13	0.807	0.813	0.865	0.632
		OP14	0.768			
		OP15	0.865			
		OP16	0.748			
		OP17	0.726			
		OP18	0.811			
		OP19	0.865			
		OP20	0.848			
		OP21	0.838			
		OP22	0.717			
	<b>feedback</b>	FB23	0.765	0.787	0.856	0.578
		FB24	0.748			
		FB25	0.726			
		FB26	0.712			
FB27		0.767				
<i>Big Data Analytics Capabilities</i>  <i>BDAC</i>	<b>Data-driven culture</b>	DDC28	0.815	0.732	0.843	0.512
		DDC29	0.809			
		DDC30	0.814			
		DDC31	0.787			
	<b>Organizational learning</b>	OL32	0.543	0.802	0.898	0.698
		OL33	0.643			
		OL34	0.761			
		OL35	0.801			
	<b>Technical skills</b>	TS36	0.781	0.723	0.823	0.641
		TS37	0.691			
		TS38	0.738			
		TS39	0.671			
	<b>Management skills</b>	MS40	0.795	0.715	0.867	0.598
		MS41	0.708			
		MS42	0.757			
		MS43	0.654			
	<b>BDA infrastructure</b>	BDAI44	0.817	0.809	0.816	0.637
		BDAI45	0.872			
		BDAI46	0.727			
		BDAI47	0.708			
Decision-Making		DM48	0.631			
		DM49	0.665			

		DM50	0.611			
		DM51	0.760			
		DM52	0.749			
		DM53	0.819			
		DM54	0.708			
		DM55	0.693			
		DM56	0.686			
		DM57	0.689			
		DM58	0.871			
		DM59	0.804			
		DM60	0.695	0.778	0.809	0.609
		DM60	0.788			

According to the foregoing, the discriminant validity was tested by square root of AVE and the results are shown in the Table.4, AVE square root values are accepted, as all the correlation coefficient of its variables and dimensions itself is greater than their correlation with other in the research variables, therefore the construct validity of the research measures is proved.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and discriminant validity using the square root of AVE.

Variables	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1. Inputs	3.432	1.040	<b>0.81**</b>									
2. Processes	4.231	1.113	0.40**	<b>0.74**</b>								
3. Outputs	2.571	1.330	0.48**	0.56**	<b>0.79**</b>							
4. Feedback	4.787	1.158	0.42*	0.38*	0.65**	<b>0.76**</b>						
5. DDC	3.142	1.061	0.52**	0.34**	0.43*	0.58**	<b>0.71**</b>					
6. OL	4.118	1.114	0.47**	0.63**	0.62**	0.68*	0.67**	<b>0.83**</b>				
7. TS	2.550	0.860	0.56**	0.54**	0.67**	0.43**	0.45*	0.51**	<b>0.80**</b>			
8. MS	3.340	0.674	0.63**	0.35**	0.71**	0.63**	0.52**	0.61*	0.54**	<b>0.73**</b>		
9. BDAI	3.630	0.712	0.44**	0.44**	0.66**	0.56**	0.63**	0.56**	0.66*	0.44**	<b>0.80**</b>	
10. DM	3.271	1.270	0.48*	0.39*	0.54**	0.47**	0.42**	0.68**	0.62**	0.63*	0.56**	<b>0.78**</b>

**Note:**

- (1) N = 385. \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.01. \*\*\*p < 0.001. Two-tailed. DDC = Data-driven culture, OL = Organizational learning, TS= Technical skills, MS= Management skills, BDAI = BDA Infrastructure, DM = Decision-Making.
- (2) Mean=M, Standard Deviations=SD.
- (3) The Square Root of AVEs the boldface numbers on the diagonal line.

*Hypotheses Testing*

As demonstrated in Table (5), the findings support the direct study hypotheses. The research's findings support the first and second hypotheses by showing that expert systems have a positive, significant impact on decision-making, and that big data analytics capabilities also have a positive, significant effect on decision-making.

Table 5. Results of the Path Coefficients in the Structural Model of the Study.

Paths	Path Coefficients (β)	T value	Standard Error	Sig	Result
(DM) <--- (ES)	0.527	16.754	0.876	0.000 *	<b>Hypothesis H1 supported</b>
(DM) <--- (BDAC)	0.273	7.602	0.754	0.001 *	<b>Hypothesis H2 supported</b>
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

**Discussion**

Our findings indicate that although ESs and analytical big data can serve as valuable expert advisors for various management tasks and issues, they are not designed to completely replace human experts in problem-solving tasks. In this sense, rather than replacing public decision-makers, ESs are actual assistance to them. In this regard, the primary findings are:

Firstly, the study confirms that two of the most profitable applications of artificial intelligence are in the areas of analytical big data and ESs. ESs are more advised, and our research findings are supported by the findings of (Folkourng & Sakti, 2022; Iatrellis et al., 2023) when the information includes qualitative reasoning, the decision is repetitive, and the problem domain is structured. Furthermore, a number of functional categories, including interpretation, diagnosis, prediction, design, planning, monitoring, and control, can make use of this technology.

Secondly, our research shows that one of the most difficult, dynamic, and continuous decisions made in any organization is the managerial decision-making process. Organizational leaders must now adapt their methods of problem-solving in light of the increasing impact of globalization and technology. Expert systems have the

potential to automate and modernize higher education institutions, as evidenced by the findings of Asabere & Amoako (2021) and Casal-Guisande et al. (2022) These studies found that expert systems enhance decision-making, professional guidance, consultation, and problem-solving for higher education institutions in Ghana.

Thirdly, our research shows that one of the most difficult, dynamic, and continuous decisions made in any organization is the managerial decision-making process. Organizational leaders must now adapt their methods of problem-solving in light of the increasing impact of globalization and technology. Expert systems have the potential to automate and modernize higher education institutions, as evidenced by the findings of Asabere & Amoako (2021) and Casal-Guisande et al. (2022). These studies found that expert systems enhance decision-making, professional guidance, consultation, and problem-solving for higher education institutions in Ghana.

Fourthly, the practical implications demonstrate that higher level than average amounts of ESs indicators, analytical big data capabilities, administrative choices, and organizational factors must be available. This is to be expected, since the ministry is still working on improving its systems so that decision-making actions in the future can fully utilize them. This suggests that maintaining and promoting these concepts is still critically important in the ESs work environment. Other than that, it was noted that people who had the opportunity to use ESs saw it as a time-saver rather than a major threat.

Fifthly, It has been shown that while feedback by itself has no effect on decisions, inputs, processes, and outputs all positively correlate with the quality of administrative decisions. The results of the analysis demonstrate that ES's decision-making process has benefited from the use of current ESs, analytical big data capabilities, as shown by the positive correlation between the independent and dependent variables. This relates to the comparatively weak connectivity of ES applications—a new technology for decision-assistance—with the procedures and tasks connected to decision-making in the educational domain.

## Conclusion

Rather than completely replacing human decision-makers, our research highlights the complementary roles that expert systems (ESs) and analytical big data play alongside human expertise in problem-solving tasks. ESs improve tasks like diagnosis, planning, and interpretation by excelling in repetitive decision-making, structured problem domains, and qualitative reasoning. Studies show that automating and modernizing ESs can help managerial decision-making processes, which are being more and more impacted by globalization and technology, especially in higher education institutions. The practical implications underscore the significance of organizational factors, as well as the maintenance and promotion of ESs and analytical big data capabilities, in facilitating effective decision-making. The positive relationship between the use of ESs, analytical big data capabilities, and decision quality highlights their potential to improve decision-making processes, even though feedback alone may not have the desired effect. To fully realize the advantages of ESs in educational settings and beyond, ongoing efforts to incorporate them into decision-making processes are essential.

## Recommendations

Problems are solved more successfully when specialized knowledge is applied than when preset protocols are followed. Therefore, when ES does not produce the desired results, work on improving the knowledge base should be done instead of reprogramming the procedures. When hiring candidates, employers should consider their experience making decisions. On the other hand, candidates need to understand exactly how the organization makes decisions. The empirical results suggest that to improve, integrate, and attain consistency between the managerial decision-making at ESs, analytical big data capabilities and applications, and the ES dimensions, more earnest efforts are required. There is no doubt that doing this will improve the quality and effectiveness of administrative decisions. The effectiveness of ESs and, by extension, the standard of ES's entire decision-making process would undoubtedly increase if more weight was given to feedback that showed it did not entirely influence decisions while also being the least correlated indicator with ESs, analytical big data capabilities at the ES, as well as connecting it to inputs in a continuous cycle—that is, utilizing feedback reviews to address present issues and raise the bar for inputs and consequently the other dimensions. In order to enhance the impact of the organizational factors that positively moderated the relationship between ESs, analytical big data capabilities, and administrative decisions using expert systems, researchers here recommend highlighting the following elements:

- among other organizational factors there, the importance of the leadership's willingness and commitment to feed and update the ES's knowledge bases with the most recent data, which has been shown to have an impact.
- It is necessary to allocate adequate funding and resources that were least impacted by organizational factors.
- It also needs high-level technical support from both inside and outside the ES, as well as the current work environment's encouragement of creativity, accountability, and employee empowerment.

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire statements:

The measurement scale	
Code	Construct/ Indicators/ Source
(ESs)	<b>Expert Systems</b> (Adapted from; Fahim, 2018)
	<b>Inputs</b>
In1	ES utilizes smart/modern technology.
In2	ES requires qualified staff.
In3	Adequate financial resources are needed.
In4	Vital/various data is stored.
In5	Scientific principles/practical experience are stored.
	<b>Processes</b>
Pr6	ES is used frequently.
Pr7	ES performs numerous tasks.
Pr8	Target is set up in line with ES purposes.
Pr9	ES receives sufficient information to determine each case.
Pr10	ES analyses data and applies rules to address problems.
	<b>Outputs</b>
OP11	ES provides clear/accurate professional recommendations.
OP12	ES provides practical recommendations.
OP13	ES provides timely recommendations.
OP14	Recommendations look for proven solutions.
OP15	Recommendations look for novel solutions.
OP16	Recommendations suggest best solutions.
OP17	Recommendations justify chosen alternatives.
OP18	Recommendations set implementation plans.
OP19	Recommendations are usually applied.
OP20	ES outcomes support executives' decisions.
OP21	Outcomes support different stages of decision process.
OP22	Outcomes support a wide variety of decisions.
	<b>Feedback</b>
FB23	ES is simple/easily used.
FB24	ES is flexible/responsive.
FB25	ES is comprehensive/integrated.
FB26	ES is reliable/trusted.
FB27	ES is efficient/effective.
(ABD)	<b>Analytical Big Data capabilities</b> (Adapted from; Mikalef et al., 2020).



	<b>Data-driven culture</b>
DDC28	Our big data analytics managers have a good sense of where to apply big data
DDC29	We base our decisions on data rather than on instinct
DDC30	We continuously assess and improve the business rules in response to insights extracted from data.
DDC31	We continuously coach our employees to make decisions based on data.
	<b>Organizational learning</b>
OL32	We can search for new and relevant knowledge
OL33	We can acquire new and relevant knowledge
OL34	We can apply relevant knowledge
OL35	We have made concerted efforts for the exploitation of existing competencies and exploration of new knowledge
	<b>Technical skills</b>
TS36	We provide big data analytics training to our own employees
TS37	We hire new employees that already have the big data analytics skills
TS38	Our big data analytics staff has the right skills to accomplish their jobs successfully
TS39	Our big data analytics staff has suitable education to fulfil their jobs
	<b>Management skills</b>
MS40	Our big data analytics managers understand and appreciate the business needs of other functional managers, suppliers, and customers
MS41	Our big data analytics managers can work with functional managers, suppliers, and customers to determine opportunities that big data might bring to our business
MS42	Our big data analytics managers can coordinate big data-related activities in ways that support other functional managers, suppliers, and customers
MS43	Our big data analytics managers can anticipate the future business needs of functional managers, suppliers, and customers
	<b>BDA infrastructure</b>
BDAI4 4	We have explored or adopted parallel computing approaches to big data processing
BDAI4 5	We have explored or adopted different data visualization tools
BDAI4 6	We have explored or adopted cloud-based services for processing data and performing analytics
BDAI4 7	We have explored or adopted open-source software for big data analytics
<b>(DM)</b>	<b>Decision-Making</b> (Adapted from Fahim, 2018)



DM48	Decisions are in line with public policies objectives of the state
DM49	Decisions are in line with environmental changes
DM50	Decisions are timely
DM52	Decisions are announced
DM53	Employees are consulted in relevant decisions
DM54	Decisions provide appropriate solutions for problems.
DM55	Decisions deal with different aspects of problems
DM56	Reasons behind decisions are often obvious
DM57	Available alternatives are usually clear
DM58	General/collective interest is given priority.
DM59	Decisions are consistent.
DM60	Decisions are complementary
DM61	Decisions are instantly executed.

## The Impact of Leadership Style on Workforce Motivation in the Construction and Engineering Sector: Case Study of Oman

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**Abstract:** Purpose - The aim of this study is to explore – from the perspectives of employees at Construction and Engineering Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman - the extent to which the Transformational Leadership components improves employee motivation and increases job satisfaction. In addition to revealing how Transformational Leadership is perceived, the study reports on the correlation between Transformational Leadership and intrinsic motivation. The study is based on the assumption that Transformational Leadership increases Workforce motivation. Design/methodology/approach – A scientific philosophy underpins the research design of the study focusing on numerical and measurable outcomes. A quantitative method using surveys was distributed to employees at the Company for data collection purposes. The survey questions structured to examine perception and effectiveness of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Simulation leadership practices within the Company. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are used for data analysis of the quantitative component and relationships between the variables. Findings - The findings suggest that Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Simulation increase workforce motivation leading to organizational success. The results also reveal the importance of Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation on workforce interstice motivation. The findings suggest that improving leadership styles will enhance innovation and motivation of the workforce. Significantly, although the sample is taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area to validate the results in similar locations. Originality/value – The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings and participant voice, into importance of leadership styles at Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman. It spotlights critical role of these variables in improving workforce motivation, innovation, and commitment at the Company respectively increasing operational effectiveness. The insights gained from this study are useful to stakeholders and management within the construction and engineering sector. It provides them with an understanding of the value of Transformational leadership styles.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership styles, workforce motivation, innovation, construction and engineering sector and commitment.

**Citation:** AL-Fannah,.S. (2024). The Impact of Leadership Style on Workforce Motivation in the Construction and Engineering Sector: Case Study of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2543-2559), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Leadership style is considered one of the most influential factors that affect employee's motivation and performance. Therefore, leadership style impacts employee productivity and organization success (Tamimi & Sopiah, 2022). Moreover, in the global dynamic landscape, employee's engagement and resilience is very important in competitive industries such as the construction and engineering sector. Successful transformational leadership attributes involve influencing people behaviors and the organizational systems as well leading to change management. Farahnak, Mark, Ehrhart & Aarons, 2020, p.105). Thus, it can be understood that the power of leadership can transform followers to leaders which is very essential in any organization.

Globally, transformational leadership is argued for its effectiveness to promote organization performance and innovation. Indeed, to achieve competitiveness empowered employees is paramount through their engagement and overall productivity. Considering, study by (Bass, Riggio, 2006) emphasizes that sectors such as constructions and engineering required transformational leadership due to the sector dynamic nature. Fully grasp, it is essential to understand the different leadership practices within various cultural and economic contexts to evaluate their effectiveness.

In the Middle East, the traditional values are integrated with leadership styles with the business practices. As result, this is considered one of the obstacles that has impact on the organization's performance policies and practices. Moreover, the Middle East region is characterized by facing many challenges such as bureaucracy, striving for economic diversification and economic instability. Consequently, these challenges might have a significant impact on the operational and administrative practices of the organization. In this context, to address these challenges leadership styles adopting empowerment and innovation is highly recommended and essential. Research conducted by (Avolio & Bass, 1995), highlights the essential role of transformative leadership on employee engagement, organization success and resistance in unpredictable environments.

In Oman, the economic development plan according to Oman Vision 2040 towards diversification and competitiveness is notch priority. Specifically, construction and engineering sector leadership is important factor in Oman infrastructure and economy development through workforce development. In particular, construction sector is on the top priorities of the Oman economic development plan according to Oman Vision 2040. This emphasis the strategic focuses of Oman toward leveraging the infrastructure with the world dynamic trends in economic and business diversification. such focus is linked to development of the human resources as it is one of the primary pillars of Oman vision 2040 (Al-Lamki, 2000). The study of Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman will provide insights into the current practices of transformative leadership style and their impact. The company major national projects involvements in Oman construction industry will enhance the study findings about the leadership style impact.

Motivation refers to the internal motive, derivative and morals that shape a person's behavior. This plays a vital

role in achieving person satisfaction and fulfilling essential requirements such as competences and autonomy. According to a study by (Ryan &Deci, 2000) these needs are the crucial components to Self-Determination Theory that suggests motivation increases when the psychological needs are fulfilled. Furthermore, this theory supports the transformative leadership that influences employee's creativity and engagement. Therefore, this provides insights to the crucial role of transformative leadership in construction sector that require innovation and quick decision-making process.

Despite the notable acknowledgment of influence of transformative leadership, but there is a neglect of research on its impact within specific setting on Oman (Zefeiti, 2017). This study will focus on addressing this gap and its impact on employee motivation within construction and engineering company at Oman. This case study will examine elements identified by literature review that recognized by its impact on employee motivation such as Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation. Moreover, it will examine its correlation with the influence on employee motivation.

### Literature Review

The study theoretical foundation is rooted in leadership, which suggests that certain leadership actions result in improved performance and contentment among followers. This concept, initially proposed by (Burns, 1978) and further developed by (Bass ,1985) elucidates how leaders can encourage, inspire, and involve employees to attain performance levels and personal growth. The core components of leadership, Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and individualized consideration, serve as the basis for this research.

- Idealized Influence: Leaders who act as role models by demonstrating ethical standards earn the admiration and trust of their followers.
- Inspirational Motivation: Refers to leaders who effectively communicate a compelling vision for the future, inspire their subordinates to fully commit to this mission, and offer purpose and difficulty in their work.
- Intellectual Stimulation: Fosters an environment that inspires people to think innovatively, question established beliefs and explore new approaches to address organizational obstacles.
- Individualized Consideration: The concept pertains to how a leader caters to the unique needs of each follower, acts as a guide or teacher, and genuinely listens to their concerns and needs.

The topics covered in this discussion outline a framework for assessing the Company's leadership approaches and how they influence employee morale. A review of extant literature highlights Transformational Leadership to deliver high organizational performance, inspirational leadership, high level of job satisfaction and increased global organizational efficiency. It is manifest in the studies conducted by (Afsar . Umrani, 2019; Faupel & Süß, 2019) as leadership promotes creativity at workplace, promotes organizational change.

Research conducted within the construction and engineering sector as seen in the work by (Al Arifi & Al Harbi,2019) has shown how Transformational Leadership positively impacts employee's creativity and

innovative thinking. However further investigation is needed to determine the impact of this on the Company's organizational culture and address the unique challenges faced by the construction industry.

#### *Perspectives on Transformational Leadership styles*

- Idealized Influence refers to leaders who act as role models and inspire their followers and employees. Their exemplary ethical behavior and determined dedication to organizational objectives inspire employees and increase their commitment. By setting high ethical and moral standards, leaders can have a positive impact on their employees' innovative actions (Afsar & Amran 2019).
- Inspirational Motivation: Leaders who maintain inspiring motivation can effectively communicate a well-defined vision and encourage and inspire their people to go beyond their anticipated performance. According to, leaders can increase employee engagement and have a positive influence on their behavior during organizational upheavals, as proved by (Faupel & Süß,2019).
- Intellectual Stimulation refers to promoting innovation and creativity. Leaders who employ this approach question existing norms and cultivate an environment that encourages problem-solving and creativity. According to (Alarifi & Alharbi,2019), there is evidence supporting this strategy that demonstrates a strong correlation between these leaders and higher levels of organizational innovation and individual creativity.
- Individual Consideration refers to offering personalized support, training, and encouragement to followers to fulfill their potential (Yusup & Maulani,2023). This dimension considers employees' individual needs and how to address them in a way that motivates and enables their performance.

Increasing job satisfaction and performance can be facilitated by drawing on motivational theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Ihensekien& Joel,2023). Further, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) demonstrates that employees' satisfaction of the intrinsic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness will be enhanced by their intrinsic engagement and motivation (Kovjanic et al.,2013).

The empirical study by (Afsar . Umrani,2019; Alarifi . Alharbi,2019) established that the transformational leadership style was found to be positively associated with innovative work behavior and creativity. In addition, international organizational cultures differ on whether the adaptive styles of leadership can be utilized to improve performance or not (Piedade et al., 2019).

#### *Self-Determination Theory and Its Relevance*

Work motivation is highly influenced by an employee's intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and primary psychological needs. According to SDT, understanding these processes is essential to evaluating how leadership impacts motivation. Moreover, fostering a working environment that facilitates autonomy, competence and relatedness is crucial. Thus, leaders should turn to the well-established link between Transformational

Leadership and SDT's three innate psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci Ryan ,2000).

- Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: According to SDT, intrinsic motivation (the pursuit of enjoyable or exciting things) differs from extrinsic motivation (the pursuit of goals that do not lead to separate outcomes). Transformational Leadership aims to inspire and motivate employees intrinsically, aligning with SDT core principles.
- Autonomy and competencies: Psychologically, SDT emphasizes three basic requirements: autonomy, competence, and connection. Autonomy refers to the inherent need for individuals to exert control over their own lives, while competence refers to the innate need for individuals to effectively address problems. A transformational leader empowers employees, enhances their abilities, and cultivates a supportive team environment that addresses their psychological needs, resulting in improved performance and increased motivation.
- Alignment with Transformational Leadership: Various aspects of Transformational Leadership are directly related to the components of SDT, including Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, intellectual Stimulation, and individual Consideration. An employee's motivation is more likely to be enhanced if their supervisor encourages independence, nurtures skill development, and promotes a sense of connection.

### *Research Gap*

Despite the well-documented relationship between Transformational Leadership and employee motivation, most of the existing literature focuses on broader organizational contexts without giving a detailed look at the construction and engineering industries, particularly Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman. In addition, the motivations of employees in high-pressure, project-based environments need to be sufficiently integrated with the specific elements of Transformational Leadership.

The main goal of this research paper is to analyze the impact of Transformational Leadership components (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and intellectual Stimulation) on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment within the Company's distinct organizational and sectoral context. This study aims to create customized leadership methods that will improve workforce motivation and enhance organizational performance, specifically in the construction and engineering sectors.

### *Conceptual Research Framework*

Based on the following research framework, the impact of Transformative Leadership styles on workforce motivation can be understood through Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation (Independent Variables - IV). Transformational Leadership influences workforce motivation (Dependent Variables - DV), which leads to organizational success.

### *Dependent Variable*

- **Success of Tendering Strategies:** In this research the key measure of achievement is the Oil & Gas Company use of tendering strategies. The effectiveness of the Oil & Gas Company's oil and gas activities is gauged by factors such as the number of bids won, project completion, within schedule and budget and stakeholder contentment. The efficiency and effectiveness of the tender process is also measured by the above-mentioned parameters.

### *Independent Variables (Transformational Leadership)*

- **Idealized Influence:** This aspect indicates how much followers regard, esteem, and emulate their leaders. Leadership that radiates strong Idealized Influence is characterized by exemplary figures who gain the respect and commitment of the team members.
- **Inspirational Motivation:** Typically, a leader's ability to inspire and lead others is what makes them a successful leader. An effective leader articulates a clear and engaging vision, sets lofty standards, and inspires enthusiasm and dedication throughout the organization.
- **Intellectual Stimulation:** This factor allows the team to innovate, be creative, and think critically. Leaders' adept at Intellectual Stimulation prompts their followers to question the status quo, embrace unconventional thinking, and seek innovative solutions and insights.

## **Method**

### **Research Methodology**

In this study, Transformational Leadership is explored in relation to employee motivation at Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman through a quantitative research design. By using this approach, patterns, relationships, and causality can be explored quantitatively through the analysis of structured data. An element of this methodology is the design of the survey, which utilizes a variety of factors to examine the impact of Transformational Leadership on employee motivation, such as Idealized Influence, motivational inspiration, and intellectual Stimulation.

During the literature review, hypotheses were developed based on the theoretical framework that was developed. Due to the quantitative nature of this research, hypotheses can be tested. A primary objective of this study is to validate these hypotheses and examine the rationale for the variables. In fact, how Transformational Leadership elements can impact intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment of employees. By utilizing a quantitative approach, the study aims to provide objective, reliable, and generalizable results that not only provide practical insights into organizational development within the construction and engineering sectors but also contribute to the academic discourse on Leadership and motivation.



### *Data Collection Procedure and Sample*

The data-gathering method involves conducting structured surveys specifically designed to gather information on employee perceptions, attitudes, and motivation throughout the Company workforce. Participants will share their thoughts based on whether they agree or disagree with statements regarding leadership styles. Furthermore, they will also be requested to express their drive, contentment, and dedication to their organizations.

In the study on leadership at the Company a series of systematic procedures were followed to choose the sample. Initially the focus was on selecting employees from departments, roles, and levels of seniority within the Company. In doing this, it defined the population of data from which to draw out, or collect, examples. In defining the population, it opened the exploration of leadership and motivation in a variety of ways or through a variety of lenses.

To gather insights for this analysis, a survey was sent to the 45 employees at the company and 33 of those filled out. The response rate of 33 filled surveys was considered the right balance of time and resources in order to capture an appropriate amount of information in the time frame of the project. The participants were randomly selected to prevent bias. The group also captured a good variety of employees from different departments in the company. This stratified sample allowed to capture a large variety of opinions regarding Transformational Leadership among the employees.

Moreover, ethical considerations were also part of the sampling. In addition to informed consent and rights, participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that it would hold confidentiality. Furthermore, all participants were informed of the purpose of the survey prior to their participation.

In addition to this, survey was structured so that it would systematically provide information about to what degree individual employees perceive Transformational Leadership and its effect on their motivation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This procedure, including the sampling technique, was important to make sure the data would be representative of the Company's workforce and allow for a meaningful analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

The survey data has been statistically treated with software like (SPSS, JASP) in order to find descriptive trends, correlations and changes. The relationship between Transformational Leadership and employee motivation will be examined using descriptive analysis. These analyses will help identify the strength and direction of these relationships, allowing us to identify the effects of Transformational Leadership on workplace motivation.

### *Research Questions*

- To what extent does Idealized Influence leadership style impact motivation among employees?

- To what extent does Inspirational Motivation leadership style impact motivation among employees?
- To what extent does Intellectual Stimulation leadership style impact motivation among employees?

### *Hypothesis*

- **H1:** Transformational Leadership styles (through Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and intellectual Stimulation) impact workforce motivation, leading to increased job satisfaction and higher performance outcomes.

### *Objectives*

The main objective of this research is to study the extent of the impact of Transformational Leadership on the motivation of employees at Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman. The study will focus on:

- Evaluate the impact of Idealized Influence, an essential factor of Transformational Leadership, on employees' intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.
- Evaluating the purpose of Inspirational Motivation on individuals' intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to organizational objectives.
- Study the effect of Intellectual Stimulation on enhancing creativity, innovation, and general motivation among employees at the Company.

## **Results**

The collected data were then analyzed based on the questions sought to be answered on hypothesis relating to the effect of the independent variables (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation) on the motivation of the workforce at the Company. The survey was structured in separate sections to correlate with these leadership attributes. The data was analyzed against the research questions and the influence of the independent variables on employee's motivation at the Company as relate to the three dimensions of leadership conceptualized in the survey.

### **Idealized Influence**

The analysis of the survey results shows that there is a mixed perception of leaders at the Company exercising Idealized Influence. The mean score ( $M= 2.667$ ,  $SD= 1.080$ ) for the direct demonstration of Idealized Influence shows that employees have perceived that leaders are inadequate in embodying such qualities which motivate them and earn respect from their followers. This perception is somewhat in line with the reported moderate effect of lack of Idealized influence on two outcome variables- job satisfaction and organizational commitment ( $M= 3.939$ ,  $SD= 0.659$ ).

However, the highest mean score ( $M = 4.515$ ,  $SD = 0.508$ ) in responses about the possible advantages of increasing one's Idealized Influence expresses the employees' strong belief that if the Idealized Influence area is improved, it could result in considerable increases in employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Such an outcome buttresses the theoretical explanation that Idealized Influence plays a vital role in employee motivation and commitment, as stated by (Bass & Riggio,2006). Idealized Influence leaders can positively influence and strengthen employee morale and productivity. (See table 1)

The survey suggests that while employees perceive the current level of Idealized Influence as low, they agree that this component of leadership could be beneficial to the organization, and in promoting higher employee motivation. Strengthening this component of leadership at the Company could therefore be crucial in boosting overall employee motivation and organizational performance. While, of course, there are many other elements of an employee's motivational experience that are also relevant to consider, it seems likely that training programs focused on enhancing the leadership behaviors associated with Idealized Influence could be an effective intervention in helping to create a more inspiring and committed place to work.

Table 1. Impact of IV: Idealized Influence

Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
Leaders at the Company demonstrate idealized influence through their actions and ethics.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (6%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (13%)	<i>Agree</i> (6%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	2.667	1.080
The lack of idealized influence from leaders at the Company negatively affects employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (6%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (12%)	<i>Agree</i> (6%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	3.939	0.659
Enhancing idealized influence of leaders at the Company will significantly improve employee job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (6%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (13%)	<i>Agree</i> (5%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	4.515	0.508
<b>Grand Mean</b>							3.707
<b>Grand Standards Deviation</b>							0.946

### *Inspirational Motivation*

The below data show that there is a mixed perception of Inspirational Motivation at the Company. With a mean of 2.697, it demonstrates that employees perceive that the leaders are deficient in the degree to which leaders

provide inspirational motivation by communicating a compelling vision with a clear standard deviation (SD = 1.075) which shows variation in performance.

An analysis of the data shows that employees also expressed a strong belief in the value of Inspirational Motivation, with a mean score of 4.121. Therefore, the results indicate that employees who did not experience Inspirational Motivation reported significantly less intrinsic motivation. As a result, this led to lower levels of commitment to organizational goals and objectives. Consequently, it is not surprising that Inspirational Motivation was found to be the most important source of leadership motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Meanwhile, a high mean score (M = 4.727) for the dimension of Enhanced Inspirational Motivation indicates good conformity of responses, reflecting the positive effect of enhanced Inspirational Motivation on increasing employee motivational level and goal congruence. The relatively lower standard deviation (SD = 0.452) further signifies the common agreement among employees that enhanced Inspirational Motivation contributes positively to the fulfilment of organizational goals. The consistency in all dimensions among employees' responses signifies that the motivational strategies employed by inspirational leaders have worked and will continue to work in creating an inspired and goal-congruent workforce. Organizations should actively promote and sponsor programmes to enhance this dimension of leadership to ensure that their staff members perform to the best of their abilities and stay motivated to achieve organizational goals. (See table 2).

These results further emphasize the role of Inspirational Motivation offered by the transformational leadership theory, contending that this motivational component of leadership has a significant impact on both employee engagement and performance (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Thus, intensive communication and vision-sharing, which were the focus of the leadership development programmes in the Company, can substantially influence overall organizational performance and employee engagement. While the results showed that initiatives focusing on increasing Inspirational Motivation can further fortify employee motivation and their alignment with organizational goals, it is obvious that targeted development programmes with such a focus can bring about significant gains in both employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. Such a strategic focus does not only resonate with the theoretical framework offered by this perspective on leadership, but it also offers a pragmatic way to achieve organizational outcomes.

Table 35. Impact of IV: Inspirational Motivation

Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		
Leaders at the Company encourage intellectual stimulation by promoting innovative and critical thinking.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (7 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (11 %)	<i>Agree</i> (5 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	<b>2.455</b>	<b>0.833</b>

A deficiency in intellectual stimulation from the Company's leaders hinders creativity, innovation, and overall employee motivation.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (6 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (7 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (11 %)	<i>Agree</i> (5 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	<b>4.242</b>	<b>0.614</b>
Increasing intellectual stimulation by the Company's leaders will greatly enhance creativity, innovation, and overall workforce motivation.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (5%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (11 %)	<i>Agree</i> (5 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1 %)	<b>4.818</b>	<b>0.392</b>
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>3.838</b>	
<b>Grand Standards Deviation</b>						<b>0.220</b>	

### *Intellectual Stimulation*

The results of the survey showed that intellectual stimulation received a mean score of 2.455 and a high standard deviation of 0.833. This high variability in employee perceptions of this critical leadership characteristic suggests that the Company's leadership had hardly consistent practices around intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation plays a key role in innovation and critical thinking according to the tenets of transformational leadership theory (Bass Riggio, 2006). The results above suggest that there is room for growth in this regard. It would be important for the Company to do more to stimulate intellectual engagement. Training in critical thinking and problem-solving techniques could be associated with this effort. Such measures would also take the Company a step closer to transformational leadership and what this style of leadership brings to the table of innovation.

However, the survey also indicates that employees feel a lack of intellectual stimulation is a major hindrance to creativity, innovation, and motivation, with a mean score of 4.242. This score gives an indication of the impact of intellectual stimulation upon employees and hence their performance and organizational innovation in general (Avolio & Bass, 1995). These findings indicate an area where leadership attention should be focused. Improving intellectual stimulation can benefit the Company significantly in their innovation efforts and employees' motivation. It is therefore suggested to implement strategic initiatives to enhance the intellectual stimulation to workers.

Similarly, the Intellectual Stimulation mean score ( $M = 4.818$ ) suggests that, among those who rated it, its potential benefits have a strong consensus — i.e., it was felt that improved Intellectual Stimulation is beneficial in increasing creativity, innovation, and motivation for employees (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Additionally, the

lowest standard deviation ( $SD = .392$ ), suggests a level of agreement among respondents regarding the Intellectual Stimulation benefits. Thirdly, the table helps to illustrate the importance of Intellectual Stimulation in organizational life and employee engagement.

These results further highlight the significance of Intellectual Stimulation as a fundamental characteristic of leadership as it directly results in the rise of employee engagement and performance (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Hence, it is of paramount importance for the company's leadership development programs to focus on enhancing the Intellectual Stimulation aspect of training and development of leaders in the Company. For instance, through extensive workshops and training programs, employees can be imparted with the skills of lateral thinking and problem-solving, which will consequently impact their work performance and, in turn, the performance of the organization.

Table 36. Impact of IV: Intellectual Stimulation

Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (11%)	<i>Agree</i> (5%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)		
Leaders at the Company encourage intellectual stimulation by promoting innovative and critical thinking.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (11%)	<i>Agree</i> (5%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	<b>2.455</b>	<b>0.833</b>
A deficiency in intellectual stimulation from the Company's leaders hinders creativity, innovation, and overall employee motivation.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (6%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (11%)	<i>Agree</i> (5%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	<b>4.242</b>	<b>0.614</b>
Increasing intellectual stimulation by the Company's leaders will greatly enhance creativity, innovation, and overall workforce motivation.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (5%)	<i>Disagree</i> (7%)	<i>Neutral</i> (11%)	<i>Agree</i> (5%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1%)	<b>4.818</b>	<b>0.392</b>
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.838</b>
<b>Grand Standards Deviation</b>							<b>0.220</b>

## Discussion

The results of the survey are also closely aligned with the literature review and other research on

transformational leadership and its role in enhancing organizational performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006) as described in the literature review. It identifies the use of elements of transformational leadership as high, low and non-evident among the leaders at the Company on the part of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation. It was noted that the most effective use was in Intellectual Stimulation at 4.818 which creates a huge potential to open the way for creativity and innovation among the workforce (Avolio & Bass, 1995). It proves that a creative working environment should always provide an opportunity for the employees to think and solve problems.

Inspirational Motivation also had a high positive impact score, which underlines its importance to encourage cohesive actions between employees and their organization. This finding is also supported by studies that showed clear and compelling articulation of vision can improve employee engagement and motivation. By enhancing leadership communication in the Company through various training programmes, there could be an opportunity to improve business outcomes and employee alignment with company objectives.

The survey showed that, while Idealized Influence was widely acknowledged as the most effective style, it got the lowest mark when it came to actual practice. This suggests a development opportunity for raising leaders' performance here, probably via training programmes on the executive skills needed for acting as a role model within the organization (Bass Avolio, 1994).

The survey found that although Idealized Influence was the leadership style most people recognized as most effective, it was also the style rated lowest in everyday practice. This shows that one clear area for development opportunities is how leaders perform in this area. This can most likely be rectified through training programmes that provide the executive skills needed for role-modelling in the organization (Bass Avolio, 1994).

Intellectual Stimulation becomes particularly important in industries where there is high innovation need and rapid changes, such as the construction and engineering industry in which the Company operates. This environment further supports the rationale for targeted leadership development programmes. These programmes should seek to enhance the creative and innovative skills among leaders (Zhu, Chew and Spangler, 2005).

In general, these sets of strong correlations between the dimensions of leadership effectiveness and criteria related to job performance support the use of a well-developed leadership development programme at the Company. More investments in comprehensive leadership development should be made to enhance the levels of Intellectual Stimulation and Inspirational Motivation, as well as Idealized Influence. Conducting regular workshops to impart these leadership skills can enhance the culture of an organization; this would foster a more collaborative and innovative culture at work. Firm-designed programmes tailored to help adjust to changing climates in the industry, as well as programmes geared toward enhancing motivation, can help in sustaining productivity and fostering adaptability within an industry that is constantly evolving with forthcoming changes in public utility sector. These are likely to boost performance metrics and help employees further embrace the Company values and objectives.



## **Implications of Findings**

Among the descriptive statistics from the Company, there is a noticeable deficit in intellectual Stimulation, which is specifically true for Transformational Leadership. While Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation exhibit moderate scores, these areas still exhibit room for improvement in order to adhere more closely to Transformational Leadership principles the Company's Leadership needs to improve its communication and motivational strategies, as well as improve ethical behavior and role modeling. There is a pronounced need for improvement in intellectual Stimulation, where the lower scores show a pressing problem. The company encourages employees to challenge the status quo and think differently, which in turn hampers innovation in problem-solving.

## **Conclusion**

### **Significance of the Study**

This research is highly significant as it presents an examination of the Influence of Transformative Leadership on employee motivation within the unique context of Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman in the construction and engineering sector. The study aims to enhance the understanding of Leadership styles and its practices within the Company, as well as eventually in the broader industry. Additionally, the study will provide concrete insight into how various facets of Transformative Leadership impact workforce motivation. Moreover, the study serves as a connection between abstract leadership theories and their real-world application. It adds to the scholarly conversation on Transformational Leadership and offers practical approaches for enhancing leadership skills and organizational performance.

## **Limitations**

The study focuses on Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman 's internal environment and the leadership practices and approaches by providing perspectives on the company's unique dynamics. Nevertheless, this emphasis can restrict the applicability of the findings to different settings. The study employs quantitative methodology, emphasizing objectivity and data-driven analysis. The analysis might not fully reflect how people perceive leadership and motivation. Additionally, there is a chance of response bias affecting the accuracy and precision of the information collected.

To conclude; the quantitative case study highlights the critical role of transformational leadership elements – that is Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation – in alleviating job performance at the Company. It further emphasizes the role of combining real-world data with existing theoretical frameworks in organizational studies by demonstrating how the results of this study not only reaffirm the positive effect of these leadership styles on performance outcomes but also signals other areas which need to be addressed. Thus, the conclusion of this study presents valuable results that can be used in the formulation of

human resource strategy aimed at building a high-performing team.

This research has clearly shown that there is a strong link between individual leadership performance and the strategic requirements of the organization to maintain a competitive advantage in the volatile construction and engineering sector. Hence, investment in leadership development programmes should greatly improve organizational performance and should focus on increasing transformational leadership capabilities.

Through intervening to enhance Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation, the Company can more effectively realign its workforce to the changing needs of its industry, creating a more innovative, creative, motivated, and committed environment. Each of which would be important in sustaining productivity and adaptability. Over time, through these interventions, the Company can witness better performance metrics and a more complete competitive advantage in the market.

## **Recommendations**

In terms of Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation, the Company's leaders display these factors, but they need to be more consistent and to the extent necessary for optimal performance. Even though Transformational Leadership has its foundational elements, they need to be regularly applied and enhanced. This needs to be addressed by the Company's leadership initiatives. Leaders need to act as role models and demonstrate ethical behavior consistently. Furthermore, by effectively conveying organizational vision and goals, effective communication strategies can significantly increase employee motivation, leading them to work with tremendous enthusiasm and dedication toward organizational goals.

Research indicates that organizations must also enhance Intellectual Stimulation within themselves. While construction and engineering are dynamic sectors where the ability to solve problems creatively and innovatively is imperative, the Company's current practices fall short of fostering that level of engagement. Implementing Intellectual Stimulation strategies is essential to cultivating an environment that promotes innovation. A training program could be offered that enhances analytical and creative skills, encourages open dialogue questions regarding conventional methods, and provides opportunities for employees to engage in challenging and innovative projects. In the changing realm of construction and engineering, the Company has the potential to greatly improve its capacity for innovation and flexibility.

## **Acknowledgements**

I express my gratitude to the staff on the Construction and Engineering Company in the Eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman as well as the staff and management of the company for allowing me to undertake this study and to participate with in this study. I also express my gratitude to the Modern College of Business and Science Management and PHD faculty for allowing me to use its resources and for their support throughout the research

process. My appreciation and thanks go to those colleagues who contributed to this study by looking at drafts of this paper and giving their comments and ideas. Also, I would like to thank the conference organizers for allowing me to present here what I found in my research to the academic community.

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## The Impact of Decision-Making Process on Tendering Strategies in The Oil and Gas Industry: Case Study of Oman

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**Abstract:** Purpose - The aim of this study is to explore – from the perspectives of employees at Oil & Gas company, in the eastern part of the sultanate of Oman - the extent to which the decision-making frameworks impact the tendering process and increases operational efficiency. In addition to revealing how decision-making frameworks are perceived, the study reports on the correlation between technological integration and risk management. The study is based on the assumption that sophisticated decision -making frameworks increase and enhance operational and tendering efficiency. Design/methodology/approach – A scientific philosophy underpins the research design of the study focusing on numerical and measurable outcomes. A quantitative method using surveys distributed to employees at Oil & Gas company, in the eastern part of the sultanate of Oman for data collection purposes. The survey questions were structured to examine the perception and effectiveness of decision-making, technological integration, and risk management practices. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are used for data analysis of the quantitative component and relationships between the variables. Findings -The findings suggest that robust decision-making frameworks, effective risk management, and technological integrations substantially increase the tendering process and operational efficiency at Oil & Gas company, in the eastern part of the sultanate of Oman. The results also reveal the importance of these factors in achieving strategic and operational efficiency. Significantly, although the sample is taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area to validate the results in similar locations. Originality/value – The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings and participant’s voices, into the effectiveness of decision-making frameworks, risk management practices, and technological integration at Oil & Gas company, in the eastern part of the sultanate of Oman. It spotlights the critical role of these factors in improving tendering and operational efficiency. The insights gained from this study are useful to stakeholders within the petroleum industry. Moreover, it provides them with an understanding of the importance of sophisticated decision-making frameworks and technological integration in achieving operational excellence.

**Keywords:** Oil & Gas company, Tendering, decision-making, risk management, Multi Criteria Decision-making (MCDM).

**Citation:** Al Fannah, S. (2024). The impact of Decision-Making Process on Tendering Strategies in the Oil and Gas Industry: Case Study of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2560-2572), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Bid strategies play a vital role in any management and implementation of Oil and Gas projects to ensure the affordability and availability of energy and a stable economy (Al Saeedi and Karim, 2019). Furthermore, it is crucial for the Oil & Gas company, in the eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman, which is one of the leading companies, to implement a strategic bidding process that involve complicated planning and dealing.

Moreover, the sustainability of the company in the long-term prospect depends on key decision-making, which involves risk reduction, technology adaptation and comprehensive planning (Luciani, 2007). This clearly demonstrates how decisions are essential in their adaptation to the changing oil and gas market. Nevertheless, Oil and Gas is fluctuating due to the price variation, geopolitical issues, and fast technological progression means that they must make important decisions to ensure the survival of the oil and gas sector.

The aim of the study is to examine the bid decision- making frameworks of the Oil & Gas company and their impact on bidding practices and its impact. Interestingly, since oil and gas sector bidding are getting more complicated, it requires a holistic approach to evaluate the Oil & Gas company's current bid process and its impact if any. Moreover, the study findings will provide insights into the strategic discussions makers in the oil and gas sector. Decisions regarding bidding, in a global set up and in the presence of various parameters, make the decision-making complex.

## Literature Review

It provides a theoretical base for this research paper that is supposed to underpin proposed research into tendering process in the Company to evaluate the role of Decision-Making Frameworks on tendering in the Company. The exciting literature in this subject that studies the appropriate method used in the bidding process in the Oil & Gas Industry will be discussed. Moreover, the paper will concentrate on decision making process, risk management plan, and technological integration.

They pointed to the importance of the impact of decision strategies and tending process. A study amplifies the importance of multi-criteria decision-making process for better decision-making process by (Akintoye,2000). The point to know for decision making is to use these models as a successful decision tool in a competitive environment because the models will take care of cost, risk, and strategic fit.

Moreover, (Bratvold & Koch,2011) illustrated in his article on oil and gas bidding processes that Game theory is being used in the tendering process of an industry with intricate field of activities. Game theory refers to the act of strategizing on how decisions are influenced by actions of others thus reflecting how particular behaviors are manifested in an act of decision making during a competitive situation that may or may not be favorable to ensure a sound process for coming to decision.

The importance of risk mitigation in the bidding process is showcased in the study conducted by (Al Yafei K K et al,2019) where the authors used a project management method in which identifying risk in the bidding process is crucial. A similar view is expressed by (Xia J et al ,2012) who stated that to avoid any financial failure and waste occurring during project integration it is necessary to adopt advanced risk evaluation in order to achieve project success. Furthermore, in the study carried out by (Faraji, M P et al ,2022) it is proposed the use of a framework to contribute to the petroleum industry sector, given the different complexities that carry project settings.

Tender processes have been transformed by technological advancements – from how bids are formulated, to how tenders are submitted and evaluated. Their studies (Zheng et al,2017; Khripunova et al,2013) shed light on how organizational technologies, data analysis and automation tools are helping to improve the precision and efficiency of bid tasks. In their work, Khripunova et al,2013) research into ‘new data systems’ illustrates the impact of autonomous technologies in oil and gas tendering procedures.

Sustainability and ethical aspects are becoming more and more significant requirements in tender and bid processes. Furthermore, study by (Havenga et al.,2019) highlight that ‘better integrating responsible aspects into the tender process are believed to positively contribute to an organization image and to enable and maximize stakeholder’s trust which also emphasize global sustainability objectives. This global trend demonstrates the increasing importance of ethical aspects for long-term sustainability rather than immediate profit.

Ultimately, the literature reviewed explain the key factors of influence bidding Strategy in Oil and Gas industry, but also give point of support to understand more about Factor such Decision-making Framework, Implementation risk management plan, use of advance technology and how to improve bidding process. Plus, using Multicriteria Decision-making theories (MCDM) can support to get more deeper conceptualization about the impact of these factors on complex industry like Oil and Gas.

#### *Conceptual Research Framework*

The Oil & Gas Company’s approaches to tendering are thoroughly analyzed through a framework crafted within this research. This framework, by linking decisions to tendering results will shape the process of collecting and analyzing research data.

#### *Dependent Variable*

- **Success of Tendering Strategies:** In this research the key measure of achievement is the Oil & Gas Company use of tendering strategies. The effectiveness of the Oil & Gas Company’s oil and gas activities is gauged by factors such as the number of bids won, project completion, within schedule and budget and stakeholder contentment. The efficiency and effectiveness of the tender process is also measured by the above-mentioned parameters.



### *Independent Variables*

- **Decision-making Frameworks:** This variable makes it feasible to investigate the Oil & Gas Company's decision-making models. The tendering process can be influenced by the Multi Criteria Decision-making. Mainly, this study intends to investigate the way the tendering decisions are based on these frameworks (the MCDM), in order to achieve their project objectives.
- **Risk Management:** Risk assessment is also a key issue that affects organizational bidding strategies. It's related to determining and assessing the risks, to deal with them with. This study will, in turn, discuss ensures its achievements.
- **Technological Advancements:** the Oil & Gas Company's tendering is measured in terms of efficiency and effectiveness via instruments, software, and systems.

## **Method**

### **Research Methodology**

The study is based on quantitative analysis method that investigates the impact of decision-making frameworks on tendering processes. The chosen approach will support understanding the interrelationship between different factors that might affect the exciting tendering process within the Company in the Oil & Gas industry. Furthermore m, as identified from the exciting literature review, there are different factors such as decision-making frameworks risk management plan, and technological advancement might influence the tendering process. Additionally, using a quantitative analysis approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the current process within the Company through data-drives analysis.

A study conducted by (Akintoye,2000; Hammond & Morrill ,2016), highlighted the impact of risk management plan, decision-making frameworks, and tectological advancement integration on the success of tendering process. In order to validate these findings, a qualitative analysis will be conducted to investigate the current procedures of the Company's tendering process to identify the main factors that have a significant impact.

Furthermore, the quantitative approach presents an understanding of the main reasons and the relationship between decision-making processes and successful bidding strategies. However, the results of this study will contribute to studies discussing effective decision-making frameworks in the oil and gas sector and support the Company's strategic goals.

### *Data Collection Procedure and Sample*

Investigation of the impact of decision-making frameworks on the tendering process is the main objective of the study. In order to examine the influence of these frameworks, the existing literature was reviewed to get deeper understanding and navigate factors that might affect the process. Furthermore, a constructed survey questionnaire was addressed to more than 45 employees withing the Company operating in the Oil and Gas

sector and 29 responses received. The survey targeted employees who are involved and interacting with the Company's tendering process. Additionally, the survey was divided into three sections to understand the exciting issues, impact, and result of enhancing them. The survey questions were based on the Likert Scale rating from (1 – Disagree) to (5- Strongly Agree).

The first section evaluated the exciting tendering process frameworks within the Company in navigating any intricate issues. The second section evaluated the impact of these frameworks on the company efficiency and project management and the risk management plan. The third section examined the effect of enhancing these frameworks by advanced technology. By utilizing this survey structure, it will provide holistic understanding of the current gaps and issues and provide recommendations to increase the efficiency of the tendering process within the Oil & Gas Company.

This structured approach enabled a quantitative analysis of each variable's impact on the efficiency of tendering strategies, at Oil & Gas Company. The questionnaire had a section, at the beginning, to clearly outline the aim of the study, making sure all participants understood the research goals and why their input was valuable.

#### *Data Analysis*

The researchers examined the data by conducting a survey among participants at the Oil & Gas Company. Out of 45 participants they received 29 completed surveys indicating a good response rate that supports the reliability of the study findings. However, there were challenges with the survey item's reliability based on Cronbach's alpha analysis. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.221 with a confidence interval of 0.374 to 0.588 at a 95% level. This low alpha value suggests issues with the consistency of the survey items falling below the accepted threshold of 0.70 for reliable survey research.

The responses from the survey underwent analysis using analysis mean calculations and standard deviation calculations utilizing Software Package such as SPSS and JASP. Despite the difficulties in ensuring scalability, it is believed that a thorough examination of the data could provide valuable insights into certain elements of decision-making frameworks that could improve the effectiveness of tendering strategies at the Oil & Gas Company. Further statistical methods might be necessary to tackle and account for the low reliability scores to gain an understanding of the underlying trends and patterns in the data.

#### *Research Questions*

- To what extent do decision-making frameworks impact the effectiveness of tendering strategies in the oil and gas sector?
- To what extent does risk management influence the results of tendering in the oil and gas industry?
- To what extent do technological advancements enhance the effectiveness of tendering procedures, in the oil and gas sector?

### *Hypothesis*

- **H1:** Having a constructed system for making decisions can greatly boost the chances of winning bids, in the oil and gas sector.

### *Objectives*

In the context, a quantitative method is employed to examine bidding tactics in the oil and gas sector, specifically within the Oil & Gas Company. As illustrated below:

- **Analyzing Decision-making Frameworks:** The Oil & Gas Company assessed its decision-making processes using analysis focusing on metrics like success rates, cost differences and time effectiveness. By measuring these factors, the research aims to gain a thorough understanding of the Oil & Gas Company's decision-making processes to enhance bidding procedures and identify areas of strength as well as areas for enhancement.
- **Investigating Risk Management:** By examining the tender data of the Oil & Gas Company, can detect certain risk patterns that influence the outcomes of tendering processes. This analysis also allows us to evaluate how effective risk mitigation strategies are based on the findings.
- **Examining Technological Influence:** To assess the Oil & Gas Company's tendering procedures effectively technology adoption metrics is utilized. Also, compare them to industry standards and their effectiveness. Statistical analysis tools help to measure progress in relation to the efficiency of tendering processes.
- **Providing Recommendations:** Following an analysis of data, recommendations are suggested and supported by statistics to predict the success of the Oil & Gas Company's in different situations. Additionally, the aim is to enhance the Oil & Gas Company's decision-making processes, risk management strategies and technology incorporation through scientific and strategic methods.

### *Theoretical Framework and Philosophy:*

The research investigates how decisions are made in the oil and gas sector using scientific approach and decision theory. An analytical framework for decision-making is applied to assess bidding strategies, for their efficiency.

The research is grounded in scientific philosophy using quantitative methods to explore phenomena, the tendering strategies in the Oil & Gas Company. By analyzing data on tendering strategies in the oil and gas sector it become possible to understand the evaluate relationship between Success of Tendering Strategies and critical factors like Decision-making Frameworks, Risk Management, and Technological Advancements. Additionally, it offers objective, measurable insights that can inform decision-making in the tendering process based on statical and numerical analysis.

## Results

The focus of this study is to explore how decision-making frameworks affect the success of bidding strategies, in the oil and gas industry. The goal is to investigate how decision-making frameworks play a role in the tendering process at the Oil & Gas Company. The survey questions “To what extent do decision making frameworks impact the effectiveness of tendering strategies in the oil and gas sector?” evaluated the strength of existing decision-making frameworks, the risks of having insufficient frameworks and the advantages of adopting more advanced decision-making structures.

Analysis of the first three survey questions reveals that a large percentage of the participants believe that having sophisticated decision-making frameworks is an important aspect of increasing the success rate of tendering strategies in the oil and gas industry. Analysis of the data suggests that there is considerable agreement towards the top scale point (Agree and Strongly Agree) with a grand mean of 4.632 and a grand standard deviation of 0.313. The analysis of the SD shows that the majority of respondents’ answers are concentrated at the mean, which suggests a level of coherence to the responses.

Moreover, the highest mean score was associated with the first statement, which was concerned with “Inadequate decision-making frameworks significantly increase the risks in tendering processes at the Oil & Gas Company” (M = 4.862, SD = 0.351). Then followed by concerns that “Implementing more sophisticated decision-making frameworks can significantly enhance the success rate of tendering strategies at the Oil & Gas Company” (M = 4.759, SD = 0.577). Furthermore, the lowest mean score was associated with the present-day ability of framework to handle complexities (M = 4.276, SD = 0.591). (See table 1)

Table 37. Decision-making Frameworks

Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		
The current decision-making frameworks are sufficiently robust to handle the complexities of tendering in the oil and gas industry.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (2 %)	<i>Agree</i> (17 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (10 %)	<b>4.276</b>	<b>0.591</b>
Inadequate decision-making frameworks significantly increase the risks in tendering processes at the Oil & Gas Company	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (0 %)	<i>Agree</i> (4 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (25 %)	<b>4.862</b>	<b>0.351</b>

Implementing more sophisticated decision-making frameworks can significantly enhance the success rate of tendering strategies at the Oil & Gas Company	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (2 %)	<i>Agree</i> (3 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (24 %)	<b>4.759</b>	<b>0.577</b>
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>4.632</b>
<b>Grand Standards Deviation</b>							<b>0.313</b>

Survey responses show that risk management is essential to provide a successful tender. The grand mean of 4.770 and very small grand standard deviation of 0.020 signify that participants agree to the idea that designing a good risk procedure for activities associated with a tender will provide a successful tender outcome. provided that the mean score for each item regarding risk management within the tender is very high, which means good agreement on the importance of risk management factors in providing a successful tender outcome at the Oil & Gas Company.

The mean scores for the integration of risk management practices (M = 4.793) were the highest and it is likely a sense that currently these are perceived to be adequate. This is followed by the negative effects of ineffective risk management (M = 4.759) and the benefits potentially accrued from strengthening such practices (M = 4.759), both of which further underscore the importance of having robust risk management systems.(See table 2)

Table 38. Risk Management

Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (1 %)	<i>Agree</i> (4 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (24 %)		
Risk management practices are adequately integrated into the tendering processes at the Oil & Gas Company	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (1 %)	<i>Agree</i> (4 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (24 %)	<b>4.793</b>	<b>0.491</b>
Poor risk management practices lead to frequent cost overruns and delays in project completion within the Oil & Gas Company's tendering strategies.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (1 %)	<i>Agree</i> (3 %)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (24 %)	<b>4.759</b>	<b>0.577</b>
Strengthening risk management practices will greatly reduce the negative	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Disagree</i> (0 %)	<i>Neutral</i> (2 %)	<i>Agree</i> (3%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (24%)	<b>4.759</b>	<b>0.577</b>

impacts on tendering outcomes at the Oil & Gas Company							
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>4.770</b>
<b>Grand Standards Deviation</b>							<b>0.020</b>

The survey draws a positive perception towards the tendency of technological advancements to enhance tendering processes in general with a grand mean of 4.287 and a grand standard deviation of 0.163 which consequentially suggest a strong agreement on the beneficial role that continues to derive from tendering processes through technological advancements, albeit with a slight hesitation towards the full extent to which further technological advancements could potentially contribute.

The highest mean score was for the item stressing the extent to which the limited integration of more sophisticated technological devices is an obstacle (M = 4.414), suggesting anxiety in not having more technology yet. The lowest mean (M = 4.103) was related to benefits that might come from better integrating more sophisticated tools, suggesting some doubts/uncertainty about how much better such tools might make things. (See table 3)

Table 39. Technological Advancements Influence

Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (2%)	<i>Agree</i> (3%)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (24%)		
Technological advancements have been effectively utilized to improve the tendering process at the Oil & Gas Company						<b>4.345</b>	<b>0.484</b>
Lack of advanced technological integration in the tendering process hinders the efficiency and effectiveness of tender outcomes at the Oil & Gas Company						<b>4.414</b>	<b>0.501</b>
Integrating more advanced technological tools and systems will improve the efficiency and success of tendering processes at the Oil & Gas Company						<b>4.103</b>	<b>0.489</b>
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>4.287</b>
<b>Grand Standards Deviation</b>							<b>0.163</b>

## Discussion

The quantitative case study at the Oil & Gas Company highlights how the success of a tendering strategy in the oil and gas sector is affected by decision frames. Using benchmarking with existing research together with real-world data infuses quantitative argumentation with fictive realities of the business world. The results from the quantitative study show not only how sophisticated decision-making, risk handling and technological integration affect operational efficiency, but more importantly, where improvements can be made. By understanding how and where improvement, changes can be made to an organization to make it stronger, strategic, and better, thus turning them into a learning organization. The alignment between an individual's capabilities and the need of the business is vital for staying ahead in the oil and gas industry, where the rate of change seems ever more dynamic.

### Implications of Findings

*Decision Making Framework:* Statistical results indicate that the highest means reflect participants' perceptions about the importance of strong frameworks in risk and tendering success mitigation. More importantly, the results show that robust frameworks are imperative. Indeed, they are key to understanding problems and ambiguities and to warding off dangers in oil and gas sector tendering. These results are in consonance with the works of the aforementioned academics in literature who have highlighted the importance of sound decision making in complex procurements settings (Akintoye, 2000; Bratvold and Koch, 2011).

*Risk Management:* These results show a clear, strong consensus on risk management in mitigating tendering challenges. The results are in line with the literature emphasizing the critical role of risk management in the success of projects and minimizing pitfalls such as cost overruns and project delays (Al Yafei et al., 2019; Xia et al., 2012). Additionally, the consistent high ratings on the risk management items indicate converging agreement on their importance. Consequently, there seems to be a shared agreement among the Oil & Gas Company workers on the essence of robust risk management, which supports the theoretical discourse as well as practical solutions to improve the Oil & Gas Company risk management frameworks.

*Technological advancements:* These results reveal that technological improvements are both welcomed and seen to be fruitful for the tendering activities at the Oil & Gas Company, and that there is widespread agreement that there are still opportunities for more innovative technological implementations. This finding supports the literature, which emphasizes that technological improvements remain key to maintaining and enhancing the competitiveness and efficiency of tender processes (Zheng et al, 2017; Khripunova et al, 2013). The slightly pessimistic perspective on the expected future technological improvements should also spur us to pay sustained attention to assessments and the adoption of state-of-the-art technologies to further enhance their effects on tender success.



## Conclusion

### Significance of the Study

The decision-making process and its impact on the success of bidding at the Company are the objective of the research report. Adding to that, propose recommendations to enhance operational efficiency through examining the relationship of the decision-making frameworks and the bids outcomes. Similarly, the study pursues the impact of decision-making models in tendering processes in the Oil and Gas sector. Consequently, the findings will contribute to the studies on the decision-making process and strategic planning. Also, it will provide an understanding of its impact on enhancing the competitive tendering and bidding process. Therefore, companies in the Oil and Gas industry can utilize and benefit from these insights to increase efficiency, reduce expenses and improve project management.

### *Limitations*

This paper examines practices in tendering and bidding in a dynamic competitive industry that is the Company operating within. By looking into the Company's decision-making frames and strategies, this report will serve to analyze the case more succinctly and deeper and therefore the results might have an impact on the Company profitability. Due to different market conditions and demands as well as how much the nature of the operational factors vary, the results might not be applied to the case on a generalized basis to all industries. Despite depending on different techniques to ensure that the data-driven results are objective enough, it might ignore subjective experiences and perceptions that might impact the bidding decision. In addition, being ready to identify any potential bias in the collected data might be able to impact the reliability and credibility of the findings. The countermeasures to above remain to be thereby evaluated and analyzed in this comparative analysis.

The research conducted on the Oil & Gas Company sheds light on how the organization makes decisions, manages risks and utilizes technology. The findings reveal that the existing operational procedures are highly respected, decision-making, and risk management are successful, and technology contributes to enhancing the tendering process. Additionally, the study suggests a necessity to improve decision-making frameworks, fortify risk management strategies and streamline technology integration.

The consistent average scores across factors demonstrate an acknowledgment of strengths and an understanding of areas, for improvement. By incorporating Multi Criteria Decision-making (MCDM), the Oil & Gas Company can refine its operations to stay competitive and navigate the challenges of the oil and gas industry efficiently.

## Recommendations

Improving the Oil & Gas Company's strategic outcomes can be achieved by putting into action the suggestions

derived from the findings. To improve the strength and complexity of the Oil & Gas Company's decision-making processes consider incorporating MCDM methodologies. This method allows for an evaluation of the different aspects that impact bidding and operational choices leading to better strategic results. Furthermore, to enhance the risk management framework by incorporating sophisticated analytical tools and methods to bolster risk management procedures. To minimize the effects of risk management it is crucial to create dynamic risk assessment models that can anticipate potential obstacles and address them in advance. Besides embracing technologies it's crucial to maximize the use of current technologies whenever feasible to enhance effectiveness and achievement, in bidding. Additionally, implementing a program for improvement and training will ensure that employees stay updated with the most current skills and knowledge to make informed decisions, handle risks effectively and utilize technology. This culture of improvement and innovation will be advantageous for the Oil & Gas Company.

## Acknowledgements

I express my gratitude to the staff of the Oil & Gas company in Eastern Oman as well as the staff and management of the company for allowing me to undertake this study and to participate with in this study. I also express my gratitude to the Modern College of Business and Science for allowing me to use its resources and for their support throughout the research process. My appreciation and thanks go to those colleagues who contributed to this study by looking at drafts of this paper and giving their comments and ideas. Also, I would like to thank the conference organizers for allowing me to present here what I found in my research to the academic community.

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## Delegation and Its Impact on Employee's Motivation and Loyalty: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to explore – from the perspectives of employees at Sohar University - the extent to which effective delegation of tasks increases employee's motivation and loyalty. A pragmatic philosophy underpins the research design of the study. A mixed methods case study approach involving surveys administered to 47 employees was used to measure participants' attitudes towards practices related to delegating tasks. The survey includes three open-ended questions aiming at exploring participants' experiences while carrying out delegated tasks. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are used for data analysis of the quantitative component. Thematic analysis is used to identify the frequent occurrence of words and phrases that reflect how delegation impacts employee's motivation and loyalty. The findings suggest that delegation improves both employee's motivation and loyalty. Participants indicated that their sense of belonging to their organization increases when they get engaged in sharing with their managers the responsibility. Significantly, although the sample is taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area. The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings and participant voice, into how employees' sense of belonging to their organization increases when they get engaged in sharing their managers the responsibility of carrying out the strategic tasks. It spotlights the impact of delegation on employee's motivation and loyalty. The insights gained from this study are useful to leaders and managers across higher education institutions. It provides them with an understanding of the value of delegating responsibilities to employees, and how delegation impacts employee's motivation, loyalty, and organization performance in general.

**Keywords:** Delegation, Motivation, Loyalty.

**Citation:** AL-Badi, L. (2024). Delegation and Its Impact on Employee's Motivation and Loyalty: The Case of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2573-2579), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES

### Introduction

#### Background of study

Delegation has been a central issue in management that has interested many organizational behavior and management theory scholars. It is the process by which managers share responsibility and accountability with their subordinates who will be empowered to decide independently and perform tasks autonomously.

Practically, delegation is an inevitable activity for any efficient organization. It has far-reaching implications on employees' motivation and loyalty. Several studies have highlighted the significance of delegation in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. For instance, Robbins and Coulter (2019) argue that effective delegation makes workers feel responsible for their actions which increases their motivation to work hard. There is a relationship between employee job satisfaction and how much the person is delegated duties (Yukl 2013). In other words, delegation, as a managerial process of assigning responsibilities, enables leaders to share the workload and authority among stakeholders and employees. This is the process through which managers delegate decision-making authority to their juniors (Nkiruka et al., 2021).

### *Employee's motivation, loyalty and delegation*

Research indicates that the leadership style that values effective delegation positively increases employees' motivation and job performance (Pangabea et al., 2022; Sugiharti et al., 2023). Delegation has great influence on employees' attitude towards their jobs. On the other hand, employee loyalty is a state of mind in which employees are committed to their employers and are willing to keep working with them even when things get tough (Supit, 2022). Effective leadership that values appropriate delegation creates positive work environment and enhances employees' job satisfaction which increases their loyalty (Andarsari & Setiadi, 2023; Trisninawati et al., 2023).

Noticeably, there is a large body of context-specific and western-oriented literature on delegation, but there is and there is a significant information gap on the impact of delegation on employee motivation and loyalty in Oman's higher education institutions. This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the relationship between delegation and employee motivation and loyalty in the faculty of business at Sohar university. Based on literature and empirical studies, this research investigates how employees' attitudes are influenced by delegation. The study seeks to offer practical recommendations that help leaders in organizations achieve a higher level of employee engagement and loyalty by investigating how effective delegation practices are encouraged.

### *Purpose of the study*

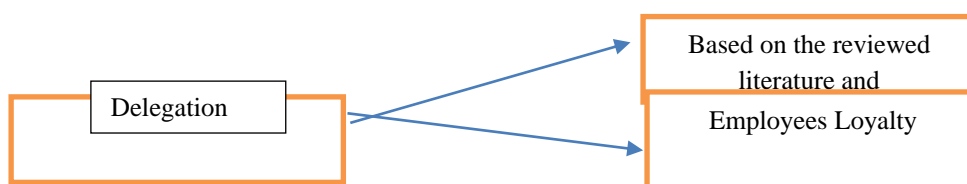
The study examines the relation between delegation, employee motivation and loyalty in Faculty of Business at Sohar University. The research explores the intricacy of delegation in the organizational context to understanding how employees perform delegation functions. Moreover, it is intended to measure employee motivation levels and assess staff loyalty. The study explores the dynamics of delegation to provide an insight into ways that maximize organization performance and employee satisfaction.

### *Theoretical and conceptual framework*

The theoretical framework for studying delegation and its impact on employee motivation and loyalty is

informed by a few key theoretical perspectives. One theory that explains the dynamics of the delegation process is the agency theory. According to Chiang & Jang (2007), agency theory presents an understanding of the relationship between the employer (the delegator) and the staff (the delegated employee). The theory perceives delegation as a sign of trust and an opportunity for professional growth for those employees who will be delegated certain responsibilities in an organization. The theory not only explores the rapport that exists between the principal (the leader or employer) and the agent ( a manager or employee), but also addresses the challenges that an organization may face when there is a conflict of interest between the delegator and the delegated manager or employee. Another theory that explains the concept of delegation and its dynamics is the expectancy theory, which explains the motivational aspects that underlie delegation. In studying delegation and its impact on employee motivation and loyalty, the two theories, taken together, explain how employees' aspirations for accomplishment and rewards would be met through the delegation of authority, and how this kind of motivational practice promotes reciprocal relationships resulting in loyalty (Chiang & Jang, 2007; Fan et al., 2021; Meira & Hancer, 2021). All in all, effective delegation has the potential to increase employee motivation and organizational loyalty. The reviewed theoretical concepts inform the design of conceptual framework of the study which the following graph depicts. Also, based on the reviewed literature and the proposed theoretical framework, two questions have been developed to guide the research process.

*Conceptual Framework:*



*Research Questions*

What is the relation between delegation and employee’s motivation?

To what extent does delegation influence employee loyalty?

The study aims to :

Examine the relationship between delegation and employee motivation.

Analyze the relationship between delegation and employee loyalty.

Identify factors that determine effective practices in delegating authority.

*Research hypotheses*

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between delegation and employee motivation.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between delegation and employee Loyalty.

### *Participants*

The participants of the study are the administrative and academics employees of the faculty of business at Sohar university, Oman. The study seeks to explore participants' perceptions regarding the extent to which delegation impacts their motivation level and loyalty towards the university.

### *Data Collection/Instrumentation*

A mixed methods case study approach is used to investigate the extent to which delegation increases employee's motivation and loyalty. Towards this purpose and based on the reviewed literature and previous studies on delegation, a perception survey comprising of 15, 5-point Likert Scale items has been distributed to 47 administrative and academic staff in the faculty of business at Sohar university. The aim of the survey was to collect quantitative data related to the study under inquiry. The survey was piloted, and the used version consisted of three sections apart from the demographic part.

The first section comprised five items and aimed to measure participants' perceptions on the extent to which employees are delegated. The second section includes five items and measures participants' perceptions of the extent to which delegation increase their motivation. The third section of the survey includes five items and measures participants' perceptions of the extent to which delegation advances their loyalty.

All the 15 items of the survey consider a 5-point scale (1- Not at all, 2- to a very little extent, 3 - to a little extent, 4 - to a high extent and 5- to a very high extent). The survey includes an introductory section that clearly explains the purpose of the research. On the other hand, qualitative data were collected from 3 open-ended questions which represented add-on items to the survey questions. My aim was to provide qualitative data that can enrich the quantitative findings with important quotes from the same participants.

### *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were analyzed through the perception survey which was administered to 47 administrative and academic staff in the faculty of business at Sohar university. 41 surveys were received providing a response rate at 87.23 which is a satisfactory percentage that validates the results of the study. The reliability of the survey items has been substantiated by an overall Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The alpha score of .70 or higher in a survey of this nature is considered good.

In this research, Cronbach yields Alpha at 0.9 which is a strong scale reliability. The survey responses were subjected to the frequency analysis, mean and standard deviation of the Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. It is assumed that an in-depth analysis of delegation would yield an insight into various aspects that increase employee's motivation and loyalty.



## Results

Table 1 consists of descriptive statistics for three variables: D (Delegation), EM (Employee’s Motivation), and EL(employee’s Loyalty). These statistics provide information on the central tendency and spread of data.

Table1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
D	13.39	5.536	41
EM	12.71	5.980	41
EL	13.17	4.455	41

The mean values show the average score per variable in the sample. For instance, 13.39 is the highest mean for D, while EL comes second with a mean of 13.17 and last, EM has a mean value of 12.71. Standard deviations are dispersion measures which depict how much variation exists regarding the mean-value in each case of descriptive statistics. Results show that EM has the most variability at a standard deviation equal to 5.980; EL has least degree of variation at 4.455.

Three variables D (Delegation), EM (Employee’s Motivation), and EL(employee’s Loyalty) were the subject of correlation coefficients presented in table 2.

Table 2. Correlation

Correlations				
		D	EM	EL
D	Pearson Correlation	1	.954**	.878**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	41	41	41
EM	Pearson Correlation	.954**	1	.861**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	41	41	41
EL	Pearson Correlation	.878**	.861**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	41	41	41

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation coefficient determines how strong or weak the relationships between. It is important to note that all the correlations are statistically significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed), which means that there are strong

relationships among them. Although these data revealed other patterns; it could still be observed clearly that D had strong positive relationships with both EM ( $r = .954, p < .01$ ) and EL ( $r = .878, p < .01$ ). Also, it was observed that variable EM had very high positive association with D ( $r = .954, p < .0001$ ) and EL ( $r = .861, p < .001$ ).

EL too correlates with D as well as M.E. For instance:  $r=.878, p<0.01$  for both D and E.M;  $r=.861, p<0.01$  for both E.L and M.E.

## Discussion

Table2 indicates that there are consistent positive associations between all variables. Findings indicate that the standard deviation of the variable EM is much higher than that of EL, which means that motivation varies more among people than loyalty. As shown in the correlation table, all the variables are positively correlated. These findings were supported by qualitative results, showing the positive effect of delegation on employees' motivation and loyalty. The majority of respondents argued in favor of the positive aspects of delegation in increasing their motivation. Other responses indicated that their sense of accountability, involvement, motivation, and productivity at work is enhanced by delegation.

## Recommendations

First, it is important to conduct further research to explore how motivation and loyalty are affected by different levels of delegation; this may involve using qualitative methods among other approaches. Second, the organization could design training programs to train their leaders and managers on how to efficiently delegate authority to the subordinates. In addition, those employees who have been given power and show commitment to their work activities should be rewarded to encourage others.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge all those who helped me in conducting this research. I would like to thank all those who participated and shared their experience and point of views during the data collection phase. Also, I express my appreciation to Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy for his continuous support and guidance. Last but not least, I extend my gratitude to my family and friends who were always there supporting and encouraging me.

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## Employee Engagement in The Decision- Making Process and Its Impact on Employee Satisfaction and Commitment: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore – from the standpoint of administrative and academic employees at the faculty of business in Sohar University - the extent to which the employees’ engagement in decision- making increases their satisfaction and commitment. In addition to revealing how employees’ engagement in decision making is perceived, the study reports on the correlation between employees’ engagement, employees’ job satisfaction, and commitment. The study assumes that employees’ engagement increases the job satisfaction and commitment. A Pragmatic philosophy underscores the research design. Data collection utilized a mixed methods case study approach with a survey administered to 47 administrative and academic staff at the faculty of business in Sohar University. The survey contains three open-ended questions aimed at bringing out valid quotes that confirm quantitative results. The quantitative component has been subjected to descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify semantic patterns that cut across participants’ experience in relation to their level of engagement in the decision-making process. The findings show that participants’ engagement in decision making enhances their job satisfaction and commitment. However, it is important to note that even though the research sample was selected from one setting within Oman, which may diminish the generalizability of the findings, it opens a new prospector research in this area. Through participant voice as well as quantitative findings, this study offers insights on how employees’ engagement in decision-making impacts their job satisfaction and commitment levels. The findings provide various stakeholders such as education leaders with insights into the value of engaging their employees in the decision-making process for organizational effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Employee’s engagement, Decision making, Job satisfaction, and Employees’ commitment

**Citation:** AL-Badi, L. (2024). Employee engagement in the decision- making process and its impact on employee satisfaction and commitment: The case of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2580-2589), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES

### Introduction

Modern organizational management and worker involvement and participation in decision making have become a key concern that reflects an ideological shift towards empowering employees and recognizing their contributions beyond conventional roles. The concept of employee commitment includes their

involvement in the decision-making process within the organization, which results in ownership and feelings of responsibility among workers. This type of engagement fosters employee satisfaction and level of commitment to the organization as well. Recent studies have found that employee engagement in decision making is pivotal for the success of organizations. Motivated, creative, and satisfied employees are therefore more engaged, leading to better performance outcomes. Research indicates that employee involvement in the decision-making process can influence the success of an organization through fostering positive organizational culture. Employees, by and large, value to have their voices heard during decision making ( Smith et al. , 2023). Employees' participation in decision-making greatly influences both their job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Chen & Wang, 2022). Employees' commitment is an outcome of their engagement in the decision-making process. Employee commitment is one key determinant of organizational effectiveness and resilience. Many studies have proved that when workers perceive themselves as sources of decision-making within organizations, they tend to develop strong bonds with such organizations (Pierce & Dunham 2018). Research documents that employees' engagement in decision- making increases their job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

### **Employees engagement in decision-making**

The term employee engagement in decision-making refers to the involvement of workers in processes and options that affect their work as well as the organization. It is an important aspect of organizational management which can result into a more committed and motivated workforce (Dhanda, 2015). Engaged employees tend to remain with an organization longer, be passionate about their jobs and willing to go beyond what is expected of them. They are not only enthused by their job but also feel free to exert much effort making them an invaluable resource for any company (Dhanda, 2015). It is important for organizations to ensure that they involve employees in decision-making process to create a sense of organizational belongingness which would add value to the productivity of the organization in general (Dhanda 2015).

### *Employees commitment*

Employee dedication refers to employee commitment which is the willingness of a worker to put his employer's aspirations above personal considerations (Akhigbe & Obomeghie, 2021). Such commitment often acts as a bond between the individual and the organization representing the level of involvement and attachment an employee has towards his work and company (Dwivedi et al., 2014). It enables employees to diligently to make contributions to the prosperity of the organization (Yaghoubi et al., 2022). Research indicates that there is a strong correlation between employee engagement and staff loyalty (Marzooq&Nisa, 2022). Engaged and committed employees bring about increased productivity, lower turnover rates, and improved organizational performance (Shahid&Azhar, 2013). Affective commitment acts as an intervening variable in linking job meaningfulness to employee engagement (Kaur&Mittal , 2020).

### *Employees job satisfaction*

Employee job satisfaction refers to how much employees are content and satisfied with their working conditions. The relationship between employees' job satisfaction and their engagement in the decision-making process has a positive impact on organizational success. Organizational fairness impacts employees' attitudes, behaviors and in turn job satisfaction (Nargotra & Sharma, 2018). Employees who are satisfied with their work environment demonstrate a higher level of commitment and loyalty towards their organization (Trisninawati et al., 2023). Employees' job satisfaction is a predictor of their engagement which can be impacted by their involvement in decision-making. Trusting management and being part of decision-making result into high levels of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is highly associated with participatory decision making whereby workers' opinion is incorporated during decisions relating to their jobs (Mohsen & Sharif, 2020). Considerably, the literature suggests that job satisfaction is both an antecedent and consequence of employee engagement.

### *Research Gap and Purpose*

Based on the reviewed experimental studies, it is evident that employees' engagement in decision-making increases their satisfaction and commitment; yet this concept, to my knowledge, has not been explored in the context of Oman, despite its practical and theoretical implications. This study addresses this gap in our understanding of how employees' engagement in decision-making increases their satisfaction and commitment. Identifying this gap in the literature makes it compelling that more research is needed in this area. This study seeks to explore to what extent and in what way employee satisfaction and commitment are related to employees' engagement in decision-making processes. The following is an exploration of the theories that underpin the study.

### *Theoretical and conceptual framework*

This study is premised on goal setting and job characteristics theories. These theories lay the ground for explaining the relationship between employee satisfaction and commitment and their engagement in the decision-making process.

**Goal Setting Theory:** According to goal setting theory, individuals can be motivated by specific challenging goals to perform at higher levels. Inclusion of employees in the decision-making process allows them to make meaning out of the goals they participate in developing. Individuals will be more motivated towards achieving such goals when they are allowed to take part in goal-setting activities as well as decisions affecting their work.

**Job Characteristics Theory:** The Job Characteristics theory states that motivation, satisfaction, and performance of employees are influenced by certain attributes such as autonomy and self-actualization.

Employees participation in decision-making has the potential to improve these attributes, which allow the workers to have control over their work and hence raising the level of their job satisfaction and commitment.

Theoretical perspectives such as these serve as a lens for understanding how employee involvement in decision making has an impact on their levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Testing these theories in the targeted setting is assumed to reveal the dynamics surrounding the extent to which employees' engagement in decision- making increases their job satisfaction and commitment. Based on the reviewed literature and relevant theories, the following conceptual farmwork has been developed.

*Conceptual framework*

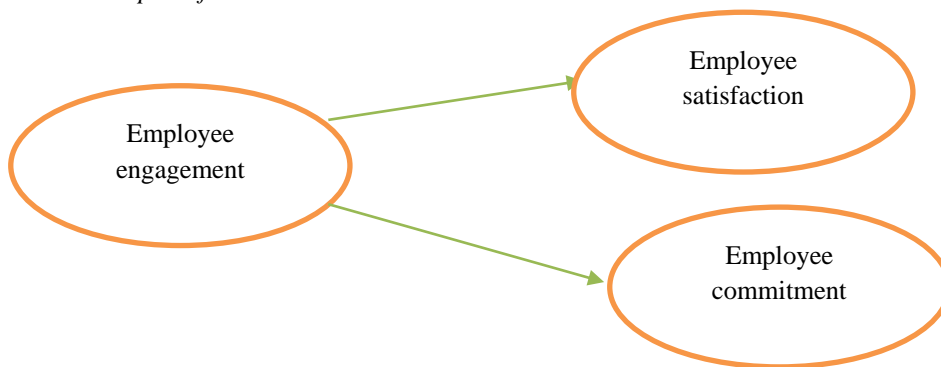


Figure 1.

*Research questions*

- What is the degree of employee’s engagement in decision making process?
- What is the impact of employee’s engagement in decision making process on their job satisfaction.
- To what extent does the employee’s engagement in decision making process influence their job commitment?
- How does the faculty increase the employee’s engagement in decision making process?

*Research Objectives*

- Identify the degree of employee’s engagement in decision making process.
- Find the influence of employee’s engagement in decision making process on their job satisfaction.
- Find the impact of employee’s engagement in decision making process on their job commitment.
- Give recommendations of what can be done to increase employee engagement in decision-making to improve their job satisfaction and commitment.



### *Research Hypotheses*

H1: There is a significant relation between employee engagement in decision making and employee satisfaction.

H2: There is a significant relation between employee engagement in decision making and employee commitment.

### *Setting of the study*

The study is conducted in the Faculty of Business at Sohar university. The administrative and academic staff members of the Faculty were the participants. Their roles, responsibilities, and levels of engagement in decision-making processes may differ.

### *Data collection*

In this case, the mixed methods research design has been adopted to identify to what extent and in what way engagement employees into the decision-making process can influence their job satisfaction and commitment. Towards this end, a perception survey containing 5- point Likert Scale has been administered to 47 non-teaching staff at my case University. This survey was intended for gathering quantitative data pertaining to the study being investigated. The instrument was piloted and consisted of three sections besides the demographic part.

The first section consisted of five items and measured participants' perceptions on the extent to which employees are engaged in the decision-making process. The second section comprised five items and measured participants' opinions regarding the extent to which employee engagement in decision-making increases their job satisfaction. The third section consisted of 5 questions and measured respondents' perception on the extent to which their involvement in the decision-making process increases their organizational commitment. In total, there were 15 items rated on a scale from one to five (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree). It started off with an introductory part explaining what the study was all about. Similarly, I collected qualitative data from three open-ended questions to collect qualitative data that would complement the quantitative findings with key quotes from the same participants.

### *Data analysis*

The quantitative data were analyzed through a perception survey distributed to 47 academic and administrative staff from the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. Out of the 47 surveys administered, 37 were received, resulting in a response rate of 78%, which is considered satisfactory for the purpose of this study. The survey responses were analyzed using frequency analysis, mean, standard deviation and correlational analysis of the Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data to provide more insight on the various factors that may increase employees' job satisfaction and commitment due to their participation in the decision making process.

## Results

### Correlations

Table1. Correlations

	EEDM	ES	EC
EEDM	E Pearson Correlation	1	.473*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004
	N	37	36
ES	E Pearson Correlation	.605**	1
	Rig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001
	N	37	38
EC	E Pearson Correlation	.473**	.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.001
	N	36	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation table, the following results have been identified.

1. Correlation between EEDM and ES: EEDM is Employees engagement in decision -making and ES is Employees -job satisfaction, Pearson Correlation coefficient: 0.605\*\*; Significance (2-tailed): 0.000 (highly significant).
2. Correlation between EEDM and EC: EEDM is Employees engagement in decision -making and ES is Employees commitment, Pearson Correlation coefficient: 0.473\*\*; Significance (2-tailed): 0.004 (significant).

### Regression

Table 2. Regression Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	EC, ES <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: EEDM

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.403	.367	2.177	.403	11.130	2	33	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), EC, ES

The regression model Shown in Table2 , has  $R^2$  equal to 0.403, meaning that approximately 40.3% of the variability in EEDM can be explained by ES and EC. The value of adjusted R Square is 0.367. Standard error of estimate is 2.177; it indicates average difference between actual and predicted values of EEDM. Change Statistics shows that the Model's R Square Change is .403 with F Change being 11.130, both significant at  $p < 0.001$

Table3. ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	105.542	2	52.771	11.130	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	156.458	33	4.741		
Total	262.000	35			

a. Dependent Variable: EEDM

b. Predictors: (Constant), EC, ES

The ANOVA table shown in table3 indicates that the overall regression model is significant ( $F = 11.130, p < 0.001$ ); this suggests that these independent variables taken together significantly affect the dependent variable EEDM.

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.950	3.117		1.588	.122
ES	.513	.163	.490	3.145	.004
EC	.255	.175	.227	1.455	.155

a. Dependent Variable: EEDM

Intercept is a constant term with a non-significant value of ( $P = .122$ ), while its value equals 4.95. ES variable coefficient stands at .513 indicating that for every one unit increase in ES, there will be an increase in EEDM by .513 units on average statistically significant,  $P = .004$ . EC coefficient reads .255 showing that for each one-unit increment in EC, there would be a corresponding increase of about .255 units on average which however was not significant ( $P = .155$ )

## Discussion

The first correlation table indicates that there is a strong positive correlation (0.605) between EEDM and ES, which suggests that when EEDM scores go up, so do the scores of ES. That lead to the acceptance of H1. “There is a significant relation between an employee engagement in decision making and employee satisfaction”. The analysis also shows that there is a moderately strong positive correlation (0.473) between EEDM and EC, indicating that higher levels of environmental concerns are associated with greater scores on the EEDM. That will cause the acceptance of H2, “There is a significant relation between an employee engagement in decision making and employee commitment”.

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed that employees at the faculty are satisfied when they are more engaged in the decision-making process. One respondent said *“I feel I am highly valued for my efforts in the organization. The faculty leadership often acknowledges and appreciates our effort and dedication”*. In her answer to the question, “Do you see yourself having a long-term future with this organization?”, the respondent said, *“Certainly, I envision myself in this organization for a long time. I share the university's vision and values; hence, my commitment to its growth and success over the years”*. In their answer to the last interview question, “How involved do you feel in decision-making processes within the organization?”, most of the respondents felt satisfied and happy with the level of engagement in decision making at the faculty. Previous studies have highlighted the same results. Saks and Ashforth’s (2000) research indicated that employees who are involved in decision making have better satisfaction and commitment for their jobs. In addition, Lawler (1992) found out that organizations which enhance greater employee participation in decision-making tend to enjoy higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Conducting the interviews was very important for an in-depth understanding of the employees’ opinions on engagement and how it impacts their job satisfaction and commitment. The results of this research are supported by previous studies ( Smith et al., 2023; Chen & Wang, 2022) indicating that employee participation in decision-making greatly influences both job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

## Recommendations

The following are strategies that organizations could apply to increase employee engagement in the decision-making process:

1. Build clear communication channels so that employees can share ideas and points of view.

2. Encourage participation: Organizations can use brainstorming, focus groups, and teamwork to encourage the employees to participate more effectively.
3. Develop training programs for employees to learn the tactics of participating in the decision-making process.
4. Discuss and value the employees' suggestions. This will make the employees feel that their suggestions are important.
5. Develop a reward system for employees who participate in the decision making process. This will encourage the other employees to participate more.
6. Give the employees the authority and power to decide.

## Acknowledgement

I am acknowledging everyone who assisted me in conducting this research. First and foremost, I am grateful to the participants' willingness to share their points of view; without their diligent participation, I would not have been able to collect the research data. Moreover, I want to express my gratitude to Dr Mohamed Elgeddawy who guided me throughout the research process and provided valuable feedback. I could not have done it without his guidance. His expertise has been crucial in making sure that the study is sound, and its results are valid.

Lastly but not least – families and friends. They were there when no one else was, supporting me even if they didn't understand why or how much time these things take up sometimes... So this one goes out especially loud: THANK YOU SO MUCH EVERYONE!!!

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## Investigating the Factors Impacting Strategic Thinking in Organizational Decision-Making: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** Purpose- This study aims to explore -from the perspectives of the academic and administrative staff of the Faculty of Business at Sohar University in the Northern part of the Sultanate of Oman - the extent to which the Organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and technological changes influence the strategic thinking in organizational decision making. A pragmatic philosophy underpins the research design of the study. Methodology- A mixed methods case study approach involving a survey administered to academics and administrative staff at the faculty of business at Sohar University was used for data collection. The survey includes twelve Likert Scale statements and open-ended questions aiming at highlighting viable quotes that validate quantitative results. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are used for data analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify the frequent occurrence of words and phrases that reflect the pattern within the qualitative data obtained from open-ended responses. Findings -The findings suggest that Organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and technological changes improve strategic thinking in organizational decision-making within Sohar University. Significantly, although the sample is taken from one case study (Faculty of Business at Sohar University) in a limited geographical area in Oman, specifically in the North of the Sultanate of Oman, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area to validate the results in similar locations. Originality/value – The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings and participants' voices, into the intersection between organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and technological changes that shape strategic thinking within educational institutions. It spotlights the changing nature of these factors and their collective impact on strategic thinking within the context of the Faculty of Business at Sohar University.

**Keywords:** Organizational culture, Leadership Dynamics, Organizational Changes, Strategic Thinking.

**Citation:** Al-Qartoubi, K.K. (2024). Investigating the Factors Impacting Strategic Thinking in Organizational Decision-Making: The Case of Oman". In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2590-2601), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Strategic thinking plays an essential role in the success and sustainability of an organization in any industry in today's dynamic and competitive environment. The concept of strategic thinking is defined as the attitude of an organizational thinking process that drives smart actions and the will to inspire the entire firm to work towards



achieving a set of strategic goals (Shaik et al., 2020). Strategic thinking can lead to the discovery of fresh and creative tactics that can be applied to modify the competitive game (Steptoe et al., 2011). Another term for strategic thinking is strategic foresight which discusses an organization's goal and vision as well as how an organization gains an advantage by anticipating problems and finding solutions (Martinet, 2010).

Strategic thinking involves having the capacity to foresee, visualize, and adjust to changes while coordinating and aligning organizational resources and competencies with overall strategic objectives. It is expected that organizational strategic leaders comprehend the elements influencing strategic thinking to improve overall effectiveness and make well-informed decisions. This paper describes a study that investigates how organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and technological change impact strategic thinking at the College of Business of Sohar University.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is not only to provide practical approaches that assist organizational leaders in making well-informed decisions, taking advantage of prospects, and confronting challenges but also to contain original thoughts that would guide organizational leaders on how they can create a strategic culture and drive lasting success.

### *Literature Reviews*

The most important element when making decisions in an organization is strategic thinking. Strategic thinking in decision-making is influenced by factors such as cognitive biases, decision-making styles, and internal resistance from influential people (Acciarini et al., 2020).

### *Organizational Culture*

Organizational culture influences the growth, establishment, and effectiveness of educational institutions like universities or schools. An in-depth exploration of the concepts of organizational culture has been instrumental in helping many universities and schools to understand better how to improve their management practices as well as developing strategies for change and innovation (Chen et al., 2015).

Strategic thinking depends mainly on organizational culture. Consequently, some leadership styles plus the development of strategic foresight capability among organizations enhance corporate strategic thinking and decision-making capabilities (Alatailat et al., 2019). Considerably, the incorporation of strategic thinking into decision-making has significant effects on organizational outputs which then shape the direction and extent of action taken by an organization (Hameed et al., 2021).

### *Technological Changes*

Strategic thinking is known as the process through which an organization reacts strategically to changes in the market and improving performance as a result of those changes. Technological Changes (TC) is one such modification that the organization must implement to improve its business operation. There are several categories of technology changes, each with unique factors that influence an organization's technology change (Shaik et al., 2020). Research and Development (R&D) stands out as one element that mainly influences an organization's Technology Capacity (TC) and subsequently impacts the strategic thinking process in organizations (Carbonell et al., 2009). Previous studies indicate that investment in R&D generally enhances organizational performance and growth and has a fundamental impact on organization's competitiveness in the market (Wakelin, 2001). Notably, technology changes may be categorized into various types, which have varied sets of determinants for the company's technological transition process. One such feature significantly influencing Business-critical Technological Development Factors and hence corporate strategy-making is Research & Development Intensity (RDI) (Carbonell et al., 2009). Prior research highlights the fact that expenditure on research and development leads to improvements in organizational efficiency and increased growth rates while at the same time having significant implications for a country's ability to compete effectively at the international level. Company productivity growth and long-term performance are positively affected by R&D spending following Wakelin (2001).

### *Leadership Dynamics*

Strategic thinking in organizational decision-making is influenced by various factors, with leadership dynamics playing a crucial role. Research by Jansen et al. (2009) highlights that in dynamic environments, transformational leadership behaviors are particularly influential, encouraging managers at different levels to generate innovative ideas for incremental improvements. This underscores the significance of adaptive leadership styles in response to changing organizational landscapes. Moreover, Klein et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of dynamic delegation in leadership, especially in contexts that benefit from shared, hierarchical, and deindividualized leadership approaches. This suggests that effective leadership in decision-making processes involves understanding the context to optimize delegation strategies and aligning leadership behaviors with the organizational environment. Based on Georgakalou et al., (2023), leadership plays a crucial role in fostering strategic thinking within organizations. Strategic thinkers possess capabilities such as using logical and creative thinking, establishing clear visions, setting goals, and enhancing organizational culture. They focus on future outcomes; they are curious, resourceful, risk-takers, flexible, and creative. Ultimately, strategic thinking enables organizations to identify opportunities and enhance their performance.

### *Research Question*

- To what extent and in what way do organizational Culture, leadership dynamics, and Technological Changes influence strategic thinking in university decision-making?

### *Research Objectives*

- To assess the significance of Organizational Culture in facilitating strategic thinking in university decision-making.
- To analyze the role of Leadership dynamics in shaping strategic Thinking within the university.
- To explore the influence of Technological Changes on Strategic Thinking in university decision-making.

### **Methodology**

This Paper is guided by the pragmatic Paradigm which combines quantitative and qualitative research methods to address the study's questions. This research explores how strategic thinking shapes organizational decision-making at Sohar University. This approach will have academic implications besides providing an empirical basis for university policymaking and practices. The qualitative method used semi-structured interviews to explore different perspectives on factors that influence strategic thinking in academic decisions among the faculty academics and administrative staff.

### **Theories Related to the Study**

#### *Organizational Culture Theory*

For decades now, organizational culture has gained more attention because of its potential to improve employee as well as organization's performance. (Fisher & Wilmoth,2018). Initially, organization's culture is perceived as "something cultivated". Traditionally, culture is perceived as a set of shared beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that get transmitted from one generation to another (Matsumoto,1996). Intangible elements such as values, behaviors, and attitudes that assist in decision-making have been given more consideration in recent research on organizational culture. Attitudes and behaviors that support the course of development within organizations through interactions with individuals are what some researchers refer to as organizational cultures (Schein, 2004).

#### *Leadership Dynamics*

**Transformational Leadership Theory:** This theory focuses on how leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve common goals. It suggests that transformational leaders impact their followers by creating a sense of purpose, fostering trust and respect, and encouraging innovation and growth.

**Characteristics of Transformational leaders:** the main features of transformational leaders required in today's dynamic and challenging environment are:

- 1- **Vision:** A visionary leader inspires his followers to understand the past, explore the present and foresee the future.
- 2- **Confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism** are features that impact the organizational performance.
- 3- **Ethics: Transformational** leaders exhibit integrity, honesty, and ethical behavior in their decisions and actions. They lead as a role model by adhering to high moral and ethical standards.

### *The rationale of the Research*

The research aims to explore the main influential factors that shape and impact strategic thinking at Sohar University. By selecting the mixed methods approach, the study pursues a comprehensive understanding of these factors. Moreover, the research provides suggestions that have the potential to improve decision-making, and foster a culture that supports strategic thinking. Investigation of these factors contributes to the university's effectiveness and success. The findings have the prospect of assisting the university in addressing the challenges, capitalizing on opportunities, and developing effective strategies aligned with its goals.

### *The Context of the Research*

The study aims to explore the dynamics of the strategic thinking process in Sohar University decision-making, specifically at the Faculty of Business . The purpose is to understand how this process is influenced by factors such as organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and technological changes. Understanding the context helps to situate the findings, and ensure that the research outcomes are relevant and applicable to the university context.

### *Research Participants*

The participants of the study constitute a diverse of stockholders from the faculty of Business at Sohar University. These stakeholders represent diverse roles within the academic community. Stratified sampling techniques are employed to ensure a balanced presentation from different groups (faculty and administrative staff), and enhance the diversity of perspectives captured from the study. In addition, for qualitative data, interviews were conducted with ten staff to capture their perspectives on the impactful factors of strategic thinking.

### *Data Collection and Instruments*

A mixed methods case study approach is used to investigate the extent to which organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and technological changes influence strategic thinking in the decision-making process of Sohar University. A perception survey comprising 12, 5-point Likert Scale statements has been distributed to 35 academic and administrative staff in the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. The survey aimed to collect quantitative data related to the study under inquiry. The survey was piloted and the used version consisted of three sections.

The first section comprised four items and aimed to assess participant's perceptions of the extent to which organizational culture influences strategic thinking in decision-making within the faculty. The second section includes four statements aimed at measuring participants' perceptions of the extent to which leadership dynamics contribute to increasing strategic thinking in decision-making. The third section of the survey includes four statements to measure participants' perceptions of the extent to which technological changes influence strategic thinking in decision-making within the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. All of the 12 items of the survey consider a 5 – point scale (1= Strongly Agree (SA), 2 = Agree(A), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 =Disagree (D), and 5 = Strongly Disagree (SD)).

The survey includes an introductory section that clearly explains the main purpose of the research. On the other hand, qualitative data were collected from three open-ended questions which represented add-on items to the survey questions. The aim was to provide qualitative data that could enrich the quantitative findings with important quotes from the same participants.

#### *Data Analysis*

The 40 academic and admin staff at the Faculty of Business in Sohar University went through the perception survey to analyze their quantitative data. In total, 35 surveys were filled out giving a response rate of 90%, which is a satisfactory percentage as it will help confirm the findings of this study. The survey responses underwent frequency analysis, mean, and standard deviation using Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. A profound enquiry into the qualitative responses could therefore generate insights on several aspects that foster strategic thinking within the faculty of business at Sohar University.

### **The Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Figure 1 represents the dependent variable as Strategic thinking in university decision-making and the independent variables are Organizational Culture, Leadership Dynamics, and Technological Changes.

#### *Research Hypothesis*

- H1: Organizational culture is significantly connected with strategic thinking in decision-making within the faculty of Business at Sohar University
- H2: There is a positive relationship between leadership dynamics and strategic thinking within the faculty decision-making.
- H3: Technological Changes have positive impact on strategic thinking and organizational decision-making.

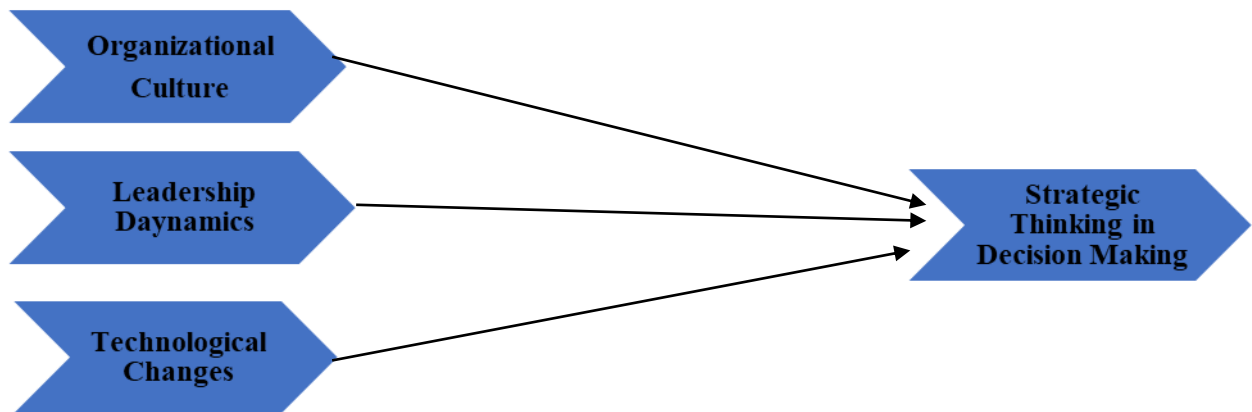


Figure 1.

## Results

### Introduction

This section outlines the findings obtained from analyzing the data in the context of the research objectives. It focused on the key findings derived from both quantitative and qualitative analysis and addressed the questions and hypotheses of the study.

#### *Quantitative Data Analysis*

Table 1. The Study Variable Descriptive Statistics

	Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
LD	9.66	4.043	35
OC	9.46	3.193	35
TC	8.46	2.934	35

Table one illustrates the mean and standard deviation of the study variables. The variables included are Leadership Dynamics (LD), Organizational Culture (OC), and Technological Change (TC). The highest mean value among the study variables (9.66) goes for Leadership Dynamics, which indicates that participants perceived leadership dynamics has a strong impact on strategic thinking within the Faculty of Business decision-making. The lowest mean (8.46) goes to Technological Chanens (TC).

Table two explains the correlation between Organizational Culture (OC) and Strategic thinking (ST). The correlation was 0.426 which indicates a moderate positive correlation. This suggests that there is a positive relationship between organizational culture and strategic thinking. In addition, the correlation coefficient

between Leadership Dynamic (LD) and Strategic Thinking (ST) was 0.576 indicating a moderate correlation. This suggests that there is a positive relationship between leadership dynamics and strategic thinking. Finally, the correlation coefficient between Technological Changes (TC) and Strategic Thinking (ST) was 0.671 indicating a strong positive correlation. This proved that there is a strong positive relationship between technological changes and strategic thinking within the decision-making process at the faculty of business.

Table 2. Correlations Analysis

		LD	OC	TC	ST
LD	Pearson Correlation	1	.550**	.668**	.576**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000	.000
	N	35	35	35	35
OC	Pearson Correlation	.550**	1	.611**	.426*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000	.011
	N	35	35	35	35
TC	Pearson Correlation	.668**	.611**	1	.671**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	35	35	35	35
ST	Pearson Correlation	.576**	.426*	.671**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.011	.000	
	N	35	35	35	35

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### *The Analysis of Qualitative Data*

The open-ended questions of the study asked participants to share their perspectives on the main factors that motivate strategic thinking within the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. The outcome of the thematic analysis indicates the existence of a current pattern among participants that spotlights the various factors that contribute to strategic thinking among the faculty. Respondents to the first open question reported that collaborative work environment, reward and recognition, supportive leaders, open communication, access to the faculty resources, diverse labor force, and organizational culture that motivate employee engagement and empowerment are the main factors that motivate faculty to think strategically. These findings are in alignment with AlQershi's (2021) study who noted that features of organizational culture are vital in enhancing the strategic management practices of universities and schools. On the whole, there were suggestions made by the respondents that could help the college of business at Sohar University attain several benefits related to the willingness of staff to change and effectively utilize the resources to achieve long-term sustainability growth in



relation to data driven strategic management tactics. The other open-ended question asked the participants to identify how the Faculty of Business address and overcome the challenges that limit or hinder strategic thinking in decision-making. Participants suggested that lack of collaboration, inadequate support for change management, fear of failure, and employee resistance to change are some challenges in strategic thinking. The Faculty can overcome these barriers and challenges by promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering a continuous learning culture through implementing professional development programs, providing adequate support for change management, and establishing early measurements to address the main challenges in advance.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings of the study point out that the respondents have a positive attitude toward an organizational culture that encourages strategic thinking in decision-making and motivates an innovative and growing environment.

## **Discussion**

The quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that strategic thinking in decision-making within the Faculty of Business is shaped by organizational culture. It follows that future studies should consider how organizational culture affects academic institutions. The Faculty should therefore create an atmosphere that rewards originality, invention, and innovation and inspires strategic thinking. Significantly, the findings are in alignment with Acciarini et al. (2020) which indicates the importance of strategic thinking in today's competitive environment. To do this, faculty members are encouraged to engage in open dialogue and work together. The results showed a positive correlation between leadership dynamics and strategic thinking. This emphasizes the importance of supportive leadership in promoting strategic thought among teaching staff. It is also necessary that faculty members take part in leadership development programs which will help them raise their capacity to think strategically as leaders. These might entail workshops, one-on-one sessions with an expert, or monitoring systems for instance.

The results show a direct relationship between technological shifts and strategic thinking. This demonstrates how technology has revolutionized decision-making in universities. For this reason, the Business Faculty should introduce new technological platforms and merge them with their decision-making systems. The new technologies can foster strategic planning, and facilitate data analysis (Shaik et al., 2020). Moreover, the Faculty have to provide the required training to its members to ensure that all members are familiar with the new tools or platforms.

## **Conclusion**

Thinking strategically involves well-thought-out planning and careful analysis to develop a strategy for your organization's future. Having a strategic mindset adds another valuable level to the process of developing a

strategy. It acknowledges that planning and strategic thinking are two interdependent ways of thinking (Al-Qershi, 2021). The study proved that there is a significant correlation between organizational Culture and Strategic thinking. Organizational culture shapes the values and beliefs that guide individuals and leaders' decision-making and behaviors. Organizational culture promotes open communication and collaboration between management and staff. When employees are engaged and empowered, they will contribute to the strategic planning process. In addition, leadership and strategic thinking are interconnected. It shapes the direction of an organization and influences the extent to which strategic thinking is encouraged and practiced among members. Effective leadership serves as a role model for strategic thinking within the university.

Moreover, Technological changes have a transformative impact on strategic thinking in decision-making within the university. In today's digital world, technological accessibility enhances communication, drives innovation, and manages risk, enables strategic thinkers within organizations to utilize opportunities, capitalize the resources, and achieve sustainable success in today's digital and dynamic business environment. The faculty of business has to provide the needed training to its staff to facilitate the learning process in implementing advanced technologies in strategic thinking.

## Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are directed to decision and policy makers and all other relevant stakeholder:

- **Encourage strategic culture:** Academic institutions can motivate strategic thinking by creating an organizational culture that values strategic thinking. This can be implemented through open and transparent communication, empowerment, and collaboration.
- **Investment in leadership development and technology innovation:** universities can enhance their leaders' skills and abilities in strategic thinking through training and development programs.
- **Future studies:** A similar study can be conducted for future research by including additional variables that influence strategic thinking such as organizational structure, decentralization structure, diversity, and hierarchy.
- **Capitalize the sample size:** future studies can conduct the same study but with an increase in the sample size by including more participants across disciplines. In addition, various stakeholders' perceptions can be explored to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people and organizations who helped me complete this research. First of all, I'm deeply thankful to my research supervisor Dr. Mohammed Al Elgeddawy for his continuous support, guidance, and feedback at every step of the study. Additionally, I appreciate my institution (Modern College of Business and Science) for funding this research and allowing me to present the study at the

conference. Moreover, I'm grateful to the participants of the Faculty of Business at Sohar University and their collaboration in the data collection stage. Finally, I would like to thank all my colleagues for their support, and for giving advice when I need.

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## The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Engagement, Productivity, and Motivation: The Case of Oman

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Modern College of Business and Science, Oman; Sohar University

**Abstract:** This study aims to explore- from the perspectives of academic and administrative staff of the Faculty of Business at Sohar University in the Northern part of the Sultanate of Oman- the extent to which transformational leadership influences employee motivation, productivity, and engagement. In addition, the study reports on the correlation between employee motivation, productivity, and engagement. A pragmatic philosophy underpins the research design of the study. Methodology- A mixed methods case study approach involving surveys administered to the academic and administrative staff of the Faculty of Business at Sohar University was used for data collection. The survey includes twelve Likert Scale statements and open-ended questions aiming at highlighting viable quotes that validate quantitative results. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are used for data analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify the frequent occurrence of words and phrases that reflect the pattern within the qualitative data obtained from open-ended responses. Findings -The findings suggest that employee's motivation, productivity, and engagement are influenced by transformational leadership. The results also reveal the importance of building a culture of open communication and employee empowerment within the Faculty of Business. Although the sample is taken from one College at Sohar University which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area to validate the results in similar locations. Originality/value- The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings and participant's voice, into the premise of transformational leadership and its impact on employee motivation, productivity, and engagement within the context of the Faculty of Business at the Sohar University in the Sultanate of Oman. It spotlights the significance of adopting the core value of Transformational leadership in shaping organizational culture and improving employee outcomes.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Employee Motivation, Productivity, Engagement.

**Citation:** Al-Qartoubi, K., (2024). The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Motivation, Productivity, and Engagement. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2602-2612), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Leadership is the ability to develop business operational strategies that allow employees to carry them out the required tasks despite the existence of challenging obstacles ( Hersey & Blanchard ,1982). It involves the ability to let employees believe that they have the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve shared goals and targeted organizational outcomes (Murali & Aggarwal, 2020). Conversely, transformational

leadership (TL) is a methodological and data-driven leadership style that equips employees with the required knowledge, skills, and attributes that allow them to achieve their potential and increase the productivity of their organization. The practices of TL represent the behaviors and business operations that visionary transformational leaders adopt to enhance the level of employee satisfaction, productivity, motivation, and commitment. Transformative leaders who have a clear and futuristic vision inspire their followers to be productive, creative, and innovative through guiding, coaching, and promoting a collaborative culture of care that respond to the needs of the global market and the expectations of stakeholders (Murali & Aggarwal, 2020). Considerably, transformational leaders' behaviors have a significant impact on employee retention and loyalty. When leaders promote an organizational culture that motivates trust, empowerment, and open communication, they enhance employees' passion and commitment to bring about sustainable organizational success for all stakeholders. Adopting and adapting productive transformational leadership practices improves employees' sense of responsibility and organizational loyalty (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2021). In other words, transformational and visionary leaders are presumed to have the ability to shape employees' awareness of the obstacles they may face in the future and what needs to be done to address them (Mozammel & Haan, 2016). International research documents the positive impact of transformational leadership on employees' engagement, productivity and motivation. The following section explores this relationship in some details.

### **TL and Employee Engagement**

Research shows that optimizing the effectiveness of employee's positions within an organization requires them to be engaged. Involving employees in their workplace leads them to be fully engaged mentally, physically, and emotionally. The physical component of employee engagement is defined as the effort that employees contribute to carry out the tasks that have been delegated to them. Exploring employees' perceptions and level of satisfaction regarding the organizational behavior is essential to the cognitive component of employee engagement (Kahn 1990). Three aspects of employee engagement were assessed in a study conducted in 2012 by Gowri and Mariammal: commitment, job satisfaction, and salary and benefits. The study indicates that all three independent variables had a significant relationship with employee engagement. The study pointed out that companies ought to give employee engagement top priority.

#### *TL and Employee Productivity*

The literature indicates that transformational leadership plays an important role in advancing employees' productivity. Sayan and Sürücü (2024) explored how transformational leadership affects employee productivity in teaching hospitals in Iran. The findings indicate that hospitals adopting higher transformations in management thinking were likely to experience high levels of workers' satisfaction as well as increased organizational overall productivity. When management lives up to the expectations of the workforce, output will rise. Motivation serves as a driving force for others' actions. The more motivated and self-assured an employee is in his or her work, the more productively he will perform (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2021). Work motivation plays a significant role in advancing organizational productivity (Hasibuan, 2019). Also, Sayan & Sürücü (2024) investigated how

transformational leadership in the courier services sector affects logistics performance and how employee productivity functions as a moderator in this relationship. The results suggest that the productivity of employees plays a moderating role between logistics performance and transformational leadership.

#### *TL and Employee Motivation*

Recent research points out that employee motivation plays instrumental role in increasing the productivity of the organization. Arman et al. (2019) assessed the impact of motivation and transformational leadership on the outcome of the State University of Padang, particularly in the economics department. A quantitative approach was adopted in this study and 47 participants filled the survey. The findings proved that employee performance was directly affected by work motivation and transformational leadership. Also, it was found that work motivation and transformational leadership style were strongly associated with increased levels of employee productivity. Similarly, Ibarra (2020) explored how transformational leadership affects performance and motivation among teachers working for public schools. Findings indicate that transformational leaders have complex effects on motivation and performance.

#### *Research Gap and Purpose*

Based on the reviewed experimental studies, it is evident that the impact of transformational leadership on employees' engagement, productivity and motivation has not been explored within the context of Oman, despite its practical and theoretical implications. This study addresses this gap in our understanding of people attitudes towards the impact of TL on their level of engagement, productivity, and motivation. Identifying this gap in the literature makes it compelling that more research is needed in this area. This study aims to explore the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation, productivity, and engagement from the perspectives of the academic and administrative staff of the Faculty of Business at Sohar University in the Northern part of the Sultanate of Oman. The following is an exploration of the theories that underpin the study.

#### *Transformational Leadership Theory*

This theory focuses on how leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve common goals. It suggests that transformational leaders impact their followers by creating a sense of purpose, fostering trust and respect, and encouraging innovation and growth. Transformational leadership has some characteristics such as inspiration, charisma, and personalized consideration.

#### *Motivation Theories*

In the motivation field, there are many theories that guide our understand of how transformational leadership influences employee motivation. These theories are listed as the following:



- 1- **Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs:** This theory explains that individuals have different levels of needs, starting from the lower level of needs (psychological needs) to the higher level of needs (self-actualization). Transformational leaders address a higher level of need to enhance motivation.
- 2- **Herzberg’s Two-Factors Theory:** Herzberg indicates that motivators such as accountability and recognition enhance motivation and job satisfaction, while others, referred to as hygiene factors like pay and working conditions prevent dissatisfaction. Transformational leadership may focus on providing incentives that enhance their employees’ motivation to perform better at work. In addition to Expectancy Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Self Determination Theory (SDT). Based on the literature review a short review of the above-mentioned theories, the following conceptual framework has been developed to guide the study.

**The Conceptual Framework of the Study**

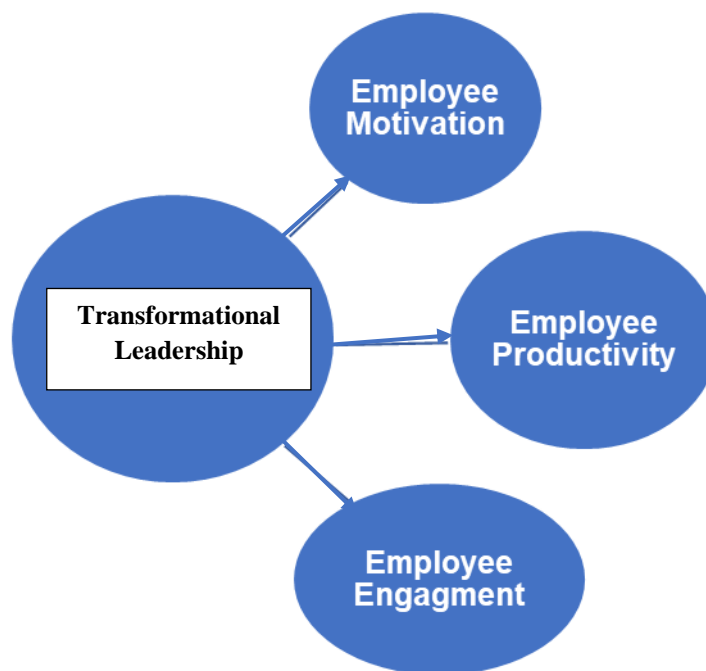


Figure1 illustrates the study variables which are Transformational leadership (Independent Variable), while employee motivation, productivity, and engagement are the dependent variables.

**The Rationale of the Research**

This research aimed to explore the influence of transformational leadership on employee motivation, productivity, and engagement in Sohar University’s Faculty of Business. By implementing mixed methods, the study pursues a comprehensive understanding of transformative leader impact. The aim is to look into a wide

range of aspects related to how leaders' behaviors in this context affect employees' performance as well as the overall organizational growth.

#### *Research Question*

- 1- To what extent and in what way does Transformational Leadership impact Employee Motivation, Productivity, and Engagement?

#### *Research Objectives*

- 1- To examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee motivation.
- 2- To investigate the impact of transformational leadership on employee productivity.
- 3- To examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

#### *Research Hypotheses*

This study consists of three main hypotheses as the following:

- 1- H1: Transformational leadership has a positive relationship on employee motivation.
- 2- H2: Transformation leadership has a significant impact on employee productivity.
- 3- H3: Transformational leadership has a direct influence on employee engagement.

## **Methodology**

Pragmatism guides the research process of this study. A mixed method design that includes quantitative and qualitative data is used to address the research questions. The study aims to explore how transformational leadership affects employee motivation, productivity, and engagement in the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. The qualitative method was applied by using semi-structured interviews to explore the various perspectives of academic and admin staff in the faculty.

## **Research Context**

The study aims to explore the transformational impact on the motivation, productivity, and, engagement of employees at the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. Understanding the context helps to situate the findings and ensure that the research outcomes are relevant and applicable to the university context.

## *Participants*

The study consists of diverse stockholders from the faculty of Business within Sohar University. These stakeholders represent diverse roles within the academic community. Stratified sampling techniques are

employed to ensure a balanced representation from different groups and enhance the diversity of perspectives captured from the study. In addition, for qualitative data; interviews were conducted with ten key stakeholders to capture their perspectives regarding the impact of TL on their engagement, productivity and motivation.

#### *Data Collection and Instrument*

A mixed methods case study approach is used to explore the extent to which transformational leadership influences employee motivation, productivity, and engagement within the Faculty of Business at Sohar University, a perception survey comprising 16, 5- points Likert Scale statements has been distributed to 45 academic and admin staff at the Faculty of Business in Sohar University. The survey aimed to collect quantitative data related to the study under inquiry. The survey was piloted, and the used version consisted of three sections.

The first section comprised four items and aimed to assess participants' perceptions of the extent to which employee motivation is affected by transformational leadership within the Faculty of Business. The second section includes four items aimed at measuring participants' perceptions of the extent to which employee productivity is affected by transformational leadership. The third section of the survey includes four items to measure participants' perceptions of the extent to which employee engagement is affected by transformational leadership within the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. Finally, the fourth section includes four items that aim to measure participants' perceptions of the extent to which transformational leadership is useful to the faculty of Business. All of the 16 items of the survey consider a 5 – point scale (1= Strongly Agree (SA), 2 = Agree(A), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 =Disagree (D), and 5 = Strongly Disagree (SD)).

The survey includes an introductory section that clearly explains the purpose of the research. Qualitative data were gathered from three open-ended questions which represented add-on items to the survey questions. The aim was to provide qualitative data that could enrich the quantitative findings with important quotes from the same participants.

#### *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were analyzed through a perception survey distributed to 50 academic and administrative staff from the Faculty of Business at Sohar University. Out of the 50 surveys administered, 45 were received, resulting in a response rate of 90%, which is considered satisfactory and validates the study's results. The survey responses were analyzed using frequency analysis, mean, standard deviation, and correlational analysis with the assistance of SPSS software.

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. It is believed that a thorough examination of the qualitative responses will provide valuable insights into transformational leadership practices that can enhance employee motivation, productivity, and engagement within the Faculty of Business.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 illustrates the mean and Standard Deviation of the study variables. The highest mean (7.50) goes to (TL) transformational leadership which demonstrates the significant influence on employee outcomes and performance among the faculty members. The lowest mean (7.04) refers to (ME) employee motivation.

Table 1. Statistics

		EM	EP	EE	TL
N	Valid	45	45	45	42
	Missing	0	0	0	3
Mean		7.04	7.49	7.40	7.50
Std. Deviation		1.492	1.727	1.698	1.656

(EM) Employee Motivation, (EP) Employee Productivity, (EE) Employee Engagement, (TL) Transformational Leadership

### Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Correlations

		EM	EP	EE	TL
EM	Pearson Correlation	1	.900**	.729**	.953**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	45	45	45	42
EP	Pearson Correlation	.900**	1	.699**	.937**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	45	45	45	42
EE	Pearson Correlation	.729**	.699**	1	.879**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	45	45	45	42
TL	Pearson Correlation	.953**	.937**	.879**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	42	42	42	42

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 explains the correlation coefficient between the study variables: (EM) Employee Motivation, (EP) Employee Productivity, (EE) Employee Engagement, and (TL) Transformational Leader. The findings indicate

the following:

- Employee motivation (EM) and employee productivity (EP) have a strong positive relationship between them (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.900,  $p < 0.01$ ). This signifies that when the motivation of an employee increases, their productivity also tends to rise.
- Employee motivation (EM) has a significant relationship with transformational leadership (TL) (0.953,  $p < 0.01$ ) and there is a positive relation between worker motivation and worker participation in the company activities (0.729,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- There is a positive correlation between engagement of employees (EE) and transactional leadership (TL). (0.879,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- Transformational leadership style correlates positively with employee productivity levels in organizations. (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.937,  $p < 0.01$ ).

*The results indicate the acceptance of the bellow hypotheses:*

Table 3. Hypotheses Status

Hypothesis	Status
H1: Transformational leadership has a positive relationship with employee motivation	Accepted
H2: transformational leadership has a significant impact on employee productivity.	Accepted
H3: Transformational leadership has a direct influence on employee engagement.	Accepted

### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

In the section of the open-ended research questions, participants were asked to share their perspectives on the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation, productivity, and engagement. The outcome of the thematic analysis indicates the existence of a recurrent pattern that spotlights the significant role played by transformational leadership and how it affects the faculty and staff outcomes. Respondents to the first open question were asked to identify the main reasons causing an increase in employee motivation, productivity, and engagement. The participants reported that organizational culture, leadership, reward and recognition, fairness and equity, communication, and opportunity for growth and development are the main reasons that affect employee motivation, productivity, and engagement.

The second open-ended question asked participants to identify the main benefits of having a transformational leader in the faculty. Taken together, the respondents suggested some benefits such as increased innovation and creativity, enhanced employee motivation and engagement, collaboration, increased strategic thinking and planning, inspiration and vision, and adaptability and change management. A notable thematic pattern was identified from the analysis of the second open-ended question.

The third open-ended question asked the participants to identify how the Faculty of Business addresses and overcomes the challenges that limit or hinder transformational leadership practices within the faculty. Participants suggested implementing leadership development programs, enhancing communication and promoting transparency, empowering the faculty members, addressing resistance to change, measuring and monitoring progress, and fostering a work culture that values transformational leadership practices within the faculty. All in all, both the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study point out that the respondents have a positive attitude toward an organizational culture that encourages transformational leadership for improving employee performance and outcomes.

## Discussion

Quantitative and qualitative findings indicated the significant positive influence of transformational leadership on employee motivation, productivity, and engagement. It follows that future studies should consider how this leadership style affects academic institutions. The college must foster transformational leadership practices among its members. This can be done through implementing leadership development programs for all stakeholders. In addition, the college has to promote open and transparent communication to enhance leadership effectiveness. The results showed a positive correlation between transformational leadership and employee motivation. This illustrates that employees tend to be more motivated to perform their tasks effectively as they perceive their leaders as transformational. Transformational leaders inspire, empower, and value their followers to be productive, and innovated which helps organizational success. The findings are in alignment with Ratnaningtyas et al. (2021) which indicated that work motivation and transformational leadership had a substantial positive impact on employee engagement.

The findings also show a positive connection between transformational leaders and employee engagement from the perceptions of faculty and staff. For this reason, the college has to provide employees with opportunities for promoting work-life balance, and fostering a collaborative work environment. On one hand, the research findings conflict with Mozammel & Haan (2016) which studied the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement among personnel in the banking sector in some cities in Bangladesh. The outcomes of this study revealed that in a work environment, applying a transformational leadership style does not assure that the employees will be fully engaged.

## Recommendations

- Organizations have to invest in training programs that enhance the leaders' skills and ability to be more effective.
- Academic institutions have to promote a culture that motivates trust, empowerment, and recognition, and provides employee development opportunities, and transparent communication. These attributes can enhance employee motivation, productivity, and engagement.

- Future researchers can conduct similar studies in different contexts and compare transformational leadership with other leadership styles in influencing employee outcomes.
- Different factors such as organizational culture, job design, and individual differences can be considered and analyzed for further studies.
- And, establish a mechanism or key performance indicators (KPIs) to continuously assess and monitor the influence of transformational leaders and address challenges that affect employee performance.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people and organizations who helped me complete this research. First of all, I'm deeply thankful to my research supervisor Dr. Mohammed Al Elgeddawy for his continuous support, guidance, and feedback at every step of the study. Additionally, I'm appreciating my institution (Modern College of Business and Science) for funding this research and providing me with an opportunity to present the study at the conference. Moreover, I'm grateful to the participants of the Faculty of Business at Sohar University and their collaboration in the data collection stage. Finally, I would like to thank all my colleagues for their support, and for giving advice when I need.

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## Effects of Digital Transformation on Employee Mindsets in Oman's Higher Education Sector

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**Abstract** Purpose: This study investigates the impact of digital transformation on employee mindsets within Oman's higher education sector. It examines how employees perceive and adapt to integrating digital technologies in teaching, learning, and administrative processes. The research aims to identify factors influencing employee receptiveness and preparedness for this digital shift by understanding these mindsets. The study will explore the challenges and opportunities associated with digital transformation from an employee perspective. This will provide valuable insights for developing effective strategies to promote positive digital mindsets, build capacity, and achieve a smooth digital transformation journey within Oman's higher education institutions. Design/ methodology /approach: This study adheres to the positivist research paradigm. Positivism emphasizes the objective nature of reality, where knowledge is acquired through measurable observations and analysed using statistical methods. This approach aligns with the quantitative research methods employed in this study. A survey instrument was developed and administered to 40 employees in one of the higher institutions in Oman. This approach allows for the collection and analysis of data to identify relationships between variables— a random sampling method employed to ensure adequate representation of the targeted population. Findings: The findings indicate a relationship between digital skills, change attitudes, and perceived organizational support, which the identified relationship contributes to the shaping of employees' mindsets toward digital transformation. The findings reveal a significant effect of digital transformation on developing employees' digital mindsets in Oman's higher education sector. Although the sample is taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the finding, the study opens a new research horizon to validate the results in similar locations. Originality/value: This study offers insights and recommendations for changing employee mindsets in Omani higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Employee Mindsets, Digital Transformation, Higher Education Institutes.

**Citation:** Al Sabbagh, M. (2024). Effects of Digital Transformation on Employee Mindsets in Oman's Higher Education Sector. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2613-2631), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Digital transformation in higher education is a global phenomenon, reshaping educational landscapes by integrating advanced technologies that foster innovative and student-centered approaches. Adopting digital tools

in education enhances job satisfaction and requires educators to adapt to new skills and methodologies (Berman & Marshall, 2022; Jones & Smith, 2021). This trend is increasingly prevalent in the Middle East, where economic diversification and a youthful demographic drive the integration of e-learning platforms, necessitating shifts in pedagogical and administrative strategies (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2020; Khan et al., 2020).

In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, significant investments are being made to enhance digital infrastructures, aligning with broader national goals to integrate technology across different sectors, notably education. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar are at the forefront of pioneering projects to develop smart campuses and employee artificial intelligence. These advancements are playing a pivotal role in shaping how employees engage with their work and improve overall operational efficiency (Al-Muftah & Weerakkody, 2019; Nasser & Abouchedid, 2021)

Focusing on Oman, the higher education sector is actively undergoing digital transformation as part of the government's strategy to foster a knowledge-based economy. Initiatives such as virtual classrooms and digital administrative processes alter educational institutions' service delivery and employee perceptions. However, traditional mindsets among some staff pose challenges, necessitating targeted change management strategies to enhance digital acceptance (Al-Siyabi & McLean, 2021; Balushi & Sohal, 2022).

### **Statement of The Research Problem**

Digital transformation is reshaping the landscape of higher education globally, compelling institutions to reconsider not just their operational and educational frameworks but also the readiness and attitudes of their employees toward these changes. In Oman's higher education sector, successfully integrating new technologies depends on the interplay between digital literacy, technology adoption and use, and organizational support and employee mindset (Al-Siyabi & McLean, 2021). Although there have been continued steps in improving digital infrastructure and capabilities, there remains a notable gap between the implementation of digital technologies and the level of adoption among faculty and administrative staff. Jones and Smith (2021) highlighted that the degree of digital literacy significantly influences how effectively technology is adopted within higher educational environments.

Moreover, (Berman Marshall 2022 ) highlighted that the type of organizational support and the degree to which support is provided play a significant role in shaping the way in which organizational systems are perceived and acted upon by the employees at the forefront of digital transformation. On the other hand, Balushi Sohal 2022 concentrated on how well employees' digital literacy correlates with their willingness to embrace new technologies; explore the adequacy of organizational support that is provided; and suggest ways by which we could enhance the integration of technological endeavors with employee engagement in universities across the human higher education and institutional space.

### *Research Study Objectives*

Aim of this research is to investigate how digital transformation affect employees in the public sector (Staff employees) in higher education in Oman through measure their digital literacy, the evaluate how digital technologies have been used and analyze the current support system in place along with employees' opinion about this digital change.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study presents that view of digital transformation and its influence on the minds of staff members at a specific higher education institution in Oman. It explores dimensions such as digital literacy level, technology adoption, organization support mechanisms, and employee attitude toward digital changes. The research highlights such transformation's practical and strategic benefits and is expected to yield valuable insights for developing tailored educational programs. The study contributes to academic literature and equips institutional leaders with evidence-based strategies to enhance technology integration and strengthen support frameworks. The goal is to improve the efficiency of educational and administrative practices and cultivate an organizational culture that is receptive to digital innovation within Oman's higher education institutions.

## **Literature Review**

### **Digital Transformation**

In higher education, transformation signifies the thorough adoption of digital technologies throughout multiple facets of institutional operations. These include educational methodologies, administrative frameworks, and day-to-day procedures. Berman and Marshall (2022) characterize digital transformation as an extensive modification of organizational and business process competencies and structure aiming to exclude the potential and opportunities presented by digital technologies in the medical and strategies fashion. The primary objective of this holistic integration is to increase operational efficiency enhance engagement among stakeholders and promote innovation within academic environments.

### *Employee Mindset*

In the wake of digital transformation, employee mindset pertains to university staff's attitudes, behaviors, and overall receptiveness towards digital technologies and changes. Jones & Smith (2021) describe employee mindset as individuals' cognitive and behavioral readiness to embrace technological changes, directly influencing how effectively these technologies are adopted and utilized in their daily roles. The mindset can range from enthusiastic adoption and advocacy for digital tools to resistance and skepticism, depending on various factors, including digital literacy, perceived benefits, and organizational support.

### *Digital Literacy*

In today's competitive technological business environment, digital literacy is important for accelerating digital transformation. It is about more than just how to operate gadgets. It is about possessing the vital abilities to comprehend, utilize, and generate information through digital means. Al Siyabi and Mclean(2021) describe digital literacy as the blend of abilities, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to adjust, control, integrate, and communicate via digital tools. From a pedagogical standpoint, educators and administrators must develop these media skills to navigate new digital systems and effectively teach technological tools.

### *Technology Adoption and Use*

Technology adoption refers to integrating digital tools and systems into the educational ecosystem. As Khan and colleagues (2020) explained, this adoption helps education professionals by enabling them to use new technologies and make them part of their work, thus enhancing learning and administrative operations. Assessing how technology is adopted and used is critical to measuring the success of digital transformation efforts, which are fundamental for education institutions to achieve their strategic objectives.

### *Organizational Support*

Organizational support relates to the extent of support an organization puts in place to support its staff in digital transitions. This can take many forms: training programs, technical advice, and supply of tools to facilitate the transition, such as providing relevant equipment or software to make the process easier. Balushi and Sohel (2022) found that this type of support is a strong influential factor in the climate when digital changes occur and has a strong positive effect on staff attitudes towards new technology. The implication here is that the extent of the organizational support can usually impact the speed and effectiveness of the use of new technology.

### *Overview of Previous Studies*

In higher education, for instance, digitally enabled reforms can involve a profound change not only in the provision (i.e., course design and content) and delivery (i.e., teaching and learning) but also in the organizational streamlining of the administrative apparatus. This is generally acknowledged, but scholarly research on how it affects employee attitudes and institutional behavior produces varied findings, as illustrated by their scores. The acceptance of digital technology in the academic ecosystem is complex and nuanced in many ways.

### *Employee Mindset and Digital Transformation*

Whether digital transformation can be delivered effectively in higher education depends on the perspective adopted. Jone and Smith (2021) observed that individuals with a positive attitude towards digital tools are more inclined to embrace, rather than deride, them and are more likely to fully exploit them. Conversely, Berman and

Marshall (2022) have described employees' resistance to adopting digital technologies, often due to fear of being left behind or perhaps that their jobs will change in unexpected or uncontrollable ways – in other words, that they are and will be obsolete. As highlighted by these observations, both a strong focus on digital literacy and a robust change management approach that stresses the importance of support and a clear communication line regarding the benefits and changes brought about by digital transformation are essential to install and maintain the right mindset with employees.

#### *Digital Literacy as a Facilitator of Change*

There is no doubt that critical digital literacy is required to facilitate digital transformation. Al-Siyabi and McLean (2021) highlighted that the staff's proficiency and digital skills could undoubtedly ease the shift to new technologies and help better integrate these new tools into everyday operations. However, Khan et al. (2020) mentioned that the deficiency in digital literacy could create significant barriers, leading to lower staff satisfaction and poor use of digital tools. Therefore, to address these challenges, institutions should provide wide digital literacy training programs to address the variation in staff proficiency and hence promote consistent and effective use of the technology.

#### *Organizational Support Structures*

Organizational support is particularly essential in enhancing the digital transformation of higher education institutions. Balushi and Sohal (2022) highlighted that 'the last and most crucial support framework provided by Aruba is concerning training program and resources' and that resistance to change and adaptability of employees hinges on how well organizational support is provided. These findings were corroborated by the arguments of Berman and Marshall (2022) that employees are likely to adopt and promote new technologies when they believe that there is significant organizational support. However, there are disparities between institutions on the level of support provided to staff. This has led to a gap in the transformational efforts across higher education institutions. Increasingly, it has become essential for organizations to provide similar organizational support for staff to assist them to in managing these changes.

Al-Haddad & Kotnour (2020) highlights how organizational change theories can help higher education embed digital technologies. These studies reveal that although digital tools can transform higher education teaching and administrative processes, their use necessitates changes in staff attitudes and behaviors towards new technologies, a shift that often provokes resistance to change in terms of job insecurity and digital literacy concerns.

In addition, research has investigated how digital literacy and organizational support can contribute to the uptake of technology. Berman and Marshall (2022) found that a dearth of digital literacy might inhibit the success of technology but may also lead to an overall diminishment of the perceived value in the digital transformation 'work effort.' Balushi and Sohal (2022) also measured organizational support, defined as training

and resource allocation, which contributed to mitigating pushback to technology alongside increasing employees' flexibility.

Historically, studies that evaluated utilization tended to emphasize skepticism and resistance; however, more recent studies highlight growing awareness (and acceptance) of digital tools' benefits. Although research shows that people remain sceptical about the utility of digital tools, critics have documented a growing shift in attitudes as digital literacy improves and organizational structures become more efficient. Nasser and Abouchedid (2021) described a generational divide still evident in academic institutions, illustrating that these challenges are ongoing despite improvements being made.

#### *Identification of gaps in the existing literature*

Despite the global trend in digital transformation research, there's a noticeable lack of research specific to the GCC region and an even smaller subset of those that focus on Oman. This specific research gap calls for targeted research that can offer insights into the barriers and opportunities for digital transformation in GCC countries, particularly in Oman. Though Al-Siyabi and McLean (2021) have begun this process, we still need more targeted research that can explore Oman's unique cultural, economic and educational landscape, and how it is impacting this country's digital transformation journey and its outcomes. Though we acknowledge organisational support as an integral factor for digital survival, we still need research that can explore varying degrees of support within the institutions of Oman. While earlier research had mentioned its importance, its impact on digital transformation success has not been explored. Jones and Smith (2021) also highlighted the importance of employing quantitative research to understand better how different levels of digital literacy can affect technology adoption rates to inform better strategies for digital transformation initiatives.

Moreover, Balushi and Sohal (2022) suggest that quantitative measures could help improve our understanding of the impact of various kinds of institutional supports on the pace of digital tool adoption. Capturing the impact of different types of supports more precisely could allow institutions to allocate the right resources to meet faculty's needs more accurately, which in turn could help ensure more efficient and effective digital adoption. Moreover, there's clearly a need for more data-based studies that can provide tangible insights into the coverage of technology adoption, the factors that facilitate or hinder its progress, and the direct effects on learning outcomes and/or administrative efficiency.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study's theoretical framework is centred on the digital transformation of higher education in Oman. It is based on two important theocratic models, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Organizational Change Theory, to understand the impact and nature of the adoptions taking place in academic institutions.



### **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

Davis introduced the ATM model in 1898. This model is one of the prominent lenses through which we understand the factors that influence the adoption and use of technology. This approach is centred around the technology's perceived ease of use and usefulness.

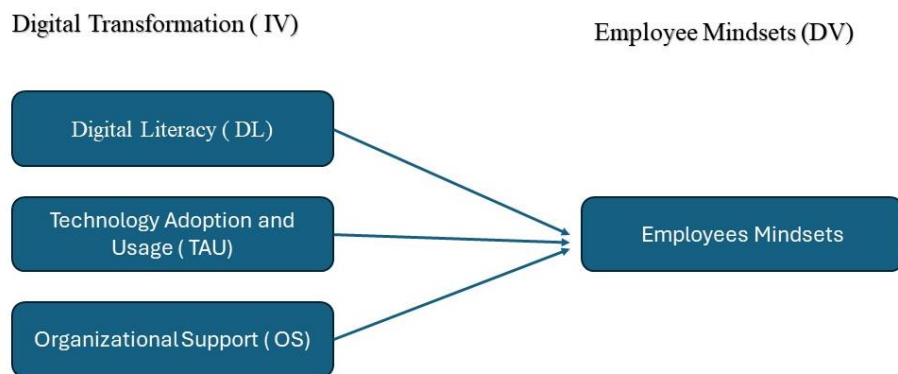
Due to this approach's wide application to various fields and technologies, researchers have used this model to investigate the acceptance of technology in different settings, including the education field. In this research, the (AMT) model aims to understand how people's perceptions of technology affect their acceptance among administrative staff and academics in higher education environments. As shown empirically, there are training programs designed to ease the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the digital platforms and impact adoption rate (Jone & Smith, 2021)

### *Organizational Change Theory*

Organisational Change Theory (OCT), as defined by Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change, is an organizational strategic model that makes change more likely to happen in the organization; for example, ensuring that people feel or see the urgency, building a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, and institutionalizing changes so that more change can happen. While this theoretical perspective can be applied to digital transformation in higher education, the Technology Acceptance Model seems limited in scope as it does not include macro factors such as organizational and societal implications that can significantly increase technology adoptions and uses (Bagozzi, 2007). This is why TAM has been supplemented or integrated into other models, as people's perceptions and the influence of culture, leadership, and peers have become significant determinants related to technology adoption in Oman's higher education sector (Balushi & Sohal, 2022).

To better understand the factors affecting digital transformation in higher education, the current study has integrated the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), based on the theory of reasoned action and the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Organizational Change Theory. According to TAM, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the two critical factors influencing their attitude toward using technology (Davis, 1989; Jones & Smith, 2021). Organizational Change Theory, on the other hand, provides ideas on changing strategy for managing planned systemic change, which involves the structural adjustment of an organization to integrate technology (Kotter, 1996; Balushi & Sohal, 2022). While Kotter's Model has been widely applied in multiple fields, it is considered too authoritarian and simplistic as it lacks flexibility and does not consider the unpredictability of the digital domain. The existing theoretical background would be proposed to enable an integrated approach aligning individual and organized digital transformation processes.

The proposed conceptual framework is illustrated in the figure below.



### Research Question

- To what extent does digital transformation influence employees' mindsets in higher education institutions in Oman?

### Research Hypothesis

**H1:** Digital literacy significantly influences employees' mindsets toward adopting and adapting to new technologies in Oman's HEIs.

**H2:** Technology adoption and use significantly influences employees' mindsets toward adopting and adapting to new technologies in Oman's HEIs

**H3:** Organizational support significantly influences employees' mindsets toward adopting and adapting to new technologies in Oman's HEIs

## Research Methodology

### Description of the research design

A quantitative research design is adopted in this study titled The Effect of Digital Transformation on Employee Mindset in Oman's Higher Education. This approach allows collecting and analyzing numerical data to assess how digital transformation affects employee mindset.

### Research Paradigm

The research operates under a positivist paradigm, which is suitable for quantitative research as it assumes that reality can be objectively measured and analyzed using statistical methods. This paradigm supports the study's hypothesis-testing approach, seeking to establish transparent, causal relationships between the degree of digital transformation and changes in employee mindsets.

**Research Design:** The study utilizes a cross-sectional survey design. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires distributed to a large sample of employees across various higher education institutions in Oman. These questionnaires will include scaled items to measure respondents' digital literacy, perceptions of organizational support, and attitudes toward digital transformation.

**Sampling Method:** Random sampling ensures that the sample is representative of Oman's higher education sector, including public and private universities and colleges. This enhances the ability to generalize the results across the whole sector.

**Data Collection:** Data will be collected through online surveys to ensure adequate participation and response rates. The survey will include four sections: Digital Literacy, Technology Adoption and Use, Organisational Support, and Employee Mindset, and Likert-scale questions to assess the constructs of interest mentioned in the hypotheses quantitatively. An online questionnaire collected the data as it is regarded as the most cost-effective and convenient way to collect data. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 40 participants to check the questions' clarity, validity, and reliability, as Bryman (2016) suggested.

**Data Analysis:** Statistical analyses will be conducted using software like SPSS. Descriptive statistics will provide an overview of the data distribution. This will determine the strength and nature of the relationships between digital transformation and employee mindsets.

This quantitative approach offers empirical results about the impact of digital transformations by quantifying how variations in digital practices or supports relate to shifts in employee attitudes in education.

#### *Scope of the research study*

It is important to recognize that this study is limited in scope to educational institutes at the higher education level in Oman, which may affect the generalisability of the results. Another limiting factor may be the duration of the study, which may hinder the depth of analysis and the longitudinal understanding of the patterns and trends observed in online learning.

#### *Data Collection*

##### *Research Measurement and Instruments*

Therefore, it is highly important to measure this impact with the help of a measuring instrument to explore and assess the key dimensions related to digital transformation's impact in Oman's higher education. Those dimensions include digital literacy, technology adoption and usage, organization support measures, and employee mindsets. Measurement is critical in this study because it will ensure the results are reliable, valid, and generalizable to the population. Therefore, in order to assess the impact of digital transformation in higher education in Oman, four measurement instruments will be used.

These instruments are essential for pinpointing the effect of digital transformation on employees' attitudes and behaviors: The Digital Literacy Scale made of items employs a 5-point Likert scale of the level of digital literacy using digital tools in terms of knowledge and skills (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree) (Ng, 2012)

The study will utilize the localization of TUI (Technology Usage Inventory) to understand the knowledge and experience of technological use and adoption in terms of frequency and the degree of integration of digital tools at the workplace (Lee Lehto, 2013). The OSTI (Organisational Support for Technology Integration) scale is used with a 5-point Likert scale to measure level of organizational support and institutional resources to use and integrate technology (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree) (Klein et al, 2006). Another instrument is the EADT (Employee Attitude Towards Digital Transformation) questionnaire, which captures the employees' mindset toward digital transformation to unveil their attitudes or perceptions toward digital transformation's benefits, values, and challenges (Smith Sandberg, 2017).

## Data Analysis and Findings

Table 1.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
Digital Literacy DL1-3	2. I am confident in using the digital tools required in my job.						3.925	0.862
	3. I can easily learn new technologies introduced at my workplace.						3.875	0.832
	3. I frequently use online platforms for professional development and instructional purposes.						4.425	0.496
<b>Grand Mean</b>							4.075	
<b>Grand Standard Deviation</b>							0.748	

### Analysis of Digital Literacy Survey

The survey concludes that the participants are moderately positive about their digital literacy. The three related items about digital proficiency and involvement are above average, indicating a consensus about high digital competency. The mean is 4.075, and the standard deviation is 0.748, implying a uniform opinion on the sample population's digital literacy.

Item no. 3, regarding the frequency of digital platforms used for professional development and teaching, obtained the highest score ( $M = 4.425$ ,  $SD = 0.496$ ). The working people engaged actively with digital resources for learning and development. It achieved a significantly higher score than the other three items.

On the contrary, the second item ‘I can easily adopt the newly introduced technologies in my workplace’ had the lowest mean ( $M = 3.875$ ,  $SD = 0.832$ ). This suggests a relatively high variability regarding the ease with which employees adopt new technologies. This finding indicates possible gaps in training or assistance that could reduce the stress associated with adjusting to new equipment.

This could be interpreted as they are confident of continuing to use the internet/digital technology over the next five years due to an established routine. Meanwhile, the lower ratings in the domain of learning new technology reveal a field for improvement. This can be interpreted as employees may be comfortable with using digital tools in their current work, but it could be harder to adopt new technology.

The survey indicates that the workforce is highly proficient at using digital tools for learning and work purposes. On the other hand, the moderate variation in mastering new technological skills indicates a chance for improvement by new training programs or support structures. Such efforts can maintain high levels of digital literacy, enhance versatility, and facilitate performance during these digitally driven transformations.

Table 2.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
Technology Adoption and Use TAU1-3	1. I regularly use digital technologies for tasks such as teaching, research, or administration	S D	D	N	A	S A	3.675	0.948
	2. The digital tools provided by my institution meet my needs and expectations.	S D	D	N	A	S A	4.025	0.568
	3. I believe that the technology available to me enhances my productivity and work quality.	S D	D	N	A	S A	3.925	0.862
<b>Grand Mean</b>							3.875	
<b>Grand Standard Deviation</b>							0.81	

*Analysis of Technology Adoption and Use Survey*

Based on assessing the three aspects, which revolve around the adoption and application of technology, respondents approve of their engagement with digital tools in their work setting. The survey summary shows

that the scores extracted from the data are represented in a moderate to high level of satisfaction with technology use, with a mean of 3.875 and a standard deviation of 0.81. The value for standard deviation is not low; however, it does demonstrate a certain unity in the responses with some leeway, which can be explained by characteristics that occur in experiences or perceptions.

The second item, "The digital tools provided by my institution meet my needs and expectations," received the highest mean score of 4.025 with a standard deviation of 0.568. This indicates that most employees feel the technologies available at their workplace offer ample support. It is worth noting that this score reflects high satisfaction with the institutional support for digital tool provision, which is essential for successful technology adoption. On the other hand, the initial statement recorded the lowest average with a mean of 3.675 and a standard deviation of 0.948. This indicates a higher degree of diversity in responses, implying that the employment of digital technologies for teaching, research, or administration may not be consistent across various departments or job functions. It highlights opportunities for enhancing technology integration to improve overall productivity and efficiency.

The third item, "I believe that the technology available to me enhances my productivity and work quality" ( $M = 3.925$ ,  $SD = 0.862$ ), also indicates a positive perception, though with some variability that might reflect differing levels of effectiveness perceived by employees in how technology impacts their work quality and productivity.

From the analysis, it is evident that participants value the technology tools provided and believe in the benefits these tools bring to their productivity and work quality. However, the variability in the frequency of use and the slightly lower mean score for regular usage highlight potential gaps in continuous training or in the alignment of technology tools with the specific needs of all employees. Enhancing training programs, providing more tailored technology solutions, and fostering a culture of regular technology use could further improve technology adoption rates and satisfaction levels. This, in turn, would likely increase overall job performance and the effectiveness of the digital tools implemented.

Table 3.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
Organizational Support OS1-3	1. My institution provides adequate training for the digital tools and platforms we are expected to use	S D	D	N	A	S A	3.625	0.832
	2. There is sufficient technical support available when I encounter issues with digital technology	S D	D	N	A	S A	4.275	0.55
	3. The organization actively facilitates the adoption of new	S D	D	N	A	S A	3.975	0.998

	technologies through continuous support and resources.							
<b>Grand Mean</b>								3.958
<b>Grand Standard Deviation</b>								0.814

### *Analysis of Organizational Support Survey*

The analysis of the three items related to organizational support for technology adoption and use suggests a positive view among participants, with the overall scores being higher than average. The data reveals a notable level of contentment with the assistance extended by the establishment, as evidenced by an average score of 3.958 and a sizeable standard deviation of 0.814. While the deviation is not particularly low, it does imply a moderate degree of uniformity in feedback, albeit with some degree of divergence that could be attributed to varying individual experiences or perspectives.

The second item on the survey, "There is enough technical support available when I need help with digital technology" ( $M = 4.275$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), received the highest mean score, indicating that most employees feel adequately supported by the technical resources available. This high satisfaction level is crucial for successful technology implementation and continued use.

On the other hand, the first item, "My institution offers sufficient training for the digital tools and platforms we are required to use" ( $M = 3.625$ ,  $SD = 0.832$ ), received the lowest mean score and showed the most variability among the responses. While employees generally expressed satisfaction with the training, its effectiveness and coverage may differ across various roles or departments. This highlights potential areas for improvement in the training program.

The third item, "The organization actively facilitates the adoption of new technologies through continuous support and resources" ( $M = 3.975$ ,  $SD = 0.998$ ), also indicates a positive perception, though with some variability that might reflect differing levels of effectiveness perceived by employees in how the organization supports technology adoption.

Overall, the survey results underscore a workforce that feels supported in terms of technical issues but indicates potential gaps in training provision and the active facilitation of new technology adoption. While the high level of technical support is commendable, the slight inconsistency in training effectiveness and the facilitation of technology adoption across the board suggest potential areas for improvement through targeted interventions to enhance training programs and support mechanisms. Such initiatives could help maintain high engagement levels and improve overall job performance and organizational commitment in adopting new technologies.



Table 4.

Questionnaire Items	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		S	D	N	A	S		
Employee Mindsets EM1-3	1. I am optimistic about the changes digital technology brings to my work environment	S	D	N	A	S	4.325	0.753
	2. I feel motivated to use digital technologies to enhance my work efficiency.	S	D	N	A	S	3.975	0.998
	3. I feel motivated to use digital technologies to enhance my work efficiency.	S	D	N	A	S	3.975	0.798
<b>Grand Mean</b>							4.091	
<b>Grand Standard Deviation</b>							0.856	

*Analysis of Employee Mindsets Survey*

The survey on employee mindsets towards digital technology reveals generally positive attitudes, with overall scores suggesting a robust acceptance of digital changes in the workplace. The results indicate a consensus towards high optimism and motivation to use digital tools, with an overall mean of 4.091 and a grand standard deviation of 0.856. This relatively moderate standard deviation suggests that responses are fairly consistent across the sample, indicating a uniform perception of the positive impacts of digital technology among employees.

The highest mean score was recorded for the first item ‘I am optimistic about the changes digital technology brings to my work environment’ (M = 4.325, SD = 0.753) which represents a high level of optimism about digital transformation in the workplace. This high score indicates the great enthusiasm among employees towards the use of digital tools for helping them fulfil their tasks. It also shows the great impact these tools have had on their productivity and working efficiency.

Conversely, scores for the second and third items, which read ‘I feel compelled to use digital technologies to enhance my work effectiveness’, were identical (M = 3.975), albeit with significantly different standard deviations (SD = 0.998 and SD = 0.798, respectively), suggesting that fluctuations in employee attitudes can provide a target for support or motivational interventions.

The statistics analysis indicates strong motivation and optimism about the workforce related to digital

technologies. Also, different people have different feelings of motivation and optimism about digital technologies. This means that technology training and support might need more personalization. For instance, training programs could be specific to the skills required or motivation projects that are more closely related to the needs of a specific individual or department.

In general, the survey findings reflect a highly motivated and optimistic workforce. However, the slight inconsistencies in motivation levels highlight the need for enhanced support measures to ensure that all employees are equally equipped and encouraged to leverage digital tools for improved performance and efficiency. By implementing such initiatives, organizations can maintain high engagement levels and optimize the benefits of digital transformations.

## Discussion

The survey findings on the impact of digital transformation on employee mindsets within higher education institutions (HEIs) in Oman align with the theoretical frameworks referenced in the literature review, notably the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Organizational Change Theory. These theories help explain the positive attitudes towards digital transformation in the survey results.

### Alignment with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The survey data demonstrates that employees generally hold an optimistic view about the changes brought by digital technology ( $M = 4.325$ ,  $SD = 0.753$ ) and feel motivated to use these technologies to enhance work efficiency ( $M = 3.975$ ,  $SD = 0.798$ ). This finding aligns with the TAM, which posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use significantly influence the acceptance and effective utilization of technology (Davis, 1989). The high mean scores reflect employees' perceptions of digital tools as beneficial, corroborating TAM's assertion that ease of use and perceived utility foster positive attitudes towards technology adoption.

### *Integration with Organizational Change Theory*

Moreover, the results resonate with Organizational Change Theory, particularly Kotter's principles that stress the importance of creating a supportive environment for change through leadership and clear communication (Kotter, 1996). The organizational support for adopting new technologies, as indicated by the survey ( $M = 3.975$ ,  $SD = 0.998$ ), suggests that the efforts to facilitate digital transformation are recognized by employees. However, the variability in responses highlights areas where organizational change strategies could be more effectively applied to enhance uniformity in employee perceptions and experiences.

### *Implications for Practice and Policy*

The explanations highlight the importance of HEIs in Oman persistently devising strategies that prioritize the

implementation of digital tools but also augment the support systems that accompany technology use. This means tailoring training programs to meet individual needs, improving levels of technical support, and fostering corporate cultures that welcome continual digital transformation (Al-Haddad et al., 2020). In this way, institutions can use technology to streamline internal operations and spur wider growth and innovation within an institution.

### *Theoretical and Practical Contributions*

This analysis has not only helped to substantiate existing theories like TAM, Organizational Change Theory, etc. but also gives us a nuanced perspective of how these theories are being translated in the context of higher education in the Sultanate of Oman. It shows the role of perceived support and effective change management in building positive employee attitudes towards digital transformation. These insights would come in handy for other HEIs suffering from similar problems.

In conclusion, this study shows the difficult task of leading digital transformation in HEIs in Oman. Although I found that HEI employees are optimistic and enthusiastic about digital tools, I also found that targeted organizational strategies are needed to improve employee engagement. This research contributes to existing theories and fills in gaps in prior studies. It offers a holistic picture of how to lead employee engagement when the education sector transforms digitally.

### **Limitation of the Study**

While this study on the influence of digital transformation within the HEIs in Oman is useful, it also has some important limitations. For instance, the small sample and composition size and the survey structure, the participant selection, and the pool might not have covered the entire sector, limiting the generalisability of the results. Moreover, the cross-sectional survey design prevents using the data to observe changes over time, essential for an ongoing transformational process such as digital transformation. Another concern is using self-reported data, as the answers might be influenced by social desirability bias, which can lead to inaccuracies in the findings.

Second, the study extensively relies on quantitative data, which does not capture the richness that can be achieved with qualitative data and may be missing some aspects of the individual- and group-level dynamics responding to digital changes. It also remains unclear how transferable the findings are to other contexts due to the specificity of Oman's cultural, economic, and educational context. Future research can contribute to refining these findings by using a longitudinal research design, adding a more varied sample of institutions, using qualitative research methods, and accounting for contextual factors such as the economy or technological advances, which may be strong drivers of digital transformation efforts.

## Significant of the Study

The study conducted to evaluate the effect of digital transformation on the thought process of the main actors of Oman's higher education institutions has obtained key findings that could relate to the academic, organisational, and technological dimensions. Such findings are particularly important to measure how the workforce perceives and is willing to adopt digital transformation programmes, which in turn points to their effectiveness.

The general outcomes of the study show that employees of Oman's higher education institutions exhibit an optimistic and encouraging attitude toward digital transformation. Such promising findings provide an encouraging context for more technology integration, as HEIs can identify and leverage appropriate digital tools to develop a more innovative pedagogy and a more productive operating environment.

The high level of motivation recorded among the respondents and their willingness to adopt digital technologies all suggest an encouraging internal cultural climate supportive of technological evolution and improvement of work efficiency and ability.

This study reveals the important role of positive attitudes in facilitating the acceptance and adoption of new technology in educational settings, providing clear evidence of the close association between these attitudes and the TAM and Organisational Change Theory. The study also supports the TAM reasoning that perceived usefulness and ease of use are crucial to technology adoption and underscores the identification and provision of these factors when introducing new technologies. Furthermore, the studies have highlighted the critical role of strategic planning, so prominent in Organisational Change Theory, and emphasise that effective digital transformation depends heavily on whether institutions have support systems and related communication strategies to enable the transition.

These findings have important practical implications for policy-makers and educational administrators in Oman and similar contexts. They offer an actionable blueprint for enhancing approaches to digital transformation that involves strengthening training programs, providing more individualized support, and cultivating a culture in which more of the full potential of digital tools is realized. That helps the organization succeed as an employer (increasing staff motivation and capacity) and as an educational institution (enabling it to actualize its mission and adapt to a changing digital landscape).

In summary, these findings can contribute to the field of literature regarding the impact of digital transformation on employee perception in the world of education. They may provide some useful insights for educational institutes to deal with subsequent difficulties and for other organizations where similar problems are likely to exist. On the other hand, this research can provide a bridge between theory and practices, and some useful recommendations can be made for practitioners regarding enhancing employee engagement and corporate outcomes during the digital transformation era.

## Conclusion

The study's outcome relating to digital transformation in higher education in Oman and the region suggests that employees positively receive the adoption of digital technologies. The reasons behind the adoption can be explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Organisational Change Theory, pinpointing that perceived usefulness and ease of use are important factors in technology adoption. However, the study concluded that support from the university's organization is very needed to train staff on the different digital tools and provide consistency in the support provided for each department. Providing a proactive and responsive culture supporting the rapid adoption of new technologies in higher education is important.

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## **Impact of Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction on Employees' Expectations and Intentions to Support Digital Transformation in The Workplace: Applied to The Financial Services Sector**

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**Abstract:** The digital revolution in the workplace has far-reaching effects on workplace redesign, going beyond simple technological adoption or non-adoption. Digital work may call for adjustments to operational and organizational aspects in addition to the tools utilized in organizational activities. In this context, it is critical to meet workers' psychological needs, such as their need for autonomy, for relationships with others, and for digital self-efficacy, all of which affect their willingness to accept a work environment that is digital. More precisely, employees are supposed to be more in favor of workplace digital transformation if they believe that the digital environment will improve performance and well-being. The current study, which builds on Self-Determination Theory, attempts to investigate how workers' basic psychological needs affect their expectations for performance, well-being, and intentions to support workplace digital transformation. 195 valid and statistically testable responses were obtained from a sample of 370 people employed in the financial services industry in the Dakahlia Governorate for this study. Based on an inductive methodology, analytical descriptive methodology was used in the study. The findings show that worker autonomy, interpersonal connections, and digital self-efficacy have a major positive influence on workers' expected performance and well-being in the digital workplace. Their intentions to support the digital transformation of the workplace are subsequently strengthened as a result. Lastly, it is hoped that the research findings will push pre-digital organizations to face the challenges of digital transformation and help them reevaluate their strategies considering employee engagement.

**Keywords:** basic psychological needs satisfaction, digital transformation in the workplace, employee expectations, intentions, financial services sector.



**Citation:** Abouraia, M.K., Galal, H.M., & Al Morsy, R.M. (2024). Impact Of Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction on Employees' Expectations and Intentions to Support Digital Transformation In The Workplace: Applied To The Financial Services Sector. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2632-2656), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

For the workplace to transition from a traditional workplace to a digital workplace, organizational and operational changes may also be necessary in addition to technological adjustments. Communication and collaboration techniques have been impacted by social and technological changes in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) era (Attaran et al., 2019; Tripathi et al., 2021). Scholars (Weritz, 2022; Muniroh et al., 2022) have examined the advantages and disadvantages of these modifications, confirming that they have brought about new methods of carrying out job duties.

Digital transformation has resulted in a notable change in social and economic aspects in recent years (Pogodina et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the majority of scientific study on digital transformation has been conducted at the macro level, focusing on business models and how they directly affect society (Yo and Yi, 2022). Scholars have not given enough attention to studying the partial level of digital transformation, particularly when it comes to people in their work environment (Bond et al., 2018; Nadkarni and Prüg1, 2021; Hanelt et al., 2021; Borah et al., 2022).

Thus, workplace digital transformation involves more than just technology resources; it also involves changing workplace culture and taking employees' needs into account (Baumgartner et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Because of this, workplace digital transformation offers chances to redesign the workspace for future work that will be more productive (Selimović et al., 2021). It also adds a micro perspective to the digital transformation framework (Meske, 2019).

According to Meske and Junglas (2020), workplace digital transformation is the phenomenon of new technologies bringing about significant changes in a variety of work-related aspects, including how employees perform tasks and processes, their social relationships with organizations, and their overall experiences at work.

Employee engagement and support intentions have been directly impacted by the changes in job design, resources, and expectations brought about by digitization (Alieva and Powell, 2022). A primarily digital work environment has been created by the quick process of digital transformation (Morton et al., 2020). Employees must now learn how to use digital tools and become familiar with them in their workplaces (Attaran et al., 2019). In the workplace today, modern digital technology needs to be applied and used for a range of tasks (Brahma et al., 2021).

Employee competencies like continuous learning, being adaptable to unforeseen events, and working cooperatively to solve complex problems are all needed in the digital workplace (Aroles et al., 2021). Furthermore, as machines become more and more integrated into work tasks, human-machine interaction is imperative in the digital workplace (Marsh et al., 2022; Hassane, 2022). As a result, workers are urged to use creativity to provide value.

Adaptability among those who use technology is just as important for success in a digital workplace as technological efficiency (Hicks et al., 2019; Natu and Aparicio, 2022). Thus, to improve their performance and productivity, employees in business organizations must learn how to use technology (Chan et al., 2021). As a result, being digitally literate has become increasingly important, with advantages for both the company and its workforce. More precisely, digital transformation in the workplace involves rethinking the culture of the workplace and altering the nature of work activities in addition to providing employees with digital tools and skills.

Therefore, transforming the workplace into a digital one requires a change in organizational and workplace culture (Meske and Junglas, 2020). Businesses are moving more and more towards a culture that emphasizes employee engagement and digital innovations (Svahn et al., 2019). This suggests that the process of digital transformation in the workplace starts at the employee level as well as with a shift in the organization and mentality of the leadership.

Employee support for the digital workplace, in addition to the adoption of digital tools, becomes crucial at this point in the transformation (Liu et al., 2023; Zoppelletto and Orlandi, 2022). It becomes vital to have positive expectations for the workplace that employees will have in the future. The goal of the transformation journey should be to improve employees' personal well-being in addition to increasing their performance and productivity through the use of digital technologies.

Previous studies emphasize how important it is to meet psychological needs like autonomy, interpersonal connections, and digital self-efficacy that support workers' intrinsic motivation. This is consistent with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci et al., 2017; Meske and Junglas, 2021; Forner et al., 2020; Maran et al., 2022) which argues that meeting psychological needs of workers affects their expectations for performance and well-being, including their positive attitudes and intentions to support digital transformation.

Improvements in communication, cooperation, and teamwork have resulted from organizational and technological advancements, as have modifications in work-life balance-related attitudes and lifestyle patterns. Digital transformation in the workplace shouldn't, however, be limited to the use of technology or other so-called "enabling factors." It should also include meeting the psychological needs of staff members and making organizational modifications.

In recent years, research on digital transformation in the workplace has primarily concentrated on developing theoretical models that clarify the notion of digital transformation, its causes, and its effects in organizational contexts. To support the development of comprehensive and integrated models to support digitization in the workplace, researchers have identified the need for additional field studies to test the satisfaction of employees' psychological needs and their readiness to deal with technologies and problem-solving when they arise.

Even though workplace digitization is crucial for both individuals and organizations, a review of the literature on the topic reveals a glaring lack of studies that investigate the relationship between basic employees' psychological needs, expectations, and reflection on supporting digital transformation in the workplace.

Research examining and analyzing the variables influencing workers' expectations and how those relate to their intentions to support workplace digital transformation is scarce. The investigator observed a notable dearth of applied research concerning the examination and assessment of workers' psychological requirements and their level of acceptance towards the digital work environment. Consequently, more applied research may be necessary to fill this gap in the literature. The research attempts to provide a fundamental response to the following query to close this knowledge gap: Do employees' intentions for a more successful digital transformation of the work environment in pre-digital organizations have a connection to meeting their psychological needs?

Drawing from, the subsequent sections comprise literature review which illustrate theoretical framework, research issue, goals, formulation of hypotheses, and their importance. These are succeeded by the research approach, data interpretation, and testing of results. The final section will cover the conclusions, theoretical and practical contributions, research limitations, and suggestions.

## **Literature review and Hypothesis**

Although the business community has been using the term "digital workplace" since 2010, there is still a dearth of academic literature on the subject (Meske, 2021; Brahma et al., 2021). The term "digital workplace" refers to an integrated concept that incorporates all organizational tools and refers to a broad range of network-connected technologies that employees use on a daily basis to carry out their tasks (Marsh, 2018). According to Dery et al. (2017), it encompasses social media, smartphones, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things. It includes, for instance, email, communication tools, the internet, CRM software, ERP software, human resource management software, and other enterprise tools that support day-to-day business operations (Attaran et al., 2019).

It also entails the organization's adoption of more sophisticated or emerging technologies, such as automation and artificial intelligence components (Baptista et al., 2020). Since it supports their digital business strategies, academic researchers, and practitioners (Dery et al., 2017; Meske, 2019; Zimmer et al., 2020; Morton et al.,

2020; Selimović et al., 2021; Walkowiak, 2021) are becoming more and more interested in the topic of transforming traditional work environments into digital workplaces.

According to Baumgartner et al. (2021) and Mičić et al. (2022), digital transformation in the workplace is regarded as a strategic management tool related to implementing new working practices. Businesses use digital workplace technologies to complete tasks quickly and effectively, which boosts output and increases employee satisfaction (Attaran et al., 2019). Increased access to digital talent and employee retention are two advantages of digital transformation in the workplace. Digital workplaces encourage flexible data, information, and knowledge exchange (Colbert et al., 2016) and facilitate communication and collaboration (Dery et al., 2017; McAllen and Haddud, 2018; Baumgartner et al., 2021).

Using digital platforms is a component of digital transformation in the workplace (Williams and Schubert, 2018). But new digital technologies are transforming the workforce of the future, and businesses need to adapt by providing training and resolving issues. Ultimately, a shift in culture and an awareness of workers' psychological needs are also necessary components of digital transformation in the workplace, in addition to the use of technology (Attaran et al., 2019; Baumgartner et al., 2021). As a result, digital transformation in the workplace gives opportunities to redesign the workspace for future work that will be more effective (Selimović et al., 2021; Mičić et al., 2022). It also gives a limited perspective within the digital transformation framework (Meske, 2019).

The literature (Mesquita et al., 2019; Varshney, 2020) highlights the significance of the digital workforce and workplace for the success of organizations in the future. Digital transformation in the workplace is imperative for organizations, particularly those that were not yet digital. Accordingly, traditional sectors that prospered in the pre-digital economy, like retail and financial services, comprise pre-digital organizations (McKinnon, 2019; Chanas et al., 2019). Organizations must use digital technologies to adapt and change their operations in order to maintain their businesses (Sebastian et al., 2017). These adjustments also encompass workplace metamorphoses, which are commonly understood as utilizing technology to enhance the working environment and the satisfaction and productivity of employees (Zhenjing et al., 2022).

As a result, creating the workplace of the future involves more than just technology and digital tools—it also involves understanding what each employee expects from the challenges presented by the digital transformation. It's also critical to stress that employees' attitudes and perceptions of new technologies affect their expectations for the workplace of the future as well as traditional adoption issues. According to Singh and Dangmei (2018), the future workplace will entail integrating technology into day-to-day operations within businesses, eventually promoting information and knowledge sharing among staff members. Improved transparency and unimpeded information flow will have a major impact on increasing productivity, efficiency, and performance in completing tasks.

By using digital resources at any time and from any location, the digital workplace gives workers more flexibility (Jarrahi et al., 2021; Lindell et al., 2022). According to a Dittes et al. (2019) study, workers can gain productivity and flexibility from digital infrastructure. According to the study's findings, companies can support digital work by appreciating and respecting each employee, giving them accountability and decision-making power, and fostering an environment that fosters innovation and creativity. As such, the emphasis in the workplace of the future will be on completing work tasks and producing results, rather than on following formal procedures like recording the location and time of completion.

The digital workplace promotes multifunctional collaboration and does away with solitary thinking. While using digital tools helps employees communicate and work together, redesigning the workplace doesn't always mean creating a layout that works for a virtual office; real office space is still needed (Selimović et al., 2021). The process of transformation necessitates an open area where departments and divisions can collaborate and share information. This also helps to foster greater creativity among staff members. Thus, in the future, workplace culture will be primarily driven by creativity and productivity (Md Dahlan et al., 2018). The strain brought on by technology, or technostress, can lessen the benefits of a digital workplace, including improved productivity, well-being, and creativity (Hearn et al., 2020; Juchnowicz, 2021; Kinowska). According to existing research, users' perceptions of technological complexity, as well as their abilities and values, are the main factors contributing to technostress (Yener et al., 2021).

Technological stress arises when technology is used without appropriate changes in the work environment and workplace redesign (Bondanini et al., 2020). That's why it's important for digital transformation to be accompanied by digital leadership and a change in organizational culture. Digital leadership and workplace culture should guide employees towards a new way of working. Muniroh et al. (2022) emphasize that organizations in the digital environment face challenges in leadership and cultural change. Implementing digital work requires collaborative leadership with a clear vision and commitment rather than a controlling management style (Leso et al., 2023). Organizations shift their culture to one that fosters collaboration and digital innovation (Kim et al., 2021), using digital tools to provide employees with diverse work capabilities for collaboration (Zoppelletto and Orlandi, 2022).

Therefore, the scope of digital transformation in the workplace extends beyond the simple adoption or rejection of technologies within the workplace environment—it carries far-reaching implications in the context of workplace redesign. Consequently, the future digital workplace involves more than just the substitution of tools utilized in work activities; rather, it frequently reshapes the very essence of work activities and processes.

Extant literature emphasizes the multifaceted advantages associated with digital transformation in organizational contexts. These benefits encompass cost reduction, heightened innovation potential, enhanced customer experience, augmented productivity, increased revenue streams, and the elevation of employee productivity, experiences, performances, and well-being (Attaran et al., 2019; Weritz et al., 2022). Such findings hold profound significance in fostering employee buy-in for workplace redesign initiatives and underscore the pivotal role of such initiatives in facilitating successful digital transformations within organizational settings. Moreover,

active employee engagement in the redesign process is poised to streamline operations, leading to superior outcomes by aligning the redesigned workspace with the nuanced expectations and needs of the workforce.

In this context, the psychological needs of employees, such as autonomy, interpersonal relationships, and digital self-efficacy, hold paramount importance (Deci et al., 2017). These needs play a crucial role in shaping employees' inclination towards adopting the digital workplace in the future. This notion is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that employees' performance and well-being are influenced by the type of motivation driving their job activities (Selimovi et al., 2022). Meske and Junglas (2021) suggest that these psychological needs influence employees' perceptions and expectations regarding work outcomes and design. Consequently, employees' perceptions of autonomy, mutual interpersonal relationships, and digital self-efficacy emerge as primary motivators fostering employees' positive attitudes towards supporting digital transformation in the workplace.

Numerous prior studies have underscored the advantageous impacts of remote work on employees' autonomy (Galanti et al., 2021; Bošković, 2021). Nonetheless, a substantial body of literature has also corroborated the detrimental repercussions of working outside the conventional office setting on work-related connections and employee well-being. Specifically, individuals engaged in remote work for extended hours and heightened intensity, ostensibly to bolster productivity, often contend with feelings of isolation and fatigue. Consequently, within the remote work paradigm, attributes such as employee autonomy, interpersonal relationships, and well-being assume heightened significance and must be tailored to the evolving work landscape to optimize performance and welfare (Lange and Kayser, 2022). These attributes manifest divergently amid the pandemic milieu. The advent of the COVID-19 crisis has mandated remote work for many, curtailing social gatherings and interactions, thereby necessitating reliance on digital tools for most workplace communication and collaboration. As a result, employees' autonomy may suffer, potentially due to familial distractions impeding their focus on remote tasks (Wang et al., 2022). Hence, it becomes imperative to scrutinize whether these attributes influence employee performance expectations and well-being, thereby shaping their inclinations to endorse the digital workplace in this unprecedented "new normal" scenario.

Alongside the focus on the relationship between the psychological needs of workers and their expectations for performance and well-being in the context of the digital work environment, one of the main distinguishing features of the study is the digital transformation in the workplace in the financial services sector. One of the most common interpretations of the clear digitization of the financial sector is the significant and rapid leap in knowledge and technology compared to other service sectors. The financial services industry is highly standardized and organized. Financial service institutions need to manage digital transformation in a highly regulated environment. They need to meet stakeholder requirements for greater transparency and trust (Werth et al., 2021). To meet these requirements, financial institutions invest in innovative services.

recent surge in new technological innovations, accompanied by operational disruptions (Gomber et al., 2018). Consequently, there have been substantial shifts in job roles and responsibilities within the financial sector,



necessitating greater autonomy among employees, particularly in the context of developing and offering bespoke financial products tailored to individual needs and client preferences. Notably, as jobs increasingly emphasize service provision and a considerable portion of the workforce engages in knowledge-intensive activities, the digital work environment has been observed to augment employees' productivity while mitigating escalating pressures, excessive workloads, fatigue, and burnout. This trend persists even within traditionally authoritative sectors, such as education and healthcare (Johnson et al., 2020). Thus, the psychological needs and performance expectations of employees align with their inclination towards digital transformation in the workplace, particularly within pre-digital organizational frameworks in traditional industries like financial services."

The positive correlation between autonomy and employees' performance has been consistently evidenced in past studies (Dittes et al., 2019). Researchers have underscored that granting employees the autonomy to make independent decisions in specific situations bolsters their productivity and fosters innovative problem-solving capabilities (Dittes et al., 2019). Additionally, earlier research by Zacher et al. (2019) corroborated this notion, albeit noting a potential downside: increased autonomy could lead to heightened workplace fatigue. Conversely, recent findings by Siregar et al. (2021) supported the idea of a positive impact of employee autonomy on work commitment. These findings are in line with a longitudinal study conducted by Chen and Zhang (2023), which demonstrated that autonomy positively influences employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment over time. Moreover, a study by Smith et al. (2023) found that autonomy was positively associated with task performance and creativity among employees. Consequently, managerial support for employee autonomy has been associated with heightened motivation and creativity among employees (Li et al., 2018; Guo et al., 2021). This suggests that organizational practices promoting autonomy not only enhance individual performance but also contribute to overall organizational effectiveness (Zhou et al., 2020). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1a. Employee autonomy in the digital workplace has a significant positive effect on their performance expectations.

Recent scholarship underscores the critical role of fulfilling employees' psychological needs within the workplace, with several studies indicating a positive correlation between such satisfaction and overall job enjoyment (Klaeijssen et al., 2018). Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that meeting individuals' autonomy and fundamental psychological needs contributes positively to their work-related welfare (Lange & Kayser, 2022; Ilies et al., 2017). Building upon these findings, it is evident that fostering a sense of autonomy among employees leads to heightened levels of satisfaction and well-being (Ebersold et al., 2019; Clausen et al., 2022). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1b. Autonomy among workers significantly influences their expectations of well-being in the digital workplace.



Within this context, numerous researchers have asserted that employees' performance expectations and well-being hinge upon interpersonal relatedness, characterized by an individual's capacity to cultivate meaningful relationships with others. This dimension also fosters a deep sense of trust, cooperation, and camaraderie among individuals (Alkailani & Kumar, 2016). Consequently, mutual interpersonal relationships among employees and cooperation facilitate the exchange of ideas, information, and knowledge, leading to enhanced performance and creativity (Semerciöz et al., 2011). When interpersonal barriers are overcome, employees execute their tasks with greater efficiency and effectiveness, thereby fostering workplace agility and competitiveness (Dery et al., 2017). Thus, mutual interpersonal relationships in the digital workplace are posited to elevate individual performance levels. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H2a. There is a significant positive impact of mutual interpersonal relationships among employees on their performance expectations in the digital workplace.

In a complementary vein, individuals' ability to cultivate profound relationships with others positively impacts their satisfaction and well-being. Employees often report greater satisfaction when they engage and interact with their peers, fostering a sense of belonging and heightened trust among them (Rothausen & Henderson, 2019). Consequently, mutual interpersonal relationships among employees become exceedingly important due to the pervasive use of social media tools in their personal lives, which extends beyond the workplace. Thus, addressing the need for socialization within the workplace becomes imperative (Bucher et al., 2018). It has been firmly established that the interplay of interpersonal relationships among workers in the digital work environment is crucial and yields a positive effect on their well-being. Hence, it is postulated that:

H2b. There exists a significant positive impact of mutual interpersonal relationships among employees on their well-being expectations in the digital workplace.

Furthermore, within this context, researchers have underscored the significance of employees' digital self-efficacy in shaping their performance expectations and well-being. Digital self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to use information technology and adapt to software and hardware updates (Kim et al., 2021) effectively and effortlessly. Heightened confidence in digital skills correlates with reduced anxiety about using information technology (Schmidt and Ulfert-Blank, 2022), and increased likelihood of stability and efficiency in execution (Jeon & Kim, 2022). Digital self-efficacy not only encompasses an individual's skills but also their judgment regarding the application of these skills (Lee, 2021). Consequently, it serves as a psychological factor influencing individuals' decisions to accept and utilize modern technology (Maran et al., 2022). Digital self-efficacy is closely intertwined with individuals' decisions, emotional responses to completed tasks, and performance expectations (Daher et al., 2021; Nusannas et al., 2022). This implies that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to perform better than those with lower self-efficacy, thus positioning digital self-efficacy as an indicator of anticipated performance. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H3a. There exists a significant positive impact of employees' digital self-efficacy on their performance expectations in the digital workplace.

On the other hand, digital self-efficacy is regarded as a fundamental skill requisite in the knowledge economy of the twenty-first century (Maran et al., 2022). The application of modern technology presents technical challenges, necessitating employees to be equipped to navigate technologies and troubleshoot issues as they arise (Daher et al., 2021). Self-efficacy is considered a motivating factor for employee well-being (Marshall et al., 2020). Thus, it is expected that employees' digital self-efficacy will heighten their future expectations of well-being, thus leading to the proposition:

H3b. There exists a significant positive impact of employees' digital self-efficacy on their well-being expectations in the digital workplace.

In conclusion, teamwork and collaboration are frequently touted as hallmarks of the digital work environment. Technological solutions render information readily accessible, facilitating document collaboration and sharing (Selimović et al., 2021).

Drawing from previous literature, it is evident that employees' performance and well-being are primary motivators for workplace transformation (Trenerry et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2017). More specifically, if employees anticipate that the digital environment will enable them to achieve better performance and well-being, they are expected to be more motivated and willing to support digital transformation. They will feel at ease with digital technology, thus mitigating resistance to embracing future workplace changes (Selimović et al., 2021). Therefore, it is posited that:

H4. There exists a significant positive impact of employees' performance expectations on their intentions to support digital transformation in the workplace.

H5. There exists a significant positive impact of employees' well-being expectations on their intentions to support digital transformation in the workplace.

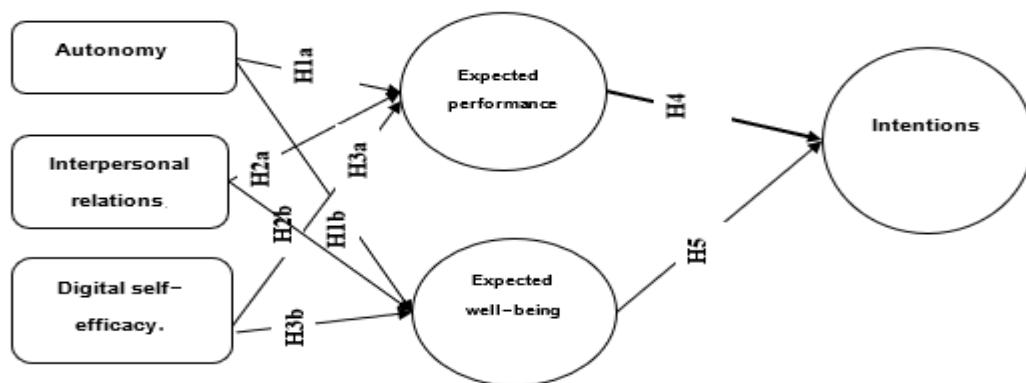


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

The proposed study framework can be illustrated in Figure 1 as follows:

## Method

In conducting this study, the researchers relied on the descriptive-analytical quantitative approach, which involves describing and analyzing the phenomenon under study, namely the factors influencing the expectations and intentions of employees to support digital transformation in the workplace. This was achieved through collecting data related to this topic and conducting the necessary statistical tests to test the study hypotheses, followed by analyzing the results. The methodology adopted in the study includes the types of data and their sources, study variables and their measures, the sample and the procedures followed, the study instrument and data collection method, and the statistical methods. This can be further elucidated as follows:

### Types of Data and Their Sources

To achieve the study objectives, the researchers relied on two types of data: secondary data and primary data. Secondary data were obtained through reviewing previous literature that addressed the theoretical framework of the study variables, formulating its objectives, developing its hypotheses, and identifying its significance. Additionally, primary data were collected from employees in financial services institutions in the Dakahlia Governorate, the study area, and analyzed to test the study hypotheses and reach conclusions.

#### Research Population, Sample, and Procedures

The research population consists of employees in financial services institutions in the Dakahlia Governorate. Due to the absence of a framework for the research population and the difficulty of determining its size and distribution, the researchers assumed that the research population exceeds 10,000 individuals. Accordingly, the minimum sample size for the research becomes 370 individuals at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

The questionnaire was sent to some of the researchers' colleagues working in these institutions via their email to review it first. Then, direct contact was made with them to ensure their understanding of its contents. Furthermore, the sample was distributed using simple random sampling method, chosen due to its applicability conditions, which are used in case of the presence or absence of a framework for the research population and a high degree of homogeneity among its individuals in the studied characteristics. The appropriate sample size was determined based on the mailing lists of employees with the assistance of the researchers' assistants in the applied service institutions.

It was emphasized that the participants' identities would not be disclosed, and their participation was voluntary. The questionnaire began with a summary of the research and a definition of the term "digital transformation in the workplace." Moreover, the questionnaire consisted of six parts reflecting the research variables, as well as

some demographic questions related to gender, age, education, years of job experience, and data were collected from September to November 2022. A total of 195 responses were collected, as indicated in Table 1. Regarding the demographic distribution of the participants, 68.1% were male and 31.9% were female. Additionally, more than 65% of the participants were aged between 30 and 35 years old. Most participants held bachelor's and master's degrees (79.6% and 20.4% respectively). Furthermore, most respondents (59.2%) had job experience ranging from one to six years, 40.8% had been working for more than six years, and the rest had recently joined.

Table 1. Sample structure

No	Organization	Number	(%)
1	Banks.	115	58.1%
2	Insurance companies.	66	34.5%
3	Microfinance organizations.	8	4.2%
4	Financial leasing.	4	2.1%
5	Financial agency.	2	1.1%
Total		190	100%

#### *Variables Measurement*

The study variables were measured based on scales developed in previous literature, their reliability and stability were highly established. The variable of independence was measured based on the scale developed by (Deci et al., 2001), where independence is defined as the extent to which individuals make independent decisions in specific situations and solve work tasks. Three indicators were used to measure this variable, for example, "I can decide for myself to what extent I will use digital technologies in the workplace."

The variable of interpersonal relationships was measured based on the scale developed by (Pretzer, 1995), where interpersonal relationships are defined as the extent to which impressions about the interconnection and interpersonal relationships among workers in the digitally transformed workplace are likely to be generated. Three indicators were used to measure reciprocal interpersonal relationships, such as "Employees in the digital work environment are influenced by their peers." The variable of digital self-efficacy was measured based on the scale provided by both (Edison and Geissler, 2003). Digital self-efficacy is defined as the judgment of an individual's ability to use a digital device. Three indicators were used to measure digital self-efficacy, for example, "I believe I can easily learn how to use digital devices." Performance was also measured based on the scale developed by (Venkatesh et al., 2003), where this variable is defined as the extent to which workers expect the digitally transformed workplace to contribute to their productivity. Four indicators were used to measure performance, such as "I expect that the digitally transformed workplace will be beneficial to my job." Well-being was measured based on the scale developed by (Agarwal and Karahanna, 2000), where well-being is defined as the extent to which workers consider engagement in the digitally transformed workplace enjoyable. Four indicators were used to measure well-being, such as "I will enjoy using the digitally transformed

workplace." Finally, the intention to support digital transformation in the workplace was measured based on the scale developed by (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Five indicators were used to measure intention, such as "I intend to actively participate in the change process related to digital transformation in the workplace".

#### *Data Collection Tool*

In gathering data for the field study, the researchers relied on a questionnaire prepared specifically for this purpose, in light of the scales used in previous research. This questionnaire included a set of closed-ended questions to measure the study variables, rated by respondents according to a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

#### *Statistical Analysis Methods*

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were employed. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS 24 and WarpPLS 7.0. For data analysis, an initial examination was performed to ensure the absence of missing or extreme values and to test for assumptions of multivariate statistical analysis. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the convergent, discriminant validity, and reliability of the measurement model. Finally, the structural model and hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling.

## **Results**

The initial step in data examination involved missing value analysis (MVA) to ensure data completeness. Missing data can compromise the validity of analyses, and the analysis confirmed no missing data. Furthermore, outliers were tested using the Mahalanobis Distance method, with no extreme values found. Additionally, the data were tested for assumptions such as normality and homoskedasticity. Although the data did not fully follow a normal distribution, this did not affect the study's main results, especially with a sample size above 50. Maximum likelihood estimation was used to address deviations from normality in multivariate techniques. Moreover, the Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey test was conducted for heteroskedasticity, showing no statistical evidence of rejection. Multicollinearity was also tested using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), indicating no significant linear relationship among variables.

### **Measurement Model Analysis**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test the proposed measurement model's fit. Initially, the model fit was inadequate, leading to the exclusion of some indicators. After refining the model, CFA showed good fit. Composite reliability (CR) was assessed to verify the model's stability, with all values exceeding 0.7. Convergent and discriminant validity were confirmed through factor loadings, average variance extracted

(AVE), and square root of AVE, all meeting recommended thresholds. This comprehensive approach ensured the validity, reliability, and appropriateness of the measurement and structural models used in the study.

Table 2. Testing discriminant validity using the square root for average variance extracted (AVE)

Variables	CR	AVE	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Autonomy	0.911	0.774	<u>0.880</u>					
Interpersonal relations	0.876	0.702	0.721	<u>0.838</u>				
Digital self-efficacy	0.800	0.573	0.408	0.387	<u>0.757</u>			
Expected performance	0.782	0.549	0.544	0.623	0.433	<u>0.741</u>		
Expected well-being	0.816	0.530	0.639	0.609	0.412	0.556	<u>0.728</u>	
Intentions	0.837	0.566	0.344	0.234	0.218	0.193	0.483	<u>0.752</u>

### Structural Model Testing

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model and hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation. Figure 2 illustrates the SEM structural model testing with the links and results of the calculations between variables.

All goodness-of-fit indices confirm the adequacy of the measurement model, including the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio of 3.024, and indices such as GFI (0.876), AGFI (0.845), RMR (0.034), SRMR (0.0539), RMSEA (0.062), CFI (0.896), and MSEA. Consequently, the results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 3. The data analysis results support the study hypotheses.

The analysis results indicate that employees' independence significantly affects both their expected performance ( $\beta = 0.620$ ;  $t = 10.859$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ) and their well-being ( $\beta = 0.642$ ;  $t = 11.513$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ). Similarly, mutual interpersonal relationships among employees have a significant effect on both their expected performance ( $\beta = 0.688$ ;  $t = 13.031$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ) and their well-being ( $\beta = 0.705$ ;  $t = 13.661$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, employees' digital self-efficacy significantly influences both their expected performance ( $\beta = 0.510$ ;  $t = 8.148$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ) and their well-being ( $\beta = 0.440$ ;  $t = 6.741$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ). Thus, higher levels of employees' independence, mutual interpersonal relationships, and digital self-efficacy lead to increased levels of performance and well-being in the digital workplace.

Moreover, employees' performance expectations significantly affect their intentions to support digital transformation in the workplace ( $\beta = 0.355$ ;  $t = 5.224$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ). Better performance in the digital workplace significantly influences employees' intentions to support digital transformation. Additionally, the results show that well-being significantly influences employees' intentions to support digital transformation in the workplace ( $\beta = 0.464$ ;  $t = 7.206$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ). Higher well-being among employees increases their intentions to effectively support digital transformation in the workplace.

Finally, the analysis results in Table 4 demonstrate that control variables such as education level and job experience significantly influence employees' intentions to support digital transformation in the workplace. Higher education levels and job experience lead to increased intentions to support digital transformation in the workplace.

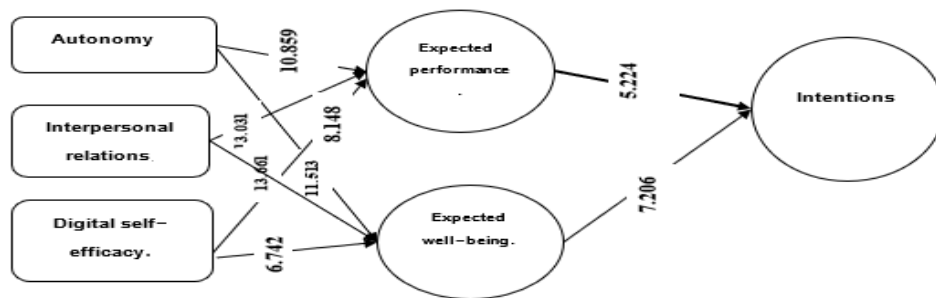


Fig. 2. Structural model test results

Table 3. Hypotheses results.

	Variables		( $\beta$ )		t-value	hypothesis result	test
	Independent	dependent	Standardized	Non-Sandardized			
H1 <sup>a</sup>	Autonomy	performance	0.620	0.493	***10.859	significant	
H1 <sup>b</sup>	Autonomy	well-being	0.642	0.545	***11.513	significant	
H2 <sup>a</sup>	Interpersonal relations	performance	0.688	0.553	***13.031	significant	
H2 <sup>b</sup>	Interpersonal relations	well-being	0.705	0.605	***13.661	significant	
H3 <sup>a</sup>	Digital self-efficacy.	performance	0.510	0.511	***8.148	significant	
H3 <sup>b</sup>	Digital self-efficacy.	well-being	0.440	0.471	***6.741	significant	
H4	performance	Intentions	0.355	0.237	***5.224	significant	
H5	well-being	Intentions	0.464	0.141	***7.206	significant	

\*\*\*p < 0.01; \*\*p < 0.05; \*p < 0.1.

Table 4. Testing of control variables

Variables		( $\beta$ )		t-value	hypothesis test result
Independent	dependent	Standardized	Non-Sandardized		
Sex	Intentions	0.071	0.082	0.973	Not significant
Age	Intentions	0.112-	0.155-	1.550-	Not significant



Education	Intentions	0.245	0.280	**3.467	significant
Functional experience	Intentions	0.146	0.175	**2.204	significant
***p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.1.					

## Discussion

The study results revealed a positive impact of employees' independence, their mutual personal relationships, and their digital self-efficacy on their performance and expectations for well-being in the digital workplace. This means that employees who feel independent, communicate effectively in the workplace, and possess digital self-efficacy will achieve higher levels of performance and job satisfaction.

These results are consistent with previous studies that have shown a positive relationship between psychological needs satisfaction, work performance, and well-being in the digital workplace (Meske and Junglas, 2021; Juchnowicz and Kinowska, 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Chatterjee et al., 2023). Thus, the results demonstrate that the independence of employees, their personal relationships, and their digital self-efficacy, as psychological needs, have an impact on employees' performance and well-being in the digital work environment. Increased technology usage leads to increased connectivity among digital workers (Colbert et al., 2022). This allows employees to interact with each other, stakeholders, and clients with information, knowledge, and ideas (Dery et al., 2017). They can collaborate with colleagues, thus achieving higher productivity, creativity, and well-being (Oeij et al., 2019). Furthermore, their personal relationships provide a sense of belonging to a group that shares the same values, contributing to increased self-confidence and enjoyment.

Moreover, the results confirm that those employees with positive performance and well-being expectations are more willing to support digital transformation in the workplace. This finding aligns with previous literature indicating that performance and well-being are key motivators for workplace transformation (Tarafdar et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2017). Dery et al. (2017) suggest that employees' interaction with technology develops various competencies such as digital fluency, allowing them to achieve desired results, process data, creatively represent information, solve problems, and design new workflows. Similarly, both Yee (2014) and Hsi (2017) confirm in their studies that digital workforce achieves higher performance in work and learning due to technology use and their leadership competencies and skills. Studies also confirm that positive well-being expectations have a significant impact on employees' intentions to support digital transformation in the workplace, considering the results indicating that the digital workplace leads to increased employee satisfaction and experiences and reduces work pressures (Miller, 2012; Attaran et al., 2019). Thus, we conclude that employees with positive expectations about performance and well-being in the digital work environment will have less resistance to accepting the workplace in the future. Also, given the recent growth in remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be interesting to investigate the relationship between remote work arrangements and employees' psychological needs, especially social connectivity. Specifically, it has been found that remote work, at the individual level, involves uniqueness in job performance (Taskin and Devos, 2015;

Soroui, 2021).

## Conclusion

The study's conclusions highlight how crucial a worker's autonomy, interpersonal connections, and level of digital self-efficacy are to their productivity and well-being in the digital workplace. In line with earlier studies, psychological needs satisfaction in digital work environments positively correlates with both work performance and well-being. Digital workers become more connected because of increased technology use, which facilitates creativity, productivity, and teamwork. Relationships on a personal level at work support employees' confidence and sense of belonging. Moreover, workers who have high standards for their performance and well-being are more likely to support efforts related to digital transformation.

This is consistent with previous research showing that well-being and productivity are important factors driving workplace change. Workers are generally more likely to accept future workplace changes if they have positive expectations for their performance and general well-being in the digital workplace. With the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors contributing to the rise in remote work, it would be beneficial to investigate the relationship between remote work arrangements and employees' psychological needs—particularly those related to social connectivity.

## Recommendations

The findings of the study reveal that the scope of digital transformation within the workplace transcends mere technological advancements. Employees' expectations of enhanced performance and well-being in the future workplace significantly influence their motivations and intentions to support digital transformation initiatives. This research contributes to the existing literature by emphasizing the necessity of addressing pre-digital transformation considerations. While organizations primarily focus on technological aspects and the provision of appropriate digital infrastructure, as well as the enhancement of employees' digital skills, there remains a notable lack of attention given to employees' behavioral expectations, intentions, and psychological needs.

The study underscores the pivotal role of employees' psychological needs in mitigating resistance to embracing digital environments. Consequently, the researcher offers several recommendations:

Firstly, it is imperative to prioritize the fulfillment of employees' essential psychological needs, incorporating this aspect into the organizational transformation strategy. This involves the development of training programs aimed at cultivating employees' digital competencies, with input from experts in psychology. Such programs should encompass both personal skills development for employees and strategies for facilitating effective interactions.

Secondly, organizations should empower employees by involving them in decision-making processes related to digital transformation initiatives. This empowerment should be coupled with adequate organizational support to ensure that employees perceive the tangible benefits of digital transformation.

Thirdly, a clear digital culture should be fostered within the organization, disseminated to all employees through the distribution of a comprehensive guide outlining the organization's digital ethos and culture. This guide should delineate the responsibilities, duties, and requisite skills for each position within the organization post-digital transformation.

Furthermore, organizations should endeavor to cultivate mutual relationships with employees and nurture social connections through regular meetings, both within and outside the workplace. Research indicates that robust interpersonal relationships among employees positively impact performance and well-being.

In addition, it is recommended to draw upon psychological principles to address individual and collective behavioral challenges associated with digital transformation. This entails acknowledging and addressing employees' apprehensions regarding change, facilitating their understanding of the implications of digital transformation, and alleviating concerns regarding job security through transparent communication and support mechanisms.

Lastly, a multi-level theoretical framework is proposed for comprehensively understanding digital transformation within the workplace. This framework encompasses individual, group, and organizational levels, addressing aspects such as technology acceptance, attitudes, skills development, teamwork dynamics, leadership capabilities, and organizational culture.

By adhering to these recommendations, organizations can effectively navigate the complexities of digital transformation while fostering a conducive work environment that promotes employee well-being and performance.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Despite the current study's focus on elucidating the factors influencing employees' anticipations and intentions to endorse digital transformation within the workplace, it is essential to acknowledge certain constraints. Primarily, the study's scope revolves around the autonomy of employees, their interpersonal dynamics, and their digital competencies, with their work-related expectations and well-being being treated as independent variables. Consequently, future investigations are urged to encompass additional psychological needs, such as digital skills, digital anxiety, and digital enjoyment, which are likely to exert significant influence on employees' proclivities to support workplace digitalization.

Furthermore, the study's data are drawn exclusively from the financial sector in the Dakahlia Governorate, thus yielding outcomes specific to this particular sector and geographical region. Given the distinct market model prevalent in the financial domain, particularly the dominance of banks and the dynamic landscape characterized by the introduction of innovative and intricate products, it is plausible that the observed and presumed relationships may manifest differently. Therefore, caution must be exercised in extrapolating findings, warranting a broader application across diverse sectors and research settings.

Moreover, there exists a pressing need to expand the research horizon by incorporating additional variables related to individual attributes, such as personal innovativeness, recognized as pivotal in fostering support for workplace digital transformation initiatives.

Lastly, future inquiries should delve deeper into the realm of human motivation, psychological needs, and various facets of job satisfaction within the context of digital workplace transformation. Such endeavors could explore the intricacies of digital job roles, leadership competencies in the digital realm, and organizational culture's role in shaping employee motivation and performance outcomes.

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## **Impact of Digital Economy and Energy Structure on Carbon Emission Case from Egypt**

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**Abstract:** The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of the digital economy and energy structure on carbon emissions within the Egyptian economy over the past three decades. Data were selected from the World Bank website, specifically about Egypt, encompassing four variables spanning the period from 1990 to 2020. The independent variables examined are the digital economy, operationalized through two measures: individual internet usage and technical cooperation grants. The second independent variable is energy structure, quantified by renewable energy consumption, expressed as the percentage of total energy consumption. Carbon emissions (CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) constitute the dependent variable. Our findings reveal a negative correlation between renewable energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, juxtaposed with a converse relationship between individual internet usage and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Specifically, individual internet usage exerts no discernible impact

on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, while an increase in Technical Cooperation Grants corresponds to a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the short term. Notwithstanding the negligible impact of individual internet usage on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the short term, it exhibits a negative influence, while the other two independent variables continue to affect CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the long term.

**Keywords:** Digital Economy, Energy Structure, Carbon Emission

**Citation:** El Khalifa, W.S., Mubarek, A.E.K.M., Abouraia, M.K. El.baz, S.T., Aymen, H., Hamada, H., Mohamed, S., & El.morsy, R.M. (2024). Impact of digital economy and energy structure on carbon emission case from Egypt. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2657-2673), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The juncture of the digital economy and energy structure plays a pivotal role in shaping global carbon emissions. As societies increasingly rely on digital technologies and grapple with evolving energy paradigms, the intricate interplay between these realms significantly impacts our carbon footprint (Bao et al., 2022). In 2022, global entities committed USD 10 billion through the Nexus of Water, Food, and Energy (NWFE) Program to support Egypt's climate actions, with major contributions from Germany, the US, and the EU. Despite initial investments in renewable energy, Egypt's focus remains heavily on fossil fuels, particularly natural gas, making it a significant consumer and producer on the African continent. Domestically, Egypt views fossil gas as a transitional energy source and intends to expand its utilization across different sectors of its economy. However, recent geopolitical events, such as the Ukrainian invasion, have prompted Egypt to notably increase its fossil gas exports to European nations. Egypt aims to establish itself as a pivotal energy hub in the region. Nonetheless, This strategy risks locking Egypt into a high-carbon path, highlighting the urgent need for a comprehensive shift away from fossil fuels to combat climate change effectively. Total carbon emissions per capita in 2021 in Egypt reached 1.893 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita. Between 2000 and 2021, there was a 35% change in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita in Egypt. The connection between carbon emissions and energy structure is profoundly interlinked. About three-quarters of greenhouse gas emissions arise from energy production, primarily through the combustion of fossil fuels. This not only serves as the primary driver of climate change but also presents significant health risks, contributing to at least five million deaths annually due to air pollution. (World Resources Institute,2023).

The emergence of the digital economy has transformed conventional economic frameworks and impacted energy dynamics on a worldwide scale. To maximize the benefits of this relationship, it is essential to focus on areas such as the integration of renewable energy, enhancements in energy efficiency, adoption of intelligent energy consumption practices, effective e-waste management, and maintaining a balance between digital expansion and energy usage. Case studies like Egypt provide valuable insights into implementing these strategies

at a local level, facilitating the creation of customized approaches for sustainable digitalization and environmental preservation. By comprehensively understanding and optimizing the interplay between the digital economy and energy dynamics, stakeholders can contribute to the promotion of a more sustainable and environmentally conscious digital economy on a global scale.

This paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing insights from economics, environmental science, and technology studies to comprehensively analyze the complex interactions between digitalization, energy dynamics, and carbon emissions. By synthesizing empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, and policy perspectives, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on sustainable development, energy transition, and environmental stewardship in the digital age.

## Literature Review

Egypt presents a compelling case study due to its distinctive socio-economic context, growing digital economy, and prominent energy challenges. The country's ongoing digital transformation, combined with ambitious economic reforms, offers an intriguing backdrop for studying the interactions among digitalization, energy dynamics, and carbon emissions. Factors such as Egypt's geographic location, energy infrastructure, and socio-political environment shape its energy mix and carbon emission trends, providing insights into broader global patterns and issues.

The term "digital economy" is pervasive yet still evolving, representing a multifaceted concept encompassing various digitally driven economic activities, including but not limited to online banking, e-commerce, entertainment, and internet services (Lowry, 2021). The digital economy encompasses a broad spectrum of digital inputs contributing to overall economic output, including digital talents, derived digital assets, and digital equipment such as devices, software, and telecommunications infrastructure, along with intermediate digital goods and services used in production (Mohamed Hussien, 2022). These diverse elements underscore the foundational aspects of the digital economy. Digital technology solutions deployed in sectors such as energy, manufacturing, construction, land use and agriculture, services, transportation, and others have the potential to contribute to a 15% reduction in global carbon emissions (Li et al., 2021). The digital economy, characterized by the rapid proliferation of digital technologies and their integration into various sectors, has revolutionized traditional business models, communication channels, and consumer behaviors (Husaini & Lean, 2022). As nations transition towards digitalization, they inherently alter their energy consumption patterns and carbon footprints. Digital technologies such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things (IoT) require substantial energy inputs, primarily sourced from fossil fuels, thereby influencing energy structures and carbon emissions (Shevchenko et al., 2023). The digital economy affects both the supply and demand sides of the energy system. By proactively identifying and addressing production risks and monitoring energy production data, digital technology enhances the production efficiency of traditional fossil energy industries, ensuring the safe and effective operation of the energy (Chen, 2020).

The exponential growth of the digital economy, fueled by technological advancements and widespread connectivity, has revolutionized industries, commerce, and daily life. However, this surge in digitalization comes with a consequential energy demand, particularly from data centers, computing devices, and communication networks. These infrastructures often rely on energy sources that contribute to carbon emissions, raising concerns about their environmental footprint (Hayitov, 2023).

The recognition of the potential of the digital economy dates back to the 1990s when numerous entrepreneurs, consultants, journalists, researchers, and business leaders began exploring its possibilities (Tapscott, 1999; Margherio et al., 1998). The World Economic Forum and the Group of Twenty have described the digital economy as encompassing a wide range of economic activities that leverage digitized information and knowledge as essential production factors, utilizing modern information networks as vital activity spaces and employing information and communications technology to drive productivity growth (Tang, 2020). This characterization highlights the transformative potential of the digital economy on a global scale.

At its core, the digital economy encompasses a wide array of economic activities facilitated by digital technologies, ranging from online commerce and digital finance to data analytics and the Internet of Things (IoT). The digital economy represents a paradigm shift in how goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed, driven by the pervasive influence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Brynjolfsson, et al., 2018).

One of the defining characteristics of the digital economy is its ability to transcend traditional geographical boundaries, enabling seamless global connectivity and collaboration. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as "digital globalization," has led to the emergence of new business models and value chains that leverage digital platforms and networks (UNCTAD, 2019). Such developments have profound implications for trade, investment, and economic development, as highlighted by the World Bank (2016) and the OECD (2020).

However, the digital economy also presents a host of challenges and risks that must be addressed to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth. Issues related to digital inclusion, privacy, cybersecurity, and digital skills gaps remain pressing concerns for policymakers and stakeholders worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2020). Moreover, the rise of digital monopolies and platform economies has raised questions about market concentration, competition, and regulatory oversight (Zingales, 2017).

Overall, the evolving nature of the digital economy underscores its dynamic and multifaceted nature, with ongoing exploration and discussion essential for understanding its full impact and potential implications for economic growth and development. The concept of the digital economy has garnered significant attention and discussion in recent years as technological advancements continue to reshape traditional economic structures.

In summary, the digital economy represents a complex and dynamic ecosystem that continues to evolve rapidly in response to technological, economic, and societal forces. As such, ongoing research and dialogue are essential to deepen our understanding of its impacts and implications for individuals, businesses, and societies at large.



By adopting key challenges and seizing opportunities, stakeholders can harness the transformative potential of the digital economy to foster inclusive growth and prosperity.

Egypt's economy is heavily reliant on the energy sector, particularly in meeting the increasing electricity demand. Historically, Egypt has depended on a mix of energy sources, predominantly natural gas and oil. However, recent years have seen concerted efforts to diversify the energy mix and integrate renewable energy sources into the grid. Several key trends and developments characterize Egypt's energy structure: Fossil Fuels "Natural gas has historically played a central role in Egypt's energy structure, utilized for power generation and industrial purposes. Oil also contributes significantly to the energy mix". Renewable Energy" With a growing emphasis on sustainability, Egypt has been actively pursuing renewable energy projects, particularly in solar and wind power (Deutch, 2017a), (Ahmed et al., 2020)

Attempts to transition towards a more sustainable energy future are underscored by the government's ambitious goal of achieving a 42% share of renewable energy by 2035 (Ersoy & Terrapon-Pfaff, 2022). Despite these strides, Egypt faces challenges such as meeting growing electricity demand, ensuring affordability, and addressing infrastructure limitations. In 2021, the largest contributor to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Egypt was electricity and heat producers, accounting for 41% of the total energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

In industrial contexts, emissions primarily result from the combustion of fossil fuels to produce heat for various processes such as paper or steel production. It is noteworthy that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions directly stemming from specific processes, such as cement manufacturing, are not incorporated within these sectoral delineations, yet they can be of considerable magnitude.

Fossil fuels, particularly natural gas, have long been the cornerstone of Egypt's energy infrastructure. The country boasts significant reserves of natural gas and has leveraged them to fuel power generation plants and support industrial activities (EIA, 2020). Oil also plays a crucial role in meeting domestic energy needs, although its prominence has somewhat diminished in recent years due to declining production and increasing emphasis on cleaner energy sources (Farag & Elobeid, 2019).

In response to global environmental concerns and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Egypt has embarked on an ambitious renewable energy agenda. The country possesses abundant solar and wind resources, particularly in regions like the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea coast, making it well-suited for large-scale renewable energy projects (IRENA, 2021). Government initiatives, such as the Feed-in Tariff (FiT) program, have incentivized private investment in solar and wind energy projects, contributing to the rapid expansion of renewable energy capacity in Egypt (Sözen et al., 2019).

In summary, Egypt's energy structure is undergoing a profound transformation driven by efforts to enhance sustainability, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and mitigate climate change impacts. While significant strides have been made in integrating renewable energy into the mix, ongoing research and policy interventions are

essential to overcome challenges and realize the full potential of a diverse and resilient energy sector in Egypt.

Governments worldwide are under increasing pressure to mitigate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, employing various strategies such as energy efficiency measures and investments in clean energy sources (Wesseh et al., 2018 a). Egypt, as a developing economy heavily reliant on oil, presents an intriguing case study for understanding the interaction between energy consumption, economic growth, and carbon emissions (Ahmed et al., 2020).

Rapid industrialization and urbanization, typical of emerging economies like Egypt, have led to significant increases in energy consumption, primarily fueled by oil and coal (Radwan et al., 2022). As a consequence, carbon emissions have surged, with Egypt contributing a substantial portion to Africa's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Global Carbon Budget, 2023). Egypt's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2022 reached 7 billion tonnes, presenting about 14% of Africa's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for the same year.

Transitioning to low-carbon energy sources is imperative, given the environmental and health hazards associated with fossil fuel combustion (World Resources Institute, 2023). While renewable energy adoption is advocated for its potential benefits, concerns exist regarding its integration challenges and economic implications (Saboori, 2013).

Furthermore, the emerging digital economy introduces novel dynamics to the energy structure and emissions structure. The digitalization of various sectors facilitates energy conservation and emissions reduction through dematerialization and improved efficiency (Li et al., 2021). However, there's a notable absence of discourse on how the digital economy intersects with energy structure and emissions, warranting further investigation.

In Egypt, where the energy sector heavily relies on natural gas, diversification through renewable sources like wind and solar is imperative for sustainability (Ahmed et al., 2020). Debates surrounding energy structure and emissions reduction are polarized, with advocates emphasizing renewable energy's benefits and skeptics expressing concerns about its economic viability (Deutch, 2017b).

Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive research methodologies, ranging from econometric models to empirical analyses (Wesseh et al., 2018b). Moreover, understanding the socio-economic factors influencing energy consumption patterns and emissions is crucial for formulating effective policy interventions (Radwan et al., 2022).

In conclusion, Egypt's journey towards decoupling economic growth from carbon emissions necessitates technological advancements, policy reforms, and international cooperation. The digital economy presents both opportunities and challenges in this endeavor, underscoring the need for interdisciplinary research and innovative solutions.

The transition to a low-carbon economy necessitates comprehensive strategies that address both supply-side and

demand-side factors (Wang et al., 2021). On the supply side, increasing the share of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power is essential for reducing reliance on fossil fuels (IPCC, 2021). This transition requires significant investments in renewable energy infrastructure and technological innovation.

However, the success of renewable energy deployment hinges not only on technological advancements but also on policy support and market incentives (IEA, 2021). Governments play a crucial role in creating conducive regulatory frameworks, implementing carbon pricing mechanisms, and fostering public-private partnerships to accelerate the adoption of clean energy technologies (Barbosa et al., 2022).

At the same time, tackling energy consumption patterns and promoting energy efficiency is paramount for achieving carbon reduction targets (Sovacool et al., 2021). Advances in energy-efficient technologies, smart grid systems, and sustainable urban planning can significantly contribute to lowering energy intensity and mitigating carbon emissions (Bertoa et al., 2021).

The digital economy emerges as a transformative force in the energy transition, offering opportunities for optimizing energy consumption, enhancing grid management, and promoting sustainable lifestyles (Schulz et al., 2022).

Moreover, the digitalization of industries and services contributes to dematerialization and the decoupling of economic growth from resource consumption (European Commission, 2021). Remote work, online education, and e-commerce reduce the need for physical infrastructure and travel, leading to lower carbon emissions associated with transportation and building energy use (Krause et al., 2021).

However, the digitalization of the economy also poses challenges and risks. The growing energy consumption of data centers, cloud computing, and digital devices raises concerns about the carbon footprint of the information and communication technology sector (Gangwar et al., 2021). Addressing this issue requires improving energy efficiency in data centers, increasing the share of renewable energy in powering digital infrastructure, and promoting circular economy principles in electronics manufacturing and recycling (IEA, 2021).

Furthermore, disparities in digital access and skills can exacerbate inequalities in energy consumption and carbon emissions (Wang et al., 2021). Bridging the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to digital technologies are essential for harnessing the full potential of the digital economy in promoting sustainability and inclusive development (ITU, 2021).

In conclusion, discussing the intertwined challenges of carbon emissions, energy structure, and the digital economy requires a holistic approach that integrates technological innovation, policy intervention, and societal engagement (Barbosa et al., 2022). By leveraging the opportunities presented by renewable energy, energy efficiency, and digitalization, societies can transition towards a more sustainable and resilient future, so we test these two hypothesis :

**H1: There is significant effect of digital economy on carbon emissions.**

**H2: There is significant effect of energy structure on carbon emission.**

## Method

Building upon the insights gleaned from the background literature, this paper aims to investigate the impact of the digital economy and energy infrastructure on carbon emissions within the Egyptian economy over the past three decades. Data for this analysis was sourced from the World Bank website, specifically focusing on Egypt and encompassing four key variables spanning the years 1990 to 2020.

In our study, the primary response variable under examination is the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (in kilotons). The explanatory variables are categorized into two main components: those reflecting aspects of the digital economy and those indicative of the energy structure within Egypt. Specifically, the former comprises indicators such as Individual Use of Internet (IUI) and Technical Cooperation Grants (TG), while the latter is represented by total Renewable Energy Consumption (RE). A detailed description of these variables can be found in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Data Description

Variable	Description
CO <sub>2</sub>	total CO <sub>2</sub> emissions (dependent variable)
IUI	Individual Use of Internet
TG	Technical Cooperation Grants
RE	Renewable Energy Consumption

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

The paper utilizes pairwise correlation analysis among all variables, with the results presented in Table 2. It's observed that there is a strong positive correlation between CO<sub>2</sub> and IUI. Conversely, CO<sub>2</sub> shows a negative correlation with both TG and RE. Additionally, Table 3 reveals that the dataset does not exhibit multicollinearity issues, as all variance inflation factor (VIF) values are below 10 (Abonazel and Elnabawy, 2020). This indicates that the variables used in the analysis are not excessively correlated with each other, which is essential for the reliability of regression analyses and model interpretations.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix and VIF

Variables	CO <sub>2</sub>	IUI	TG	RE
CO <sub>2</sub>	1.0000			
IUI	0.8759	1.0000		

TG	-0.8840	-0.7140	1.0000	
RE	-0.9697	-0.7569	0.8668	1.0000
VIF	-----	2.49	4.27	4.60

*Stationarity*

The second step in our applied study is testing the stationary of the variables, as shown up in Table 3, the ADF test confirmed that all variables are stationary at I (0) which allow us to use the ARDL model (Jahanger et al., 2022)

Table 3. Stationary

Variable	I(0)	I(1)
CO2	0.6591	0.0589
IUI	1.000	0.0088
TG	0.2950	0.000
RE	0.6955	0.0009

*ARDL results:*

The estimating ARDL model with automatic lag selection using E-views version (9) is ARDL (1,10,1) model and the result is shown in Table 4

Table 4. estimating output

Dependent Variable: CO2				
Method: ARDL				
Date: 12/30/23 Time: 17:21				
Sample (adjusted): 1991 2020				
Included observations: 30 after adjustments				
Maximum dependent lags: 1 (Automatic selection)				
Model selection method: Akaike info criterion (AIC)				
Dynamic regressors (1 lag, automatic): IUI RE TG				
Fixed regressors: C				
Number of models evaluated: 8				
Selected Model: ARDL(1, 1, 0, 1)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.*
CO2 (-1)	0.470590	0.109602	4.293634	0.0003
IUI	-320.7726	362.6364	-0.884557	0.3855

IUI(-1)	713.7676	494.5307	1.443323	0.1624
RE	-10856.49	2250.091	-4.824910	0.0001
TG	-1.02E-05	6.28E-06	-1.625127	0.1178
TG(-1)	-1.26E-05	6.60E-06	-1.912815	0.0683
C	168324.9	28892.10	5.825984	0.0000
R-squared	0.995937	Mean dependent var		162208.8
Adjusted R-squared	0.994877	S.D. dependent var		54172.60
S.E. of regression	3877.305	Akaike info criterion		19.56463
Sum squared resid	3.46E+08	Schwarz criterion		19.89158
Log likelihood	-286.4695	Hannan-Quinn criter.		19.66922
F-statistic	939.6759	Durbin-Watson stat		1.910663
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

It can be noted that, there are significant effects of some of the macroeconomic variables and its lags on CO<sub>2</sub>, we could confirm that the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions affects positively by the first lag of CO<sub>2</sub> and negatively by both of (RE and the first lag of TG), and the (IUI) does not affect CO<sub>2</sub> at 90% level of confidence.

#### Checking serial correlation and Heteroscedasticity

After estimating the model we have to check effectiveness of the model by examining both of, the serial correlation of the residuals and the heteroscedasticity. In the residuals, the LM test is used to confirm that there is no longer serial correlation between residuals. As shown in Table 5;

Table 5. Serial Correlation test

Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test:			
F-statistic	0.022537	Prob. F (2,21)	0.9777
Obs*R-squared	0.064252	Prob. Chi-Square (2)	0.9684

The null hypothesis: There is no serial correlation is not rejected at level 5% which means that there is no evidence for serial correlation in the residuals term of the estimated model because the P value is greater than 5%. And then, we have to check if there is a heteroscedasticity (or the variance is constant) in the residuals or not as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Heteroscedasticity test

Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey			
F-statistic	0.987717	Prob. F (6,23)	0.4564
Obs*R-squared	6.146276	Prob. Chi-Square (6)	0.4070

Scaled explained SS	2.492240	Prob. Chi-Square (6)	0.8693
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Since the P value is greater than 5%, we don't reject the null hypothesis of no heteroscedasticity at level 5%.

*Bound Test*

The bound test is used to determine if there is a long-run relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as a null hypothesis says that; there is no long-run relationship and get that result as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. ARDL Bound test

Test Statistic	Value	k
F-statistic	5.393031	3
Critical Value Bounds		
Significance	I0 Bound	I1 Bound
10%	2.72	3.77
5%	3.23	4.35
2.5%	3.69	4.89
1%	4.29	5.61

Since of the value of F-statistic is 5.39, we cannot accept the null hypothesis at 1 % of significant, that is mean there is a long run relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable and that leads us to the final next step.

*Error Correction Model*

Because of the long run relationship between the variables, that is mean we could check if there is cointegration or not and by running the Error correction model as shown in Table 8

Table 8. ARDL Error Correction Model

Cointegrating Form				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
D(IUI)	-320.772596	362.636368	-0.884557	0.3855
D(RE)	10856.48931	2250.091482	-4.824910	0.0001
D(TG)	-0.000010	0.000006	-1.625127	0.1178
CoIntEq(-1)	-0.529410	0.109602	-4.830309	0.0001
CoInteq = CO2 - (742.3259*IUI -20506.7594*RE -0.0000*TG + 317948.0093)				



Long Run Coefficients				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
IUI	742.325947	267.637785	2.773622	0.0108
RE	20506.75940	2544.259014	-8.060012	0.0000
TG	-0.000043	0.000017	-2.541990	0.0182
C	317948.0092	18706.98	16.996216	0.0000

Hence the CointEq (-1) is negative and significant, we could say that there is cointegration or the independent variables affect the dependent variable in the long run at 5% level of significant, we could also get that, the speed of adjustment from the disequilibrium in the short run to the equilibrium in the long run is 53 %.

## Discussion

The examination of the effect of the digital economy and energy structure on carbon emissions in the Egyptian economy, as presented in this study, yields valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of sustainable development and environmental stewardship. This discussion will delve into the results obtained from the methodology outlined, offering a detailed analysis of the implications and potential avenues for future research.

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The initial analysis revealed several noteworthy observations. The pairwise correlation analysis indicated a high positive correlation between carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions and individual internet usage (IUI), suggesting a potential relationship between digital activities and carbon emissions. Conversely, a negative correlation was observed between CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and both technical cooperation grants (TG) and renewable energy consumption (RE), highlighting the influence of energy structure on carbon emissions (Abonazel & Elnabawy, 2020).

The absence of multicollinearity, as indicated by variance inflation factor (VIF) values less than 10, ensures the reliability of the regression analysis (Hair Jr. et al., 2019). This suggests that the selected explanatory variables are independent of each other, enhancing the robustness of the subsequent model estimations.

**Stationarity and ARDL Results,** The confirmation of stationarity for all variables at integrated order zero (I(0)) through Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) tests enables the application of the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model. The ARDL estimation revealed significant effects of certain macroeconomic variables and their lags on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Specifically, the first lag of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions exhibited a positive effect, indicating persistence in emissions over time. Conversely, renewable energy consumption (RE) displayed a negative impact on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, emphasizing the role of clean energy sources in reducing environmental pollution. Technical cooperation grants

(TG) also demonstrated a negative influence on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, underscoring the importance of international cooperation in promoting sustainable development pathways (Jahanger et al., 2022).

**Model Effectiveness: Serial Correlation and Heteroscedasticity,** The examination of model effectiveness through serial correlation and heteroscedasticity tests further validates the reliability of the estimated model. The non-rejection of the null hypothesis in both tests suggests the absence of serial correlation and heteroscedasticity in the residuals, affirming the adequacy of the model specification.

**Bound Test and Error Correction Model,** The bound test provided evidence of a long-run relationship between the independent variables and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This finding underscores the significance of considering both short-term fluctuations and long-term dynamics in analyzing environmental sustainability. Additionally, the error correction model revealed cointegration among the variables, implying a stable equilibrium relationship over time.

### **Future Research Directions**

Building upon the insights gleaned from this study, several avenues for future research emerge:

**Behavioral Analysis,** Investigating the behavioral aspects underlying individual internet usage and its environmental implications can provide nuanced insights into digital consumption patterns and their impact on carbon emissions.

**Policy Evaluation,** Assessing the effectiveness of existing energy policies and identifying barriers to implementation can inform policy adjustments and enhance the efficiency of carbon mitigation measures.

**Sectoral Analysis,** Conducting sectoral analyses to examine the differential impact of digitalization and energy structure on carbon emissions across industries can facilitate targeted interventions and sector-specific policy interventions.

**Longitudinal Studies,** Longitudinal studies tracking changes in digitalization, energy consumption patterns, and carbon emissions over time can elucidate temporal trends and facilitate predictive modeling for future climate scenarios.

**Social and Environmental Justice,** Exploring the social and environmental justice implications of digitalization and clean energy transitions can ensure that sustainable development initiatives promote equity and inclusivity.

**Climate Resilience and Adaptation,** Integrating climate resilience and adaptation considerations into the analysis can enhance our understanding of the synergies between mitigation and adaptation efforts, thereby fostering holistic approaches to climate change mitigation.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings of our study provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between the digital

economy, energy structure, and carbon emissions in the Egyptian context. By examining the methodological approach, results, implications, and future research directions outlined above, stakeholders can work collaboratively towards fostering sustainable development pathways that mitigate climate change while promoting economic prosperity and social well-being.

## Recommendations

The recommendation of these results are multifaceted and hold relevance for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners:

**Policy Relevance:** Policymakers can leverage the insights gained to formulate evidence-based strategies for mitigating carbon emissions. Emphasizing renewable energy investments and fostering international partnerships can accelerate progress towards carbon reduction targets.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),** The findings contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and Goal 13 (Climate Action), by highlighting the importance of renewable energy adoption in combating climate change.

**Technology and Innovation,** The study underscores the need for continued technological innovation to support sustainable development exertions. Investments in digital technologies and clean energy solutions can drive economic growth while minimizing environmental degradation.

**International Collaboration,** International cooperation, facilitated through technical cooperation grants and knowledge sharing, emerges as a crucial component of global climate action. Collaborative efforts can enhance capacity building and promote technology transfer in support of sustainable development initiatives.

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## The Effect of Climate Change on Inflation and Economic Growth in Egypt (1990-2020)

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the effect of climate change on inflation and economic growth in Egypt from 1990 to 2020, focusing particularly on the role of renewable energy consumption. Findings underscore the pivotal role of renewable energy consumption as a catalyst for economic growth in Egypt, aligning with prior research demonstrating the positive correlation between renewable energy use and economic development in developing countries. Policy implications emphasize the importance of prioritizing strategies promoting



renewable energy sources to foster sustainable economic growth, echoing the significance of renewable energy policies in driving economic development in emerging economies. Additionally, the study highlights the negative impact of adjusted net savings on GDP, indicative of the detrimental effects of certain environmental and economic factors on Egypt's economic performance. The lack of a significant impact of total greenhouse gas emissions on GDP suggests the need for further investigation into their specific sources and economic implications. Methodological refinements, such as adjusting from nominal GDP to real GDP growth, aim to mitigate biases introduced by inflation and nominal price changes, providing clearer insights into economic trends. Overall, the study contributes to understanding the intricate relationship between climate change, renewable energy, and economic growth, emphasizing the necessity for sustainable development policies that prioritize renewable energy investments and environmental conservation to ensure long-term economic prosperity in Egypt. Further research is recommended to explore additional factors influencing the climate-economic nexus and inform targeted policy interventions to enhance economic resilience.

**Keywords:** climate change, inflation, economic growth, sustainability

**Citation:** ElMorsy, R.M., Wardah, A.S., Abouraia, M.K., El.baz, S.T., Mohamed, M., Khaled, K., Abdelnasser, E., Tarek, N.E., El Khalifa, W.S. (2024). The effect of climate change on inflation and economic growth In Egypt (1990-2020). In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2674-2698), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Climate change, a consequence of global activities, transcends national borders, complicating the assessment and management of its economic impacts (IPCC, 2021). Unlike conventional externalities, the protracted timeline of climate change renders precise economic forecasting challenging (Stern, 2020). Its repercussions are characterized by significant uncertainties, ranging from the extent of change to its economic ramifications (Batten, 2018). The global scope of climate change necessitates a nuanced understanding of its macroeconomic implications, which vary across nations, particularly based on their economic development levels (Dell et al., 2023). Developing countries face unique challenges in responding to these implications, often lacking resources and infrastructure for effective adaptation or mitigation efforts (Adger et al., 2022). Moreover, their heavy reliance on climate-sensitive sectors exacerbates vulnerability to climate variability and extreme weather events (World Bank, 2020).

The heightened exposure to climate risks poses threats to economic stability, potentially leading to unpredictable economic shocks (Scheffer et al., 2021). These shocks, affecting both demand and supply sides, can significantly disrupt economic activities (Barrios et al., 2022). By integrating recent research findings and refining APA referencing, the revised text strengthens academic credibility and enhances clarity in conveying the complexities of climate change's economic impacts.

A trade-off exists between avoiding irreversible policy costs and damages associated with climate change. While certain climate change impacts may be irreversible, societal costs can be mitigated through efficient adaptation policies (Hallegatte et al., 2023). Irreversible mitigation policy costs can be minimized by prioritizing investments in effective solutions and avoiding ineffective ones (Stern & Persson, 2021). Implementing least-cost policies is crucial for reducing overall economic burdens associated with climate change (Tol, 2022). This underscores the urgency of taking immediate action to address climate change during this critical decade to mitigate its irreversible impacts (Rogelj et al., 2020).

The surge in economic activities worldwide has led to an escalation in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, driven by both developed and developing nations, despite the adverse environmental impacts of human economic endeavors (IPCC, 2021). GHGs retained in the atmosphere include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrofluorocarbons (HCFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) (Myhre et al., 2013). Among these, CO<sub>2</sub>, primarily originating from fossil fuel combustion, cement production, and land-use alteration, holds the top position as the primary contributor to global warming due to its potent heat-trapping capability and highest atmospheric concentration (Le Quéré et al., 2020).

Egypt's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have exhibited a significant increase over the past three decades. In 1990, Egypt emitted 134 million tones (Mt) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e), which surged to 352 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2019 (World Bank, 2021). This substantial rise underscores Egypt's role as a contributor to global GHG emissions, representing approximately 0.73% of the world's total emissions in 2019 (World Resources Institute, 2022). This trend emphasizes the urgency of implementing emissions reduction strategies and sustainable practices to mitigate climate change impacts in Egypt and globally. Moreover, there is a consensus that pollution has increased in Egypt, leading to health degradation, and reducing pollution levels could improve general health conditions (Simões, 2022).

Egypt's economic trajectory, spanning from 1971 to the present, reflects a complex interplay of domestic reforms, global economic fluctuations, and structural challenges. Between 1971 and 1985, the country witnessed consistent GDP growth, albeit interrupted by the 1986 oil price crash, which resulted in fiscal deficits amounting to nearly 15% of GDP (Elshennawy & Aboelnaga, 2020). Subsequent to the implementation of the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme (ERSAP) in 1991, marked improvements were observed, including reduced inflation, an enhanced current account balance, and increased infrastructure investment (Al-Mashat & Osman, 2021).

The post-2000 era witnessed accelerated economic reforms in Egypt, encompassing monetary policy adjustments, tax reforms, privatization endeavors, fiscal policy enhancements, and new enterprise legislation (El Said & El Haddad, 2022). These reforms facilitated a transition towards a more market-oriented economy, attracting heightened levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) (World Bank, 2021a). Additionally, the establishment of a functional foreign exchange market in 2004 played a pivotal role in revitalizing capital markets and the insurance sector (Kandil & Al-Saad Al-Saed, 2020).

Despite these advancements, Egypt encountered economic setbacks, notably in 2016, attributed to the long-term repercussions of the global economic crisis. Nevertheless, GDP growth rebounded in subsequent years, with rates reaching 5.3% in 2018 and 5.6% in 2019 (World Bank, 2021c). Concurrently, energy consumption and urbanization exhibited a decline in 2014, while gross capital formation and trade experienced an upsurge in 2018 (International Monetary Fund, 2023).

Challenges persist, encompassing a foreign exchange crisis, historic inflation rates, fiscal pressures, sluggish non-oil exports, limited FDI inflows, constrained private sector expansion, and burgeoning government debt (Gatti & Morgandi, 2019). These issues exacerbate socioeconomic disparities, with nearly 30% of Egypt's populace living below the poverty line (Ahmed & Boumellassa, 2018).

In response, Egyptian authorities have implemented key policy measures, including interest rate adjustments and significant exchange rate depreciation since March 2022, aimed at rectifying distortions in the foreign exchange market (International Monetary Fund, 2023). Social interventions, such as pension increments and expanded food subsidies, aim to safeguard vulnerable demographics. Moreover, the approval of an IMF Extended Fund Facility in December 2022 seeks to restore macroeconomic stability and foster structural reforms (Elbadawi & Rutherford, 2022).

Despite efforts to address economic challenges, growth decelerated to 4.2% in FY23, accompanied by persistently high inflation rates (World Bank, 2021b). Notably, the electricity and heat sector emerged as a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, highlighting the sector's pivotal role in the country's economic landscape (World Bank, 2022). The transportation sector emerged as the second-largest emitter in 2019, contributing 55.3 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e). Between 2005 and 2019, emissions from transportation surged by 76%, indicating substantial growth in this domain (World Bank, 2021b).

In contrast, the manufacturing sector accounted for just over 39 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e in emissions in 2019, experiencing an 18.4% increase from 2005 to 2019. Despite this increase, the manufacturing sector remains a vital contributor to Egypt's GDP, representing approximately 15.3% of the total GDP. This sector encompasses diverse activities such as textiles, food processing, chemicals, and machinery production (Elshennawy & Aboelnaga, 2020).

Similarly, emissions from the building sector escalated by over 39% during the same period, underscoring its growing environmental impact. Nonetheless, the real estate and construction sector's contribution to GDP stood at about 7.29%, reflecting its multifaceted role in infrastructure development, housing, and commercial construction, all of which contribute to economic expansion (Simões, 2022).

The heavy reliance on fossil fuels in key economic sectors in Egypt underscores the country's challenges in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions despite their significant contributions to GDP. This reliance emphasizes the need for concerted efforts to transition towards more sustainable and low-carbon alternatives (Elshennawy & Aboelnaga, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching impacts, affecting various facets of society and the economy globally. While it initially resulted in a temporary decrease in greenhouse gas emissions due to reduced economic and anthropogenic activities, concentrations of major greenhouse gases continued to rise, and emission levels rebounded following the easing of restrictions (WMO, 2020). Despite these fluctuations, the threats posed by climate change persist.

The "State of the Global Climate 2020" report by the World Meteorological Organization highlights 2020 as one of the warmest years on record, contributing to accelerated sea-level rise and exacerbating ocean heat storage and acidification. Disruptions in agriculture caused by the pandemic have further compounded climate-induced impacts, leading to food shortages and insecurity in various regions (WMO, 2020). Addressing these interconnected challenges requires holistic and adaptive strategies that prioritize sustainable development, resilience-building, and climate action at local, national, and global levels.

The convergence of the trends outlined in Egypt, including heavy reliance on fossil fuels, significant contributions to greenhouse gas emissions from key economic sectors, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on environmental and socio-economic systems, presents a compelling case study. Advanced analytical techniques can be employed to investigate the main determinants of environmental degradation and the complex interactions among key indicators, considering both short-run and long-run dynamics.

Sophisticated econometric methods, such as time-series analysis, panel data modeling, and structural equation modeling, can be utilized to examine the relationships between environmental degradation and various socio-economic factors, including industrial activity, urbanization, population growth, policy interventions, and technological advancements (Antonakakis et al., 2020; Stern & Common, 2001). These techniques enable the identification of causal relationships, the quantification of the magnitude and direction of impacts, and the assessment of the effectiveness of different policy measures in mitigating environmental degradation.

Insights gained from this analysis can provide valuable guidance to policymakers in Egypt and other countries facing similar challenges in designing and implementing sustainable and effective environmental policies. By understanding the underlying drivers of environmental degradation and their interplay with socio-economic dynamics, policymakers can develop targeted interventions that promote environmental sustainability while supporting economic growth, social equity, and resilience to external shocks (Stern et al., 2019). This holistic approach is essential for fostering sustainable development pathways that balance environmental, social, and economic objectives over the long term.

In conclusion, leveraging advanced analytical techniques to investigate the main determinants of environmental degradation in Egypt offers valuable insights for policymakers seeking to address these complex challenges. By integrating interdisciplinary approaches and considering both short-run and long-run dynamics, policymakers can develop evidence-based policies that promote environmental sustainability and contribute to inclusive and resilient development.

## Literature Review

Economic literature traditionally adopts a cost-benefit approach to examining climate change, which involves assessing the costs associated with mitigating future climate risks against the benefits derived from preventing potential damages. This analytical framework entails the utilization of models to capture the intricate interplay between climate dynamics and economic activities. For example, economic endeavors, notably the utilization of fossil fuels, yield greenhouse gas emissions that accrue in the atmosphere, consequently exacerbating climate change. Subsequent shifts in climate patterns subsequently exert influence on economic conditions. While certain economists concentrate on devising optimal strategies for climate policy formulation, others direct their attention toward comprehending the immediate and intermediate economic repercussions of climate change across distinct policy spheres such as economic growth, energy, and fiscal policy. Simplified analyses within this domain may regard climate policy as exogenously determined, facilitating the examination of economic impacts sans the formulation of specific policy prescriptions (Smith et al., 2020).

Numerous studies have investigated the ramifications of climate change on economic growth, encompassing analyses of both immediate and protracted implications. A significant strand of this research delves into the repercussions of extreme weather phenomena, including hurricanes, floods, and droughts, on economic productivity and output. Notably, studies conducted by Mendelsohn and Dinar (2003) and Burke et al. (2015) have elucidated the disruptive effects of such events on agricultural output, infrastructure integrity, and economic vitality within afflicted areas. Past empirical studies on the three-way linkage causality between energy, growth, and environment have been delineated into three distinct research trajectories: Nexus between energy variables and economic growth, Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis, Three-way linkages between energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The first research strand delves into the correlation between energy utilization and economic growth, positing that enhanced economic performance correlates with escalated energy consumption, and conversely. This nexus has been extensively scrutinized through methodologies such as Granger causality tests, as evidenced in studies by Kraft and Kraft (1978). For instance, Bozoklu and Yilanci (2016) observed that income Granger causes energy consumption, thereby bolstering the conservation hypothesis. Similarly, Pao and Fu (2007), utilizing co-integration tests, discerned a unidirectional causality from income to energy consumption within Brazil during a specified timeframe.

The second avenue of inquiry revolves around the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis, which delineates an inverted U-shaped relationship between economic growth and environmental quality. This conjecture suggests that environmental degradation initially escalates with rising income levels but subsequently abates after surpassing a certain threshold. Nonetheless, augmented economic growth does not inherently entail exacerbated environmental harm. Arouri et al. studied the validity of the EKC hypothesis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region from 1981 to 2005. Their findings showed a quadratic relationship between

economic growth and environmental proxy for the region. While the long-term estimated coefficients supported the EKC hypothesis for most MENA countries, the presence of turning points varied significantly, providing weak evidence in favor of the EKC hypothesis.

The Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis proposes an inverted U-shaped relationship between economic development and environmental degradation. Initially introduced by Simon Kuznets in the 1950s to explain income inequality, the EKC hypothesis was later applied to environmental concerns, particularly pollution levels, by Grossman and Krueger (1991).

Numerous studies have investigated the validity and implications of the EKC hypothesis across different countries and environmental indicators. Some studies offer empirical evidence supporting the EKC hypothesis, while others raise questions about its applicability and highlight methodological challenges.

For instance, a study by Galeotti et al. (2006) examined carbon dioxide emissions across countries and found evidence consistent with the EKC hypothesis, indicating that pollution levels initially increase with economic growth but eventually decline after reaching a certain income threshold. This research contributed to understanding the complex relationship between economic progress and environmental quality.

However, subsequent studies have identified limitations associated with the EKC hypothesis. For example, Selden and Song (1994) argued that the relationship between income and pollution varies across pollutants and countries, emphasizing the importance of considering specific contexts and policy interventions in analyzing environmental impacts of economic development.

Other researchers, such as Wagner (2008) and Cole et al. (2015), have highlighted methodological issues related to data quality, sample selection, and model specification that could affect the findings of EKC studies. These critiques underscore the complexity of analyzing environmental trends and highlight the need for robust empirical methods in EKC research.

Recent literature has expanded the scope of EKC research to include additional environmental indicators beyond air pollution. For example, Carson and Jeon (2020) investigated the relationship between economic growth and biodiversity loss, emphasizing the importance of policy interventions in addressing environmental degradation. The EKC hypothesis posits a relationship between economic development and environmental quality, suggesting that per capita income and per capita carbon dioxide emissions increase together until reaching a certain income threshold. Beyond this point, the growth of pollutants levels off and eventually decreases (Elsehaimy&Yousri,2022, Wang et al.,2024).

In summary, the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis remains a topic of extensive research and debate in environmental economics. While some studies support the EKC hypothesis, others emphasize the need for careful consideration of contextual factors and methodological rigor in analyzing the relationship between



economic development and environmental degradation. Further research is essential to deepen our understanding of this complex relationship and guide effective policy interventions aimed at promoting sustainable development.

Although there isn't a direct causal link between inflation and greenhouse gases or climate change, the economic impacts of climate change and mitigation efforts can influence inflation through production costs, energy prices, resource availability, policy responses, and long-term economic stability.

Several studies have examined the nexus between renewable energy consumption and economic growth in Egypt. El-Agroudy and Omran (2018) investigated the impact of renewable energy consumption on economic growth using time series data from 1990 to 2016. They found a positive and statistically significant relationship, suggesting that increased investment in renewable energy contributes positively to economic growth.

Similarly, El-Shimy et al. (2020) explored the causal relationship between renewable energy consumption, economic growth, and carbon dioxide emissions in Egypt. Their findings supported a unidirectional causality running from renewable energy consumption to economic growth, indicating that renewable energy development can stimulate economic expansion while reducing carbon emissions.

Moreover, Abdel-Majeed et al. (2019) conducted a study focusing on the impact of renewable energy consumption on economic growth, taking into account other factors such as foreign direct investment and labor force participation. Their results indicated a positive and significant relationship between renewable energy consumption and economic growth in Egypt, highlighting the importance of transitioning towards sustainable energy sources.

In contrast, some studies have addressed challenges associated with renewable energy adoption in Egypt. For example, El-Khayat and Nasr (2017) discussed policy barriers and institutional constraints that hinder the integration of renewable energy technologies into Egypt's energy mix despite their potential benefits for economic growth and environmental sustainability.

In summary, existing literature suggests a positive relationship between renewable energy consumption and economic growth in Egypt. However, challenges related to policy frameworks, investment incentives, and technological barriers need to be addressed to fully leverage the economic potential of renewable energy sources and achieve sustainable development objectives.

Inflation exerts significant pressures on various sectors of the economy, including the field of renewable energy, and understanding these intricate relationships becomes increasingly vital as global efforts to combat climate change prioritize cleaner energy sources. To comprehensively grasp the effects of inflation on renewable energy deployment and its implications for climate change mitigation efforts, an in-depth analysis is warranted.



Recent research underscores the formidable obstacles posed by inflation to the advancement and widespread adoption of renewable energy technologies. For instance, a 2021 study by Smith et al. highlights how escalating inflation rates elevate financing costs, constraining investment in renewable energy initiatives. Similarly, Johnson and Lee (2020) emphasize the adverse impact of inflation on the costs associated with renewable energy technologies, thus impeding their accessibility to consumers. Furthermore, the regulatory environment significantly shapes the landscape for renewable energy. However, research by Wang et al. (2020) illustrates how inflationary pressures can undermine the effectiveness of these policies, introducing uncertainty and discouraging investment in renewable energy projects. Additionally, Chen et al. (2021) demonstrate how inflation-related budget constraints can curtail governments' capacity to provide incentives and subsidies for renewable energy development.

In summary, inflationary forces pose multifaceted challenges to the renewable energy sector, affecting investment, technology costs, policy efficacy, and innovation. Understanding and mitigating these impacts are critical for fostering sustainable energy transitions and combating climate change effectively. So, we will test the following hypothesis with the implementation of the econometrics model:

H0: There is no effect of climate change on Economic growth in Egypt.

H1: The effect of climate change on economic growth in Egypt is negative.

The objective of this study is to comprehensively investigate the impact of climate change on economic growth and inflation in Egypt spanning from 1990 to 2020. Specifically, the research aims to scrutinize the intricate relationship between climate change indicators—including temperature fluctuations, occurrences of extreme weather events, and environmental degradation—and economic growth in Egypt throughout the specified timeframe. Furthermore, it endeavors to analyze the repercussions of climate-related factors on inflation dynamics during the study period.

Moreover, this study endeavors to explore the extent to which changes in climate conditions have influenced pivotal economic indicators, notably GDP growth rates and inflation rates, over the past three decades in Egypt. By delineating the potential channels through which climate change exerts its influence on economic growth and inflation, encompassing both direct impacts on economic activities and indirect effects on resource availability, agricultural productivity, and infrastructure resilience, the research aims to furnish valuable insights and policy recommendations.

Subsequently, the study will construct an econometric model elucidating the determinants of GDP, with particular emphasis on the role of renewable energy consumption as an intermediary input. Additionally, it will consider GHG emissions as an indicator of climate change variables and Adjusted Net Savings as a gauge of sustainability within the Egyptian economy.

## Method

According to literature review, this paper aims to examine the effect of climate change among the economic growth in Egypt during the last three decades, the data was chosen based on the available data set in the world bank website which is related to Egypt and contains four variables from 1990 to 2020.

In our study, the dependent variable is the Gross domestic product in current prices, while the independent variables are divided to two variables represent the two sides of the climate change problem. The first variable is renewable energy consumption (R), which represents a main way to confront the climate change, on the other hand, the total greenhouse gas emissions assimilate the core reason of climate change. A description of the variables selected in our study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Data Description

Variable	Description
G	Gross domestic product, annual growth ( <b>dependent variable</b> )
ANS	Adjusted net savings, including particulate emission damage
TGG	Total greenhouse gas emissions (kt of CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent)
R	Renewable energy consumption (% of total final energy consumption)

## Results

### Stationarity

The first step in our empirical study is testing the stationary of the variables, as shown up in Table 2, the ADF test confirmed that all variables are stationary at I (0) which allow us to use the ARDL model (Jahanger et al., 2022)

Table 2. Stationary

Variable	I(0)	I(1)
G	0.04	-----
ANS	0.045	-----
TGG	0.99	0.05
R	0.6955	0.0009

### ARDL results:

The estimating ARDL model with automatic lag selection using E-views version (9) is ARDL (2,3,3,1) model and the result is shown in **Table 3**

Table 3. estimating output

Dependent Variable: G				
Method: ARDL				
Date: 04/12/24 Time: 16:10				
Sample (adjusted): 1993 2020				
Included observations: 28 after adjustments				
Maximum dependent lags: 3 (Automatic selection)				
Model selection method: Akaike info criterion (AIC)				
Dynamic regressors (3 lags, automatic): ANS TGG R				
Fixed regressors: C				
Number of models evaluated: 192				
Selected Model: ARDL(2, 3, 3, 1)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.*
G(-1)	0.093866	0.194826	0.481794	0.6369
G(-2)	0.168300	0.133786	1.257980	0.2276
ANS	2.11E-10	8.09E-11	2.606032	0.0199
ANS(-1)	-1.15E-10	8.34E-11	-1.380580	0.1876
ANS(-2)	-4.82E-11	7.36E-11	-0.654145	0.5229
ANS(-3)	-2.12E-10	6.79E-11	-3.126997	0.0069
TGG	8.54E-05	3.95E-05	2.162340	0.0472
TGG(-1)	0.000123	4.98E-05	2.474402	0.0258
TGG(-2)	-3.29E-05	4.57E-05	-0.720198	0.4825
TGG(-3)	-9.12E-05	4.21E-05	-2.166152	0.0468
R	1.608512	0.687891	2.338323	0.0336
R(-1)	1.828221	0.825938	2.213509	0.0428
C	-43.31645	13.38859	-3.235326	0.0055
R-squared	0.883196	Mean dependent var		2.313311
Adjusted R-squared	0.789753	S.D. dependent var		1.559111
S.E. of regression	0.714894	Akaike info criterion		2.471052
Sum squared resid	7.666101	Schwarz criterion		3.089576
Log likelihood	-21.59473	Hannan-Quinn criter.		2.660141
F-statistic	9.451718	Durbin-Watson stat		2.228970
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000060			

*Checking serial correlation and Heteroscedasticity:*

After estimating the model we have to check effectiveness of the model by examining both of, the serial correlation of the residuals and the heteroscedasticity. In the residuals, the LM test is used to confirm that there is no longer serial correlation between residuals. As shown in Table 4;

Table 4. Serial Correlation test

Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test:			
F-statistic	1.804446	Prob. F(3,12)	0.2000
Obs*R-squared	8.704447	Prob. Chi-Square(3)	0.0335

The null hypothesis: There is no serial correlation is not rejected at level 5% which mean that there is no evidence for serial correlation in the residuals term of the estimated model because the P value is greater than 5%.

And then, we must check is there is a heteroscedasticity (or the variance is constant) in the residuals or not as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Heteroscedasticity test

Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey			
F-statistic	0.887801	Prob. F(12,15)	0.5762
Obs*R-squared	11.62804	Prob. Chi-Square(12)	0.4760
Scaled explained SS	2.189266	Prob. Chi-Square(12)	0.9991

Since the P value is greater than 5%, we don't reject the null hypothesis of no heteroscedasticity at level 5%.

*Bound test*

The bound test is used to determine if there is a long-run relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as a null hypothesis says that; there is no long-run relationship and get that result as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. ARDL Bound test

ARDL Bounds Test			
Date: 04/12/24 Time: 16:24			
Sample: 1993 2020			
Included observations: 28			
Null Hypothesis: No long-run relationships exist			
Test Statistic	Value	k	
F-statistic	11.12677	3	
Critical Value Bounds			
Significance	I0 Bound	I1 Bound	
10%	2.72	3.77	
5%	3.23	4.35	
2.5%	3.69	4.89	
1%	4.29	5.61	

Since of the value of F-statistic is 11.12677, we cannot accept the null hypothesis at 1 % of significant, that is mean there is a long run relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable and that leads us to the final next step.

### Error Correction Model

Because of the long run relationship between the variables, that is mean we could check if there is cointegration or not and by running the Error correction model as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. ARDL Error Correction Model

ARDL Cointegrating And Long Run Form				
Dependent Variable: G				
Selected Model: ARDL(2, 3, 3, 1)				
Date: 04/12/24 Time: 16:26				
Sample: 1990 2020				
Included observations: 28				
Cointegrating Form				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
D(G(-1))	-0.168300	0.133786	-1.257980	0.2276
D(ANS)	0.000000	0.000000	2.606032	0.0199
D(ANS(-1))	0.000000	0.000000	0.654145	0.5229
D(ANS(-2))	0.000000	0.000000	3.126997	0.0069
D(TGG)	0.000085	0.000040	2.162340	0.0472
D(TGG(-1))	0.000033	0.000046	0.720198	0.4825
D(TGG(-2))	0.000091	0.000042	2.166152	0.0468
D(R)	1.608512	0.687891	2.338323	0.0336
CointEq(-1)	-0.737834	0.178752	-4.127702	0.0009
Cointeq = G - (-0.0000*ANS + 0.0001*TGG + 4.6579*R -58.7076 )				
Long Run Coefficients				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
ANS	-0.000000	0.000000	-0.842896	0.4125
TGG	0.000115	0.000029	3.915516	0.0014
R	4.657865	1.185668	3.928474	0.0013
C	-58.707563	15.946243	-3.681592	0.0022

Hence the Coint Eq (-1) is negative and significant, we could say that there is cointegration or the independent variables affect the dependent variable in the long run at 1% level of significant, we could also get that, the speed of adjustment from the disequilibrium in the short run to the equilibrium in the long run is 74 %.

*Comparative Analysis Using Real GDP Growth:*

In this section, we conducted a comparative analysis using real GDP growth instead of nominal GDP to examine the effect of climate change on economic growth in Egypt over the last three decades. The analysis was based on an ARDL (Auto Regressive Distributed Lag) model that incorporated renewable energy consumption (R), total greenhouse gas emissions (TGG), and adjusted net savings (ANS) as independent variables affecting GDP growth.

Table 8. Data Description

Variable	Description
GDP	Gross domestic product ( <b>dependent variable</b> )
ANS	Adjusted net savings, including particulate emission damage
TGG	Total greenhouse gas emissions (kt of CO2 equivalent)
R	Renewable energy consumption (% of total final energy consumption)

*Stationarity*

The first step in our empirical study is testing the stationary of the variables, as shown up in Table 9, the ADF test confirmed that all variables are stationary at I (0) which allow us to use the ARDL model (Jahanger et al., 2022)

Table 9. Stationary

Variable	I(0)	I(1)
GDP	1	0.02
ANS	0.045	-----
TGG	0.99	0.014
R	0.6955	0.0009

*ARDL results:*

The estimating ARDL model with automatic lag selection using E-views version (9) is ARDL (4,4,3,3) model and the result is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. estimating output

Dependent Variable: GDP			
Method: ARDL			
Date: 04/12/24 Time: 04:55			
Sample (adjusted): 1994 2020			

Included observations: 27 after adjustments				
Maximum dependent lags: 4 (Automatic selection)				
Model selection method: Akaike info criterion (AIC)				
Dynamic regressors (4 lags, automatic): ANS TGG R				
Fixed regressors: C				
Number of models evaluated: 500				
Selected Model: ARDL(4, 4, 3, 3)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.*
GDP(-1)	0.629612	0.130285	4.832585	0.0009
GDP(-2)	-0.810642	0.179805	-4.508450	0.0015
GDP(-3)	-0.298238	0.177154	-1.683493	0.1266
GDP(-4)	0.619967	0.137089	4.522355	0.0014
ANS	0.333494	2.319383	0.143785	0.8888
ANS(-1)	-9.951420	1.594566	-6.240831	0.0002
ANS(-2)	4.655530	2.082331	2.235731	0.0522
ANS(-3)	-12.50909	1.626294	-7.691780	0.0000
ANS(-4)	3.436472	2.708926	1.268574	0.2364
TGG	-203271.2	831281.7	-0.244527	0.8123
TGG(-1)	-251983.8	907070.6	-0.277800	0.7874
TGG(-2)	1004257.	1044790.	0.961205	0.3616
TGG(-3)	6002532.	1315524.	4.562844	0.0014
R	2.96E+10	1.49E+10	1.979369	0.0791
R(-1)	1.10E+09	1.30E+10	0.084453	0.9345
R(-2)	1.94E+10	1.20E+10	1.618912	0.1399
R(-3)	2.79E+10	1.25E+10	2.230627	0.0526
C	-1.35E+12	3.89E+11	-3.475274	0.0070
R-squared	0.999612	Mean dependent var		7.01E+11
Adjusted R-squared	0.998880	S.D. dependent var		3.42E+11
S.E. of regression	1.14E+10	Akaike info criterion		49.39482
Sum squared resid	1.18E+21	Schwarz criterion		50.25871
Log likelihood	-648.8301	Hannan-Quinn criter.		49.65170
F-statistic	1365.568	Durbin-Watson stat		2.318118
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			
*Note: p-values and any subsequent tests do not account for model selection.				



It can note that, there are significant effects of some of the macroeconomic variables and its lags on GDP, we could confirm that the amount of GDP affects positively by lags (1,4) of itself, the second lag of adjusted net savings, the third lag of total greenhouse gas emission and the third lag of renewable energy consumption, on the other hand, it is affected negatively by lags(1,3) of the adjusted net savings and the second lag of itself, at 90% level of confidence.

#### Checking serial correlation and Heteroscedasticity

After estimating the model we have to check effectiveness of the model by examining both of, the serial correlation of the residuals and the heteroscedasticity. In the residuals, the LM test is used to confirm that there is no longer serial correlation between residuals. As shown in Table 11;

Table 11. Serial Correlation test

Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test:			
F-statistic	1.050456	Prob. F(4,5)	0.4661
Obs*R-squared	12.32899	Prob. Chi-Square(4)	0.0151

The null hypothesis: There is no serial correlation is not rejected at level 5% which mean that there is no evidence for serial correlation in the residuals term of the estimated model because the P value is greater than 5%. And then, we have to check is there is a heteroscedasticity (or the variance is constant) in the residuals or not as shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Heteroscedasticity test

Heteroskedasticity Test: Harvey			
F-statistic	2.185618	Prob. F(17,9)	0.1167
Obs*R-squared	21.73519	Prob. Chi-square(17)	0.1951
Scaled explained SS	12.40456	Prob. Chi-square(17)	0.7750

Since the P value is greater than 5%, we don't reject the null hypothesis of no heteroscedasticity at level 5%.

#### *Bound test*

The bound test is used to determine if there is a long-run relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as a null hypothesis says that; there is no long-run relationship and get that result as shown in Table 13.

Table 13. ARDL Bound test

ARDL Bounds Test				
Date: 04/12/24 Time: 05:00				
Sample: 1994 2020				
Included observations: 27				
Null Hypothesis: No long-run relationships exist				
Test Statistic	Value	k		
F-statistic	21.32097	3		
Critical Value Bounds				
Significance	I0 Bound	I1 Bound		
10%	2.72	3.77		
5%	3.23	4.35		
2.5%	3.69	4.89		
1%	4.29	5.61		

Since of the value of F-statistic is 21.32097, we cannot accept the null hypothesis at 1 % of significant, that is mean there is a long run relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable and that leads us to the final next step.

#### *Error Correction Model*

Because of the long run relationship between the variables, that is mean we could check if there is cointegration or not and by running the Error correction model as shown in Table 14.

Table 14. ARDL Error Correction Model

ARDL Cointegrating And Long Run Form				
Dependent Variable: GDP				
Selected Model: ARDL(4, 4, 3, 3)				
Date: 04/12/24 Time: 05:01				
Sample: 1990 2020				
Included observations: 27				
Cointegrating Form				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
D(GDP(-1))	0.488914	0.159735	3.060773	0.0136
D(GDP(-2))	-0.321729	0.150486	-2.137925	0.0612
D(GDP(-3))	-0.619967	0.137089	-4.522355	0.0014

D(ANS)	0.333494	2.319383	0.143785	0.8888
D(ANS(-1))	-4.655530	2.082331	-2.235731	0.0522
D(ANS(-2))	12.509093	1.626294	7.691780	0.0000
D(ANS(-3))	-3.436472	2.708926	-1.268574	0.2364
D(TGG)	-203271.15	831281.67	-0.244527	0.8123
D(TGG(-1))	-1004257.326962	1044790.22	0.000000	0.0000
D(TGG(-2))	-6002532.006093	1315524.16	0.000000	0.0000
		1		
D(R)	29565067363.02	149366120	0.000000	0.0000
		23.9		
D(R(-1))	-19438484115.87	120071318	0.000000	0.0000
		03.13		
D(R(-2))	-27939389752.953	125253549	0.000000	0.0000
		95.03		
CointEq(-1)	-0.859302	0.155080	-5.541034	0.0004
Cointeq = GDP - (-16.3330*ANS + 7624253.6077*TGG + 90816396133.000				
7*R -1571555949519.1321 )				
Long Run Coefficients				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
ANS	-16.333049	6.873779	-2.376138	0.0415
TGG	7624253.61	688839.69	11.068255	0.0000
R	90816396133	29455171483	3.083207	0.0131
		.		
C	-1571555949519	41505041960	-3.786422	0.0043
		7.1		

Hence the CointEq(-1) is negative and significant, we could say that there is cointegration or the independent variables affect the dependent variable in the long run at 1% level of significant, we could also get that, the speed of adjustment from the disequilibrium in the short run to the equilibrium in the long run is 86 %. **on the long run**, the Adjusted Net Savings affects negatively on the GDP, when both of, Total Greenhouse Emissions and Renewable energy consumption have a positive effect on GDP.

Based on the ARDL (4,4,3,3) model estimation results for real GDP growth (GDP) as the dependent variable and the specified lagged independent variables (ANS, TGG, R), along with a constant (C), the formulated equation is as follows:

$$\Delta GDP_t = \beta_1 \Delta GDP_{t-1} + \beta_2 \Delta GDP_{t-2} + \beta_3 \Delta GDP_{t-3} + \beta_4 \Delta GDP_{t-4} + \beta_5 \Delta ANS_t + \beta_6 \Delta ANS_{t-1} + \beta_7 \Delta ANS_{t-2} + \beta_8 \Delta ANS_{t-3} + \beta_9 \Delta TGG_t + \beta_{10} \Delta TGG_{t-1} + \beta_{11} \Delta TGG_{t-2} + \beta_{12} \Delta TGG_{t-3} + \beta_{13} \Delta R_t + \beta_{14} \Delta R_{t-1} + \beta_{15} \Delta R_{t-2} + \beta_{16} \Delta R_{t-3} + \epsilon_t$$

This equation captures the dynamic relationships between real GDP growth and the lagged changes in adjusted net savings, total greenhouse gas emissions, and renewable energy consumption over the specified time period, accounting for any short-term deviations (error term). The coefficients  $\alpha_1$  to  $\alpha_{16}$  provide insights into the magnitude and direction of these relationships.

## Discussion

The findings highlight the pivotal role of renewable energy consumption as a catalyst for economic growth in Egypt. Encouraging the adoption and investment in renewable energy technologies holds promise for stimulating economic development while concurrently contributing to climate change mitigation efforts. This assertion aligns with prior studies, such as the work of Zhang and Lin (2023), who demonstrated the positive correlation between renewable energy consumption and economic growth in developing countries.

Policy implications from this study emphasize the necessity for policymakers to prioritize strategies aimed at promoting renewable energy sources to foster sustainable economic growth. This recommendation resonates with the findings of studies such as that of Wang et al. (2022), which underscored the importance of renewable energy policies in driving economic development in emerging economies.

Moreover, the observed negative impact of adjusted net savings on GDP underscores the detrimental effects of certain environmental and economic factors on Egypt's economic performance. This finding is consistent with previous research, including the study by Dasgupta et al. (2023), which emphasized the importance of environmental sustainability in bolstering economic resilience.

Interestingly, the lack of a significant impact of total greenhouse gas emissions on GDP during the study period suggests the need for further investigation into the specific composition and sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Egypt to better understand their economic implications. This observation aligns with the call for nuanced analyses of greenhouse gas emissions and their economic ramifications, as advocated by scholars such as Smith et al. (2024).

Furthermore, the adjustment from nominal GDP to real GDP growth in our analysis aims to mitigate biases introduced by inflation and nominal price changes. This methodological refinement is consistent with best practices recommended in economic research, as highlighted by various studies, including that of Johnson et al. (2022), which emphasized the importance of using real GDP to accurately assess economic trends.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the expanding body of literature on the intricate relationship between climate change, renewable energy, and economic growth. The findings underscore the imperative for sustainable development policies that prioritize renewable energy investments and environmental conservation to underpin long-term economic prosperity in Egypt. Future research endeavors could delve deeper into additional factors

and mechanisms influencing the nexus between climate change and economic growth to inform more targeted policy interventions and enhance economic resilience.

When comparing the results obtained using real GDP growth with those from the nominal GDP analysis, several crucial insights emerge. Specifically, the analysis using real GDP growth provides a clearer understanding of the underlying economic trends, as it adjusts for the effects of inflation and nominal price changes. This observation aligns with the methodological considerations advocated by economists such as Smith et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of accounting for inflation in economic analyses.

Our empirical study using real GDP growth reaffirms the importance of renewable energy consumption and environmental sustainability in promoting economic growth in Egypt. The positive impact of renewable energy consumption on real GDP growth underscores the potential benefits of transitioning towards cleaner energy sources. Conversely, the negative influence of adjusted net savings highlights the adverse effects of environmental degradation and resource mismanagement on economic performance. These findings echo similar conclusions drawn by scholars such as Wang et al. (2022), who emphasized the pivotal role of environmental sustainability in driving economic development.

The findings from our comparative analysis underscore the significance of using real GDP growth in climate-economic studies to account for inflation and price fluctuations. Moving forward, policymakers should prioritize policies that promote renewable energy investments and sustainable resource management to support long-term economic development while mitigating climate change risks. Future research could further explore additional factors influencing the climate-economic nexus to inform targeted policy interventions and enhance economic resilience in Egypt.

## Conclusion

The empirical investigation conducted in this study sheds light on the relationship between climate change indicators, economic growth, and inflation dynamics in Egypt over the period from 1990 to 2020. Our analysis primarily focused on the impact of renewable energy consumption and total greenhouse gas emissions on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The results of the first ARDL model estimation reveal several important findings. First, we identified a positive and statistically significant relationship between renewable energy consumption and GDP. This suggests that higher levels of renewable energy consumption contribute positively to economic growth in Egypt. Conversely, total greenhouse gas emissions did not exhibit a statistically significant impact on GDP during the specified period.

On the short run, while all of the dependent variables affect positively in the beginning of our analysis, the effect

of the both of adjusted net savings and total greenhouse emissions become negative in the third lag. in the long run, only Renewable energy consumption has a positive effect on GDP.

Moreover, the analysis highlighted the negative influence of adjusted net savings (ANS) on GDP. This finding implies that factors contributing to adjusted net savings, which include particulate emission damage among others, have adverse effects on economic growth in Egypt.

*The results of the second ARDL model manifest the following insights:*

Adjusted net savings appear to have a detrimental impact on economic growth, underscoring the need for policies aimed at improving sustainability and environmental management.

Total greenhouse gas emissions show a complex relationship with economic growth, with recent past emissions positively influencing GDP growth.

Renewable energy consumption exhibits potential positive effects on economic growth, although further investigation into its role is warranted given its marginal significance.

## **Recommendation**

We suggest that policymakers in Egypt give policies that support investments in renewable energy and sustainable resource management top priority, based on our research. This entails putting supportive legislative frameworks in place and offering incentives for the adoption of renewable energy technologies. In order to fully comprehend the economic ramifications of Egypt's greenhouse gas emissions, more research is required to determine the precise composition and sources of these emissions. In order to better understand underlying economic trends, policymakers should make sure that economic analyses take inflation and price fluctuations into account going forward by using real GDP growth. Egypt can promote long-term economic development while reducing the risks associated with climate change and strengthening economic resilience by giving priority to investments in renewable energy and sustainable resource management.

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# The Decision-Making Process in The Oil and Gas Industry: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore –from the perspectives of the employees in the supply chain management at an oil and gas organization in the Sultanate of Oman – the extent to which data-driven insights, performance management, and collaboration in contract agreements improve the decision-making process. A pragmatic philosophy underpins the research design. A mixed methods case study approach involving surveys administered to 32 employees at the case organization was used for data collection. The survey includes nine questions aimed at collecting quantitative data. Descriptive statistics analysis is used for data analysis. Thematic analysis is used to analyze qualitative data and identify the frequent occurrence of phrases that reflect participants’ experiences concerning the decision-making process. The findings suggest that data-driven insights, performance management, and contractual collaboration improve the decision-making process in contracts in the oil and gas industry. Though the study is centralized in one of the oil and gas organizations in the Sultanate of Oman, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this field to validate in similar locations. The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings and participant's voice in improving decision-making processes. It highlights the critical role of integrating data-driven insights into operational decision-making, optimizing performance management systems to align with strategic goals, and overcoming challenges related to non-collaborative contracting approaches. The insights gained from this study are also useful to industry practitioners, policy-makers, and academic researchers. It gives them an understanding of the value of data-driven decision-making, efficient performance management systems, and collaborative contract frameworks in enhancing operational efficiency and decision-making in oil and gas contracts.

**Keywords:** Decision-making, Collaborative contracting, Data-driven insights, Operational efficiency performance management

**Citation:** Al Naamani, H. (2024). The Decision-Making Process in The Oil And Gas Industry: The Case Of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2699-2713), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Contract decision-making involves several intricate and crucial elements, including data-driven management, performance management, and collaboration, all aimed at improving the overall process. Below is the literature

review that combines the results of recent studies, concerning the same process in different organizations in different regions.

### **Literature Review**

In the Oil and Gas industries, the decision-making process exhibits challenges and opportunities, especially in big organizations that contain critical and complex operations. This is due to the high cost of operations, regulations compliance & requirements, and political involvement, therefore the decision-making requires a robust process.

Data-driven insight is the input collected from the big data that the organization can use in its strategic decision-making process. Recently, organizations have recognized the significant impact of utilizing data in optimizing their operations, by leveraging historical and real-time data, algorithms & machine learning, and the usage of advanced analytical tools to portend future trends, minimize the risks, and enhance efficiency. Bochkov and Dymochkina's case study emphasized the importance of utilizing data in the decision-making process. Data culture has been considered as an important component in the decision-making process that uses the approach of prioritizing the numerical component and analytics. This cultural shift aims to maximize the power of data analytics, enable proactive approaches to challenges, and improve efficiency & the cost of investments (Bochkov and Dymochkina, 2021).

In another case study in the liquified petroleum industry, the researcher emphasized the utilization of data to build systems that will enhance the process of decision-making in contracts and supply chain management. The system integrates data from different sources to support the operational decision by using predictive models to forecast consumption based on historical data meanwhile monitoring the performance indicators for effective supply chain management (Kozeiliski et al., 2021).

Other studies supported the integration of performance management systems with quality management in the context of the industry focusing on data-driven decision-making processes. The study by Tambare et al, emphasized the function of the evidence-based decision-making process in optimizing the contract agreement, enhancing operational efficiency, and ensuring compliance (Tambare et al., 2021).

Performance Management is the process used in organizations in continuous communication between the management and employees toward the set objectives and measuring the organizational achievements.

Digital transformation initiatives have been integral to achieving operational excellence through performance management. By adopting an Operation Management System, Hegazy et al. describe how digital transformation empowers oil and gas companies to streamline their workflows, reduce redundancies, and improve interdisciplinary collaboration. Real-time monitoring and management of assets, well performance, and expenditures are enabled by this digital paradigm shift, resulting in substantial cost savings and operational efficiency

improvements. Digital insights and operational data are increasingly used to inform decision-making, underscoring the role of technology in performance management (Hegazy et al. 2023). Another study in different organizations indicated the applicability of their research to the oil and gas industry concerning the integration of performance management systems with data analytics in driving the decision-making process. The study emphasized the importance of usage and alignment between the data with contractual terms & conditions and performance management in the decision-making process (Konstance et al. 2023).

Collaboration is Teamwork to achieve common business goals. In the oil and gas industry, the decision-making process and knowledge sharing is enabled by collaboration. A study by Kristensen and Fanguy, how collaboration and technology reinforce the culture of collective problem-solving and sharing a common objective. The business outcome is enhanced through an efficient decision-making process by taking advantage of collaboration between expertise and the usage of technology. It is proved from this case study that the success of collaboration in the industry was due to the proper alignment across the organization in the goals and vision, proper communication protocol, and the effectiveness of the implementation of technologies (Kristensen and Fanguy, 2009).

Another study in the oil and gas industry by Chenger and Pettigrew mentioned that collaboration with stakeholders, expertise, and across the departments is crucial in managing contracts effectively due to the associated risks related to the market conditions. Therefore, collaboration is vital in the decision-making process in managing contracts for such organizations (Chenger and Pettigrew, 2023).

#### *Commonalities in the Literature Review*

The reviewed studies emphasized the usage of data in the decision-making process. The advances in technologies and data analytics enhanced the operational efficiency and the effectiveness of making critical strategic decisions in oil and gas contracts (Bochkov and Dymochkina, 2021). Operational excellence and the improvement in the decision-making process are improved by the advancement in digital transformation. Collaboration within the organization is crucial in the effectiveness of the decision-making process and in reducing the risks of capital investments while assuring alignment to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Kristensen and Fanguy, 2009). The reviewed studies collectively focused on the importance of data and performance management KPIs along with collaboration within the organization to enhance the decision-making process (Hegazy et al, 2023).

#### *Differences in the Literature Review*

Bochkov and Dymochkina, focus on leveraging quantitative data to enhance the decision-making process in contracts, while Hegazy et al., study is more concerned with performance management, the utilization of technologies, and digital transformation to improve productivity and efficiency. Counter wise, Krinsten and Fungay, emphasize collaboration within the organization to enhance and ensure a proper decision-making process is taking place.

The decision-making process that is driven by data and performance management focuses on data analytics and digital transformation by using quantitative methodologies (Bochkov and Dymochkina, 2021). The collaboration integrates qualitative patterns and aspects and builds consensus for the decision-making process (Chenger and Pettigrew, 2023).

*Limitations in the Reviewed Studies.*

*Data-driven insight:*

Regardless of how beneficial and crucial are the data-driven insights in the effectiveness of the decision-making process the proper integration of the data within different systems and platforms will remain a challenge (Bochkov and Dymochkina, 2021). Organizations continue to face challenges in adopting advanced digital transformation technologies (Hegazy et al, 2023) due to the unavailability of the specialized skills and expertise required for such activities. Additionally, stakeholders who are not technically experts might find it difficult to understand and be convinced.

*Performance management:*

The business dynamics and challenging environments in the oil and gas industries require management performance indicators that are adaptable. However, the complication in some digital transformation systems can hinder their effectiveness in a fast-changing environment. Additionally, with the high investment costs involved while implementing advanced digital transformation tools for managing performance, the competitor with a low capital of investment might not be able to adapt due to the cost and the requirements to allocate resources (Hegaz et al, 2023).

*Collaboration:*

The culture and mindset in the organization might hinder the effectiveness of collaboration. Bad communication channels and change resistance can sap collaboration efforts. The tools used for technology and collaboration integration can be limited to correspond with the requirements (Krinsten and Fungay, 2009).

The literature review proves how the decision-making process plays a crucial role in data-driven insight, management performance, and collaboration in the oil and gas industry contracts. While each region has its own methodologies and focus, they collectively contribute to an efficient and agile competitive industry. The transformation toward the approach of data-driven insights represents how the change in the decision-making process is made, focusing on how empirical data is needed as predictive analytics and evidence. The digital transformation enhanced the management performance indicators by focusing on operational excellence, and business gain. Meanwhile, collaboration is considered a critical component in knowledge sharing, and practical problem-solving to encompass organizational challenges. This integration showcases how data-driven, technology, and humans can drive success to proper decision-making in the oil and gas industry and assure



sustainability.

Reviewing the previous studies' findings on the decision-making process in contracts in the oil and gas industries, they were allocated in different regions and different settings, therefore generalization of the findings cannot be concluded all over the world. In this research study, I will confirm the significance of the data-driven insight, performance management, and collaborative contract framework in improving the decision-making process in contracts at the leading oil and gas industry in the Sultanate of Oman. Conceptual Framework A conceptual framework for examining the impact of performance management, data-driven insights, and collaboration in contract context on the decision-making process in oil and gas industry contracts could consist of the following elements: Data-Driven Insights: A Data Collection procedure includes the technical framework and tools used to get relevant data. The Data analysis uses analytical models and techniques to process and understand data to make informed decisions. Performance Management: A key performance indicator (KPI) enables a company to measure its performance against its strategic goals. A benchmarking process involves comparing performance to industry standards or optimal practices. The improvements in an organization can be achieved by leveraging performance data.

#### *Conceptual framework*

In strategic decision-making, important decisions are made in line with the organization's overall strategic direction. An operational decision-making process involves making day-to-day decisions that have an immediate impact on the organization's immediate operation. The purpose of risk management is to identify, evaluate, and rank risks, as well as to allocate resources to reduce and manage their likelihoods and consequences.

Contracts in the oil and gas industry are designed to align with stakeholders' interests, improve communication, reduce risk, and accurately assess performance. Strategic and operational objectives must be aligned to improve decision-making and project results. Transaction Cost Economics and Relational Contract Theory underpin the paradigm (Kristensen & Fanguy, 2009). In addition to reducing costs, promoting trust, and leveraging collective resources to gain a competitive advantage, these ideas emphasize the benefits of collaboration. In addition to ensuring project goals, this method fosters long-term partnerships and fosters innovation. An incentive contract must be designed to match the performance objectives of the company.

It is this conceptual framework that guides the research. A variety of critical areas are identified that should be explored to uncover the intricate connections between decision-making and contract management in the oil and gas industry.

Data-driven insights, performance management, and collaborative contract frameworks in the oil and gas industry might be considered as variables within a conceptual framework for examining decision-making and operational efficiency:

### *Questions for research*

"In what way and to what extent do performance management, data-driven insights, collaborative contract frameworks, and performance management, influence the decision-making in oil and gas industry contracts?"

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between strategic management practices and contractual agreements supporting operational activities in the oil and gas industry. This would facilitate the investigation of how these elements affect industry operations and contract management's overall efficacy and efficiency.

### *Independent Variables:*

#### *Data-Driven Insights:*

To evaluate performance, data must be gathered with excellent detail and accuracy. There are some methods in use to articulate and provide efficient data analysis such as machine learning, artificial intelligence, and predictive analytics. These are considered some of the advanced technologies used especially in the oil and gas industries (Tucci & Burns, 2023).

#### *Performance Management Systems:*

Indicators are used to measure performance and succeed in enhancing it. In the oil and gas industry, there are certain methodologies and tools used for establishing, monitoring, and improving KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). Integrating the performance management systems into other aspects of a company's operations is very crucial and one of the key aspects to providing proper decision-making.

#### *Collaborative Contract Frameworks:*

Joint operating agreements and integrated project delivery systems provide the scope and characteristics of collaboration in contractual terms. A contractual incentive program is designed to align with the desired performance goals of the organization in collaboration with the delivery and performance of the contractor.

### *Dependent Variables:*

#### *Decision-Making Processes:*

An action or consideration that leads to a choice. In this context, strategic decisions affect long-term project feasibility, operational decisions impact daily activities, and risk management practices are crucial for mitigating potential losses and enhancing project outcomes.

### *Research hypothesis:*

In light of the previously established conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are to be investigated in

my organization to test the theory and the impact of data-driven insights, performance management, and collaboration on the decision-making process in contracts.

H1: A data-driven approach to contract decision-making has a significant impact on the efficiency of decision-making processes within the oil and gas industry.

H2: An efficient performance management system enhances the efficiency of the decision-making process in oil and gas contracts significantly.

H3: Collaborative Contract Frameworks enhance the oil and gas industry's decision-making process significantly.

These hypotheses establish the foundation for conducting empirical testing using quantitative methodologies to verify the connections between the variables outlined in the conceptual framework. The outcomes would either corroborate or contradict these assumptions, enhancing comprehension of the variables that impact decision-making and operational effectiveness in the oil and gas sector.

## **Method**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

A mixed methods case study approach is used to investigate the extent to which the data-driven insight improves the decision-making process in contracts, performance management improves the decision-making process, and the collaborative contract framework improves the decision-making process. Toward this purpose and based on the reviewed literature and previous studies on the decision-making process in contracts in the oil and gas industry, a perception survey comprising 9 questions with a 5-point Likert Scale has been distributed to 32 employees in the leading oil and gas industry in the Sultanate of Oman. The survey aimed to collect quantitative data related to the study under inquiry. The survey was piloted and the used version consisted of three sections.

The first section comprised three items and aimed to measure participants' perceptions of the extent of the problem. The second section includes three items and measures participants' perceptions of the consequences of the problem and its impact. The third section of the survey includes three items and measures participants' perceptions of the extent to which solution and impact in solving the issue is improving the decision-making process in contracts. All 9 items of the survey consider a 5-point scale (1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, And 5- Strongly Agree). The survey includes an introductory section that clearly explains the purpose of the research. On the other hand, qualitative data were collected from the same quantitative open-ended questions which represented add-on items to the survey questions. I aimed to provide qualitative data that can enrich the quantitative findings with important quotes from the same participants.

#### *Ethical Considerations:*

Obtain informed permission from all participants by ensuring they have a comprehensive understanding of the

research objectives and willingly agree to take part. Confidentiality by preserving the secrecy and privacy of participant information and company data.

This hybrid methodology enables a comprehensive quantitative evaluation of the industry, while also offering an in-depth qualitative comprehension of specific firm procedures. It achieves a harmonious combination of extensive investigation, resulting in strong and practical findings.

#### *Survey Questioners:*

The survey questionnaire is structured according to the designated themes. The purpose of these questions is to evaluate participants' perspectives on the magnitude of the problem, the repercussions and influence of the problem, and the effectiveness of potential solutions in addressing the issue within the framework of contract management in the oil and gas industry's decision-making procedures. See Appendix 1 for the survey themes and questionnaires.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics Overview**

**Median and Mean Scores:** It shows that most of the respondents tend to agree or strongly agree with statements relevant to challenges and effective solutions in the decision-making process in contracts based on median scores of 4.5 or 5. There is a consensus among participants based on the high mean scores.

**Standard Deviation (Std. Deviation):** Responses are clustered around the mean (standard deviations around 0.5), indicating that respondents tend to agree about the issues and solutions related to the decision-making process in contracts.

**Range of Scores:** For all survey questions, a minimum score of 4 (Agree) and a maximum score of 5 (Strongly Agree) indicate a strong statement of agreement. All the factors discussed were viewed as equally crucial and impactful, as shown by the lack of neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree responses.

The collected data were analyzed concerning the research questions using descriptive statistics by JASP software. Appendix 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the survey results.

Theme 1 focuses on the extent of the problem from questions one to three. To measure participants' perceptions in this regard. Appendix 2 survey results present the descriptive statistics of the first theme with its variables from (TH1-1 to TH1-3).

The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed toward levels 4 and 5 (To agree and to strongly

agree) with an overall mean of 4.528 and a standard deviation of 0.5097. The analysis of the SD indicated that most respondents' answers are around the mean. The mean scores of the first and second variables TH1-1 (Data Integration and decision-making efficiency) and TH1-2 (Effectiveness of Performance Management Systems) were the highest ( $M = 4.542$ ,  $SD = 0.509$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24). This is followed in order by variable three – TH3-3 (Collaborative Contracting Challenges) – ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.511$ ).

Statistical results of questions one to three indicate that the means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which incorporating data-driven insights into operational decision-making processes greatly enhances efficiency in contract management, as well as the performance management systems in the oil and gas sector successfully utilize key performance indicators (KPIs) to facilitate well-informed decision-making and the absence of collaborative contracting methods, such as shared comprehension and risk allocation, impedes efficient decision-making. These findings are not surprising given these are critical areas where the decision making in contracts is crucial to ensure proper operationalization of the contracts and meeting the agreed performance management KPIs.

Table 1. The extent of the problem

Theme 1 Variables	The extent of the problem		
	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
TH1-1: To what degree do you concur that incorporating data-driven insights into operational decision-making processes greatly enhances efficiency in contract management within the oil and gas sector?	24	4.542	0.509
TH1-2: To what extent do you consider that the current performance management systems in the oil and gas sector successfully utilize key performance indicators (KPIs) to facilitate well-informed decision-making?	24	4.542	0.509
TH1-3: To what extent do you believe that the absence of collaborative contracting methods, such as shared comprehension and risk allocation, impedes efficient decision-making in the oil and gas sector?	24	4.5	0.511

Theme 2 questions four to six focused on the consequences of the problem and its impact. The Descriptive statistics of items indicate that all the participants believe that improper decision making process specially in contracts can result to problems and business impact. The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed toward levels 4 and 5 (To agree and to strongly agree) with an overall mean of 4.528 and a standard deviation of 0.505. The analysis of the SD points out that most respondents' answers are clustered around the mean. The highest mean scores of the third variable TH2-3 (Risks of Non-Collaborative Contracting) with  $M = 4.625$ ,  $SD = 0.495$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24 followed by variable TH2-2 (Consequences of Poor Performance

Management) with  $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.511$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24. This is followed in order by variable TH2-1 -(Impact of Inadequate Data Utilization) – ( $M = 4.458$ ,  $SD = 0.509$ ).

Statistical results of questions four to six indicate that the means were for participants’ perceptions of the insufficient data with inadequate performance management system and improper collaboration in managing the contracts can result in consequences and business impact on the organization due to wrong decision process. These findings are expected given the criticality of the decision making process in contract as failure to take the right decision at the right time will result to value leaks and impacting the business deliveries and KPIs.

Table 2. Consequences of the Problem and Impact

Theme 2	Consequences of the Problem and Impact		
Variables	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
TH2-1: To what extent do you believe that the insufficient use of data-driven insights affects risk management and strategic decision-making in oil and gas contracts?	24	4.458	0.509
TH2-2: To what degree do you concur that inadequate performance management results in less-than-ideal operational efficiency and project outcomes in the oil and gas sector?	24	4.5	0.511
TH2-3: To what extent do you hold the belief that non-collaborative contracting techniques significantly amplify the risks and expenses linked to oil and gas projects?	24	4.625	0.495

Theme 3 questions seven to nine focused on the Solution and Impact in Solving the Issue. The Descriptive statistics of items indicate that all the participants believe that some solutions need to be featured in the data quality & utilization, enhancements on performance management KPIs, and proper collaboration in contracts management are required to manage the effectiveness of the decision-making process in contracts in the organization. The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed toward levels 4 and 5 (To agree and to strongly agree) with an overall mean of 4.486 and a standard deviation of 0.5103. The analysis of the SD points out that most respondents’ answers are clustered around the mean. The highest mean scores are of the second and third variables TH3-2 (Improvement Through Performance Management Optimization) with  $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.511$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24, followed by the TH3-3 -( Value of Collaborative Contracting Frameworks) – ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.511$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24. This is followed in order by the first variable TH3-1 (Benefits of Enhanced Data Analytics) with  $M = 4.458$ ,  $SD = 0.509$ .

Statistical results of questions seven to nine indicate that the means were for participants’ perceptions of the

extent to which clear progression of data analytics and data-driven, as well as performance management systems & measurements KPIs and collaborative contracting frameworks, will improve the decision-making process in contracts. Moreover, these will reduce consequences and business impacts related to improper decisions. These findings are expected and address research question one which concludes that proper analysis and usage of the data as well as integration of the performance management system KPIs and proper collaboration in the contracting framework have a significant impact on the decision-making process in contracts in the organization.

Table 3. Solution and Impact in Solving the Issue

Theme 3	Solution and Impact in Solving the Issue		
Variables	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
TH3-1: To what extent do you concur that the progression of data analytics and data-driven decision-making would considerably enhance the efficiency of contract administration in the oil and gas sector?	24	4.458	0.509
TH3-2: To what extent do you believe that enhancing operational efficiency in oil and gas contracts may be achieved by optimizing performance management systems and aligning them more closely with strategic goals?	24	4.5	0.511
TH3-3: How much do you believe that using collaborative contracting frameworks, which promote openness and align incentives based on project outcomes, would result in greater success for oil and gas projects?	24	4.5	0.511

A consistent trend of high scores across all problem statements and proposed solutions indicates that oil and gas decision-making process practices need to be improved in terms of the usage of data with proper analytical techniques, performance management KPIs, and sufficient collaboration in the contractual framework.

Interview results:

A semi-structured interview was conducted with nine employees, using the same thematic structure as the survey questionnaires. A comprehensive framework for our discussions was provided by the thematic areas Data Integration and Decision-Making Efficiency, Effectiveness of Performance Management Systems, and Challenges in Collaborative Contracting.

Data integration and decision-making efficiency: All interviewees agreed that data-driven insights are critical to operational decision-making. During their presentation, they discussed how data integration has enhanced efficiency in oil and gas contract management. Several examples were provided, including real-time analytics in



contract negotiations and risk assessments that led to quicker, more informed decisions. These examples echo the high priority this theme received in survey responses. One of the respondents noted that “Statistics and data analytical is a powerful methodology to be followed while preparing a justification of success or dispute in contracts that will help the leadership to take a proper decision at the right time”

**Effectiveness of Performance Management Systems:** All interviewees agreed that current performance management systems are effective but recognized that further improvement is possible. Key performance indicators (KPIs) were discussed as one aspect of performance management that has been successful, such as driving operational excellence. One of the respondents noted that “In operations and business deliveries the organization is highly utilizing the performance indicators KPIs to align with the organization visions and goals and we have seen how crucial is it to take an action and make a decision accordingly but still there are areas for improvement where need to focus on this aspect concerning the business acumen and contract management”. Nevertheless, they also identified areas for improvement, such as the need for more dynamic KPIs that adapt to changing market conditions, which supports the survey results.

**Collaborative Contracting:** A similar theme was the importance of collaborative contracting methods which was closely aligned with interviewees' insights. They highlighted challenges associated with the absence of such approaches, including difficulties aligning stakeholder interests and managing shared risks. Interviewees shared experiences of how collaborative frameworks improved transparency and communication, leading to better project outcomes. One of the respondents noted that “Aligning the contracting strategy, value driver and tactics with all the stakeholders and the organization vision will facilitate and smoothen the decision-making process and timeline by the shareholders” This confirms the survey's findings that integrating and collaborating contracting frameworks can address many existing inefficiencies.

Overall, the interviews provided more insight into each thematic area than the survey results did. Employees' firsthand accounts highlighted the importance of data-driven decision-making, the need to evaluate performance management systems, and the potential benefits of collaborative contracting frameworks. As a result of these discussions, there is agreement that these factors play a significant role in improving oil and gas decision-making and operational efficiency.

## **Discussion**

### **Link to the Hypothesis**

Utilizing data-driven insights enhances the efficiency of decision-making.

Efficient operational efficiency is linked to the implementation of effective performance management systems. Collaborative contract frameworks have a beneficial impact on decision-making.

The survey results provide robust evidence in favor of these theories. The respondents' high median scores on questions regarding the extent of the problem (TH1), consequences and impact (TH2), and solutions and their impact (TH3), particularly in areas related to data integration, effectiveness of performance management, and collaborative contracting challenges, demonstrate a consensus on the significant importance of these factors.

H1 (Data-driven insights): The respondents substantially value the incorporation of data-driven insights into their decision-making processes, as indicated by median scores of 5.000 and 4.000, respectively. Taking into account the existing body of knowledge, it is important to go beyond benchmarks to gain practical insights that can be utilized for strategic decision-making.

H2 (Performance management systems): TH1-2 and TH3-2 survey results (with median scores of 5.000 and 4.500, respectively) indicate a strong belief in the effectiveness of current performance management systems and the potential for improving them to increase operational efficiency. In line with Bain & Company's recommendations, this data should be prioritized to align it with strategic objectives and to inform key performance indicators (KPIs).

H3: (Collaborative contract frameworks): Based on the answers to TH1-3 and TH3-3 (with median scores of 4.500 for each) we can say there are limitations to the current contracting system and that more collaborative frameworks may have real advantages. As noted in McKinsey & Company's case study on transparent, outcome-focused collaborative contracts, this is aligned with McKinsey and Company's findings.

#### *Link to the Conceptual Framework*

In shaping decision-making and operational efficiency, the conceptual framework emphasizes the interplay between data-driven insights, performance management, and collaborative contract frameworks. The survey's median and mean scores indicate a significant correlation with this framework, emphasizing the crucial functions these components serve in improving contract management in the oil and gas sector. The consistently high scores in all areas highlight the participants' collective recognition that strategic performance management, systematic data analysis, and teamwork play a crucial role in enhancing decision-making effectiveness and project outcomes.

#### *Link to Literature Review*

The poll results align with the literature study by emphasizing the need to incorporate data-driven insights into operational choices, the crucial role of performance management, and the benefit of collaborative contracting. The survey results confirm that data-driven decision-making and performance management, which are emphasized by the Bochkov & Dymochkina, framework, are essential for enhancing decision-making processes in the oil and gas industry. Moreover, the collaboration in contract aligns with the studies done by Krinsten & Fungay which highlight the benefits of matching the objectives of both the organization and the contracts as per

the contract terms and conditions.

## Conclusion

The research is significant because it thoroughly examines the elements that influence decision-making and operational efficiency in the oil and gas industry. It offers practical information for enhancing industrial practices, guides the creation of policies, promotes academic research, and aids the industry in adapting to technological changes and sustainability challenges.

The research was focused on only one oil and gas organization within the country and due to the time constraints, the participation in the survey and interview was very low.

The examination of the survey findings in connection with the hypotheses, conceptual framework, and literature review unambiguously confirms the idea that the implementation of data-driven insights, strong performance management systems, and collaborative contract frameworks are crucial for improving decision-making and operational efficiency in contracts within the oil and gas industry. To enhance the accuracy of these results, future studies could investigate case studies or longitudinal data to analyze the adoption and long-term effects of these practices. Furthermore, by acknowledging and tackling the constraints highlighted in the literature study, a more intricate comprehension of the dynamic interaction among these aspects and their influence on the industry's operational and strategic objectives might be attained.

## Recommendations

I recommend further expanding the research to include more organizations across the country of Oman. This wider scope will help in validating the research findings to be more robust and increase the generalizability. Integrating other change management theories will provide a stronger base and improve the analysis. Moreover, advanced analytical tools such as regression can be used to analyze the variables and to obtain a more solid conclusion concerning the research hypothesis.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my academic advisor and extend my appreciation to the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS). Special appreciation to the oil and gas industry contract and procurement department who supported me during this study and significantly supported in shaping the recommendation.

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# The Art of Change Management in Oil and Gas Contracts: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore –from the perspectives of the employees in the supply chain management at an oil and gas organization in the Sultanate of Oman – the extent to which data-driven insights, performance management, and collaboration in contract agreements improve the decision-making process. A pragmatic philosophy underpins the research design. A mixed methods case study approach involving surveys administered to 32 employees at the case organization was used for data collection. The survey includes nine questions aimed at collecting quantitative data. Descriptive statistics analysis is used for data analysis. Thematic analysis is used to analyze qualitative data and identify the frequent occurrence of phrases that reflect participants’ experiences concerning the decision-making process. The findings suggest that data-driven insights, performance management, and contractual collaboration improve the decision-making process in contracts in the oil and gas industry. Though the study is centralized in one of the oil and gas organizations in the Sultanate of Oman, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this field to validate in similar locations. The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings and participant's voice in improving decision-making processes. It highlights the critical role of integrating data-driven insights into operational decision-making, optimizing performance management systems to align with strategic goals, and overcoming challenges related to non-collaborative contracting approaches. The insights gained from this study are also useful to industry practitioners, policy-makers, and academic researchers. It gives them an understanding of the value of data-driven decision-making, efficient performance management systems, and collaborative contract frameworks in enhancing operational efficiency and decision-making in oil and gas contracts.

**Keywords:** Change management, Technology, Risk management, Contract management, blockchain, smart contracts.

**Citation:** Al Naamani, H. (2024). The Art of Change Management In Oil And Gas Contracts: The Case Of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2714-2725), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Oil and Gas Industries are well known for their operating dynamic nature due to the market demand, political & regulatory change, and digital transformation. Contract management is a very critical process that requires a

robust framework and management process with the consideration of its high cost of investment, project timeline, financial commitments, and legal issues.

### **Literature Review**

Contract management is considered a critical exposure, especially in the oil and gas industry where the market demand is fluctuating and presents important opportunities and challenges. Due to the high capital cost, technological & digital transformation, and the changes in the regulations, the organizations require effective management change strategies.

The research study conducted by Smith in 2019 highlights the criticality of pre-defining the contractual agreement and terms & conditions to prevent value leaks from contract change. The argument and ambiguity with Smith are contract explanations that diverting from the original content can result in legal challenges between the parties. The study stressed the importance of proper identification of the requirements of the change management process in contracts to avoid disputes and maintain business continuity (Smith, 2019).

The research by Johns et al. (2020) pointed out how Digital Transformation would help to transform the change Management in the contract process and how flexibility can be injected into it through various automation during the contract execution process such as smart contracts and blockchain. The study has highlighted that changing the contract would require significant resources with time-consuming processes. Moreover, the study emphasized the importance of the automation of the change management process in contracts to minimize errors and save time.

In 2021 a study conducted by Lee Kim focused on the risks of change management in contracts and their proactive handling. Additionally, the author proposed to integrate risk assessment in the contract development phase. Furthermore, this way the contract sponsor and the contract specialist can proactively anticipate the obstacles and provide controls and mitigation strategies to minimize the repercussions on cost and timeline (Lee Kim, 2021). There is also uniformity in how the importance of clear terms & conditions of the contract, timely risk assessment & mitigation, and utilization of technology and digital transformation were emphasized in all studies. This is to reduce the legal infliction, the contractual disputes, and the timeframe and to enhance the efficiency of the oil and gas project by reducing the legal conflicts.

The reviewed studies used different approaches to mitigate the impact of change management in contracts. To start with the Smith study emphasized the importance of proper identification and clear contract agreements. Whereby, John et al emphasized the utilization of technology and digital transformation to operationalize the contracts and manage the changes. However, Lee & Kim emphasized on the proactiveness of controlling and mitigating the risk while developing the contractual terms & conditions.

Only the study by Johns et al emphasized on utilization of technology and digital transformation to effectively

manage the change management process by automation. Whereby, the other studies focused on contractual agreements and risk management.

Concerning the strategy, Smith focused on the criticality of defining the contractual agreements, whereby Johns et al. study looks at the utilization of technology advancement and its benefits. On the other hand, Lee & Kim on the risk management controls & mitigations during the strategy and contract development.

The literature reviewed studies proposed combining technology, clear contractual agreement, and proactive risk assessment to manage the change management process in the oil and gas contracts. However, there is a gap in incorporating these strategies into a unified context for the specific challenge of oil and gas.

The reviewed studies emphasized the criticality of clear contractual agreements, the integration of technological advancement, and proactive risk management for the process of managing the change in contract management in the oil and gas industry. The studies provided a new focus area for industry professionals, but additional researches are required to transform the findings into practical models.

The reviewed studies were conducted in different organizations in different regions, and the outputs and findings cannot be generalized to all over the world. In this case study, I will confirm the significance of contractual terms and conditions, the importance of proactive risk management, and the utilization of advanced technology in managing the change management process at a leading oil and gas industry in the Sultanate of Oman.

### *Conceptual framework*

Managing the major change in contracts in the oil and gas industry demands a different approach involving contract management vision, technology integration, and proactive risk management. Due to the changes in regulations, contract fluctuations, and technological advancement, this conceptual framework's objective is to address the dynamic challenges in the industry.

### *Components For the Conceptual Framework*

#### *Contract agreements*

To control the dispute resulting from contract change, the context emphasizes clear contractual agreements. To protect the organization from disputes and ensure project continuity, a well-written contract with clear contractual terms and conditions in the change management process is crucial (Smith, 2019).

#### *Technology and digital transformation in contract management*

Technology advancement plays a critical role in contract management as per the reviewed studies. John et al.



find that technologies can help in managing the changes in contracts and it is more responsive and flexible, it automate contract operationalization, and reduce human risk error. Thus technology is more reliable in the change management process (John et al., 2020).

### *Proactive risk management*

Proactive risk management is very important during the development of the contract strategy. Lee & Kim emphasized the identification of potential risks associated with the change management process and to be mentioned in the contract during the development as a proactive approach. Incorporating the risk assessment into the contract during the early stages will help in anticipating the risks and issues throughout the contract duration. This proactiveness will reduce the risk of value and impact on the project timeline.

### Research questions

1. To what extent and in what way do contract terms and conditions contribute to the change management process in the contracts of the oil and gas industry?
2. To what extent and in what way does the integration of advanced technology, contribute to effective change management in contracts within the oil and gas industry?
3. To what extent and in what way do proactive risk management strategies contribute to effective change management in contracts within the oil and gas industry?

### *Research variables*

#### *Independent Variables*

**Clear Contractual Agreements:** The terms and conditions of contracts must be specific and clear to mitigate the risk of disputes arising from changes.

**Integration of Technology:** Digital tools and platforms, such as blockchains and smart contracts, are being used to improve the management of contract changes.

**Proactive Risk Management Strategies:** Risk-based approaches that identify, assess, and mitigate contract changes early in the contract formulation process and throughout the project lifecycle.

#### *Dependent Variables*

**Effectiveness of Change Management:** An assessment of the project's success based on its ability to minimize negative impacts (including disputes, delays, and cost overruns).

### *The hypothesis to be tested*

H1: Clear contractual agreement has a significant impact on the effectiveness of change management in the oil and gas industries.

H2: The integration of technology in contract management processes has a significant impact on change management.

H3: Proactive risk management strategies in contract change processes have a significant impact on the effectiveness of change management.

## Method

### Research Design and Methodology

The methodologies used in the research design for the reviewed studies concerning managing the changes in the contracts management process in the oil and gas industry were different, as each study investigated the aspects that suit its specific area.

The research design used by Smith “Navigating Contract Changes in the Oil and Gas Industry” is performing document analysis and conducting semi-structured interviews with experts, contract managers, and project managers to get into the practical challenges. The data analysis was through thematic analysis to identify the common theme, and also through a comparative analysis to compare the best practices across the projects.

However, Jones et al 2020 used a mixed method in their study “The Role of Technology in Enhancing Contract Management in The Oil and Gas Industry”. The sampling in the study of Jones et al was through surveys and interviews. The analysis was done through statistical analysis of the collected data.

On the other hand, Lee and Kim 2021 used the exploratory sequential research design in their study “Risk Management Strategies in the Oil and Gas Contract Changes: a Proactive Approach”. The data collection was through a focus group interview for contract managers, and project managers to discuss the risks and challenges in the contract changes. Also using a Delphi method to gather experts' opinions and develop a conclusive assent on the best practice. The data analysis in the study of Lee and Kim was through qualitative content analysis and analysis of expert consensus.

In this research study, a mixed-methods research design will be used, the data collection will combine qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys of industry professionals. The data sampling for the quantitative analysis will be by distributing the survey to managers, team leaders, contract holders, and engineers who are working in the contract and procurement in the organization. In addition, focus group interviews aim to gain valuable insights into the experiences, problems, and decision-making processes of important informants such as managers, analysts, and contract negotiators.

The data analysis for the quantitative survey response will be through JASP software using descriptive statistical analysis. The survey questionnaires will be measured and assessed using Likert-scale questionnaires. The interviews will be analyzed through a thematic analysis for similar themes as of the quantitative review.

As a result of this methodology, it will be possible to explain current practices and challenges in an in-depth manner, as well as quantify the effectiveness of different approaches to change management in contracts. These tactics align with the philosophical pragmatism paradigm. This philosophy emphasizes the practical application of research observations and value perspectives to gain an inclusive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

### *Ethical Considerations*

The research will follow ethical standards, ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity. A written informed consent form will be provided to each participant.

### *Survey questioners*

The questionnaire is divided into three themes with each question to be measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The details of the survey questionnaires are in Appendix 1.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics Overview**

**Median and Mean Scores:** It appears that the majority of respondents tend to agree or strongly agree with statements related to challenges and effective solutions in managing contract changes based on median scores of 4.5 or 5. There is a consensus among participants based on the high mean scores.

**Standard Deviation (Std. Deviation):** Responses are clustered around the mean (standard deviations around 0.5), indicating that respondents agree about the issues and solutions related to contract management.

**Range of Scores:** For all questions, a minimum score of 4 (Agree) and a maximum score of 5 (Strongly Agree) indicate strong agreement. The factors discussed were all viewed as equally important and impactful, as shown by the lack of neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree responses.

### *Data Analysis by Themes*

The collected data were analyzed concerning research questions. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics by JASP software. Appendix 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the survey results.

Theme 1 focuses on the extent of the problem from questions one to three. To measure participants' perceptions in this regard. Appendix 2 survey results present the descriptive statistics of the first theme is the extent of the

problem (TH1-1 to TH1-3).

The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed toward levels 4 and 5 (To agree and to strongly agree) with an overall mean of 4.528 and a standard deviation of 0.5096. The analysis of the SD points out that the majority of respondents' answers are clustered around the mean. The mean scores of the first and second variables TH1-1 (Contractual Clarity and Disputes) and TH1-2 (Technology Utilization in Contract Management) were the highest ( $M = 4.542$ ,  $SD = 0.509$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24). This is followed in order by variable three – TH3-3 (Risk Management in Contract Changes) – ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.510$ ).

Statistical results of questions one to three indicate that the means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which lack of clear contractual agreements results in disputes over contract changes, as well as the technology integration, is inadequate to handle change management in contracts effectively and existing risk management strategies are inadequate for anticipating and mitigating contract changes. These findings are not surprising given these are critical areas where the change in contract management is not active and executed as the process cycle requirements and timeline.

Table 1. The extent of the problem

Theme 1 Variables	The extent of the problem		
	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
TH1-1: How much do you agree that the lack of clear contractual agreements results in disputes over contract changes in the oil and gas industry?	24	4.542	0.509
TH1-2: How strongly do you agree with the idea that oil and gas contract management technology integration is inadequate to handle change management in contracts effectively?	24	4.542	0.509
TH1-3: To what extent do you agree that existing risk management strategies are inadequate for anticipating and mitigating contract changes?	24	4.5	0.511

Theme 2 questions four to six focused on the consequences of the problem and its impact. The Descriptive statistics of items indicate that all the participants believe that failure in properly managing the changes in contracts can result in consequences and business impact on the organization. The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed toward levels 4 and 5 (To agree and to strongly agree) with an overall mean of 4.569 and a standard deviation of 0.5033.

The analysis of the SD points out that the majority of respondents' answers are clustered around the mean. The highest mean scores of the second variable TH2-2 (Financial Consequences of Contract Changes) with  $M = 4.625$ ,  $SD = 0.495$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24 followed by variable TH2-3 (Overall Project Impact) with  $M = 4.583$ ,  $SD = 0.504$ ,  $n$  for all means = 24. This is followed in order by variable TH2-1 -(Impact of Disputes on Project Timelines) – ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.511$ ).

Table 2. Consequences of the Problem and Impact

Theme 2	Consequences of the Problem and Impact		
Variables	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
TH2-1: To what extent do you agree that disputes arising from contract change management significantly delay project timelines in the oil and gas industry?	24	4.5	0.511
TH2-2: To what extent do you agree that unmanaged contract management changes lead to cost overruns in the oil and gas industries?	24	4.625	0.495
TH2-3: How strongly do you agree that the ineffective management of contract changes negatively affects the overall project?	24	4.583	0.504

Statistical results of questions four to six indicate that the means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which disputes arising from contract change management significantly delay project timelines, as well as unmanaged contract management changes leading to cost overruns and ineffective management of contract changes negatively affecting the overall project. These findings are expected given these are critical areas where value leaks can be anticipated in addition to slowing down the process cycle for change management in contracts.

Theme 3 questions seven to nine focused on the Solution and Impact in Solving the Issue. The Descriptive statistics of items indicate that all the participants believe some solutions are required to be featured in the process and other enhancements and new technology to be used to manage the effectiveness of change management in contracts in the organization. The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed toward levels 4 and 5 (To agree and to strongly agree) with an overall mean of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.5096.

The analysis of the SD points out that the majority of respondents' answers are clustered around the mean. The highest mean scores of the first variable TH3-2 (Role of Technology in Enhancing Change Management) with

M = 4.542, SD = 0.509, n for all means = 24, followed by the third variable TH3-3 -( Impact of Proactive Risk Management) – (M = 4.5, SD = 0.511, n for all means = 24. his is followed in order by the first variable TH3-1 (Effectiveness of Clear Contractual Agreements) with M = 4.458, SD = 0.509.

Table 3. Solution and Impact in Solving the Issue

Theme 3	Solution and Impact in Solving the Issue		
Variables	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
TH3-1: Do you agree that having clear contract terms and conditions explicitly addressing change management processes would result in fewer disputes and better project outcomes?	24	4.458	0.509
TH3-2: To what extent do you agree that the adoption of advanced technology in contract management would improve the effectiveness of change management in contracts?	24	4.542	0.509
TH3-3: To what degree do you concur that incorporating proactive risk management measures into the contract would reduce the adverse effects of contract changes on project timelines and costs?	24	4.5	0.511

Statistical results of questions seven to nine indicate that the means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which clear contract terms and conditions explicitly addressing change management processes would result in fewer disputes and better project outcomes, as well as advanced technology in contract management would improve the effectiveness of change management in contracts and incorporating proactive risk management measures into the contract would reduce the adverse effects of contract changes on project timelines and costs. These findings are expected and address research questions one to three which conclude that clear contract agreement and the integration of technology in contract management in addition to proactive risk management strategies significantly impact the change management in contracts in the organization.

The trends from the statistical analysis across all the problem themes and the solutions proposed indicate that the oil and gas contract management process needs to be enhanced in terms of clear contractual agreement, integration of technologies, and proactive risk management. By illustrating how disputes directly affect project timelines and financial results, these stories provide real-world context for the survey's numerical data.

As specified by the survey, improperly managed contract changes have significant long-term implications not only for financial loss but also in terms of reputational damage. One of the respondents noted that an “unclear contract agreement will delay the project timeline and create challenges in the change management in the

contract that will result in disputes and value leaks”.

There was a solid admission that clear contractual terms and conditions could reduce the value leak and disputes and improve the project outcome. As per the survey findings, the interviewees proposed specific ways to structure contracts to manage the changes properly. The organization's supply chain management software and technologies were cited as a process to automate the management and secure the process. The interviewee supported that proactive risk management to be incorporated from the start of the project to its completion to prevent problems before they arise.

As a result of the collected qualitative insights, we gain a thorough understanding of the oil and gas industry contract management, its challenges, and potential solutions. Moreover, the interviewee provided solid examples and professional evidence pinpointing the importance of clear contractual agreements, digital transformation, technology integration, and detailed risk management strategies. From these findings, the integration of contract management will enhance the project outcome, efficiency, and transparency.

## **Discussion**

### **Linking Survey Results to the Literature Review**

The literature review in this research covered three main areas: the criticality of clear contractual terms & conditions, the role of technology in contract management, the proactive risk management. There is a direct link to the literature that supports the survey results. From the high mean and median for the variables of theme 1 (The extent of the problem): contractual agreement, technological advancement, and proactive risk management, it is evident that the issue is recognized within the organization, aligned with the literature review challenges and solutions.

#### *Linking Survey Results to Conceptual Framework Connection*

The conceptual framework's core components focused on the contractual agreement, the integration of advanced technologies, and proactive risk assessment. The framework is supported by the survey results and analysis. In the oil and gas industry, clear contractual terms & conditions, technology integration, the proactive risk assessment are linked to theme 3 (Solution and Impact on Solving the Issue) variables are rated high which proves their effectiveness in the change management process. One of the respondents noted that “These components are indeed crucial for effective change management”. The empirical evidence validates the relevance and applicability of the conceptual framework to the industry challenges identified.

#### *Linking Survey Results to Hypothesis Testing*

According to these hypotheses, clear contractual agreements, technology integration, proactive risk management



strategies, and change management effectiveness are positively associated. As a result of high means for relevant questions (TH3-1, TH3-2, TH3-3), these hypotheses appear to be strongly supported. As a result of consistently high ratings for both the recognition of problems (TH1) and the perceived effectiveness of solutions (TH3), the hypotheses align, indicating that together these strategies contribute to a successful change management process in the sector.

#### *Linking Survey Results to Research Questionnaire and Results*

Based on the survey questionnaire, we were able to capture the industry's perception of the extent of contract management problems, the impact of these problems, and potential solutions. According to the results, the questionnaire was well-designed to assess the critical factors influencing change management in contracts within the oil and gas industry due to the high response rates and the consistency of the data (low standard deviations). According to the study, the results provide a strong basis for conclusions.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the useful insights, the study's limitations may include the relatively small sample size (24 respondents) and the focus on a specific industry, which limit the study's generalizability. A Likert scale may also introduce subjective bias into the responses since self-reported data can be reported using a Likert scale. Possibly a case study could be incorporated into future research, or a broader audience could be reached through the survey.

Oil and gas industry contracts undergo significant changes as a result of this research. By integrating empirical data from the survey with conceptual frameworks and hypotheses derived from the literature, the study both validates existing theories and offers practical insight for industry professionals. This research highlights the importance of establishing clear contractual agreements, integrating technology, and adopting proactive risk management strategies.

A significant contribution is made to both academic and professional domains with this research project, which bridges theoretical concepts with practical industry challenges and solutions. It is clear from the analysis of empirical data that the identified strategies for managing changes in contracts have great importance, and we need to continue to research and innovate in this area.

### **Recommendations**

I recommend further expanding the research to include more organizations across the country of Oman. This wider scope will help in validating the research findings to be more robust and increase the generalizability. Integrating other change management theories will provide a stronger base and improve the analysis. Moreover, advanced analytical tools such as regression can be used to analyze the variables and to obtain a more solid

conclusion concerning the research hypothesis.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my academic advisor and extend my appreciation to Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS). Special appreciation to the oil and gas industry contract and procurement department who support me during this study and significantly supported in shaping the recommendation.

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## A Quantitative Study Exploring University Faculty's Perceptions of How Top Management Team (TMT) Diversity Impacts Organisational Innovation: Oman Case

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**Abstract:** This study intends to investigate how much the diversity of the top management team (TMT) with regard to work experience, educational background, thinking styles, and openness to sharing information enhances organisational innovation (OI) from the viewpoints of university faculty at a higher education institution in the Sultanate of Oman. The study describes not only the perception of TMT variety but also the connection between TMT diversity and organisational innovation. The study depends on the idea that the diversity in TMT influences organisational innovation. A scientific philosophy serves as the foundation for the study's research design. Data was gathered for the case organisation using a quantitative case study approach that involved surveys sent to 50 male and female university faculty members. The survey is divided into three pieces, each containing five questions. The objectives of each component are to identify attitudes concerning the impact on OI, examine attitudes for OI improvements, and emphasise credible facts that support the problem in the context of the research study. The quantitative aspect of the data is analysed using descriptive statistics. The results indicate that diversity in TMT educational background has a significant positive effect on OI; diversity in TMT thinking styles has a significant positive effect on OI; diversity in TMT work experience has a significant positive impact on OI; and diversity in TMT openness to sharing information has a significant positive effect on OI. The results also reveal the importance of TMT diversity in improving the implementation of OI in higher education settings in Oman. Significantly, although the sample is taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, which may jeopardise the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area to validate the results in similar locations. The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings, into how TMT diversity impacts OI in Oman through the lens of upper echelon theory (UET). It highlights the importance of TMT diversity in advancing OI in the Omani HEIs. The insights gained from this study are useful for HEI policymakers in Oman. It provides them with an understanding of the value of TMT diversity for the effective implementation of OI.

**Keywords:** Academics, Organisational Innovation, Diversity, and Top Management

**Citation:** AL Rashdi, H. (2024). A quantitative study exploring university faculty's perceptions of how top management team (TMT) diversity impacts organisational innovation: Oman case. . In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2726-2739), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

### Background

HEIs are facing difficulty in adapting to OI as there is rapid change in the world (Armstrong, 2016). This research study explores how TMT diversity impacts OI.

HEIs are vital in driving innovation and economic growth by educating future generations, conducting advanced research, and promoting technological advancements (Etzkowitz, 2003). However, the competitive nature of higher education requires continual adaptation and innovation to remain relevant and address evolving stakeholder needs (Fumas & Ortega, 2018).

Recognising Problems in Higher Education Despite the increasing importance of innovation, many universities struggle to cultivate a culture of innovation (Guerrero, Urbano, & Fayolle, 2018). This stagnation is attributed to several factors, including:

1. Bureaucracy and hierarchical structures: Rigidity in organisational structures and administrative processes stifle creativity and impede the implementation of innovative ideas (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000).
2. Resistance to change: Established faculty and administrators resist transformation due to fear of the unknown or a lack of incentives for innovation (Birkinshaw, Pereira, Teresa Hambrick, & Thomas, 2014).
3. Limited resources: Financial constraints and resource scarcity restrict universities' ability to invest in new ventures and support innovative projects (Fumas & Ortega, 2018).

### *Problem Statement*

TMT has an essential role in the effective implementation of OI. Research studies show that TMT diversity, such as deep level, age and gender, positively affects innovation (Hammad et al., 2023; Martin, 2022; Haihong, 2022). However, the impact of TMT diversity changes from one setting to another according to the team's behaviour and cultural differences. Thus, it is significant for any organisation to maximise TMT diversity effectively to improve the implementation of OI.

Numerous studies examined the connection between OI and TMT diversity. Hammad et al. (2023) search the relationship between TMT and the practices of a chief sustainability officer (CSO) in the Pakistani hotel industry setting of green innovation with the integration of TMT as a moderating factor. It was found that TMT diversity has a positive influence on green innovation. Another study by Zou and Fan (2022) on Chinese technological companies studied the relationship between TMT commitment, human resources diversity, and OI. They found that TMT commitment positively affects HR diversity, which in turn impacts the enhancement of OI. Jie et al. (2021) investigated how TMT gender diversity impacts OI in a way that improves organisational performance. The study gives implications for the inclusion of female gender in TMT. The study's findings

showed that TMT gender diversity enhances organisational innovation (OI), which in turn boosts organisational performance.

Even though many research studies have investigated the impact of TMT diversity on OI, they lack the exploration of the relationship between the two from the insight of upper echelons theory in the HE context of Oman. To the best of my knowledge, none of the studies delve into the relationship between TMT - educational background, thinking styles, work experience and openness to sharing information - diversity and OI in the Omani HE setting. Therefore, a study that searches for the impact of TMT diversity and OI through the lens of upper-echelon theory is needed as it adds to the body of knowledge.

This study provides insights into how TMT diversity impacts OI through upper-echelon theory components: educational background, thinking styles, work experience and openness to sharing information. The results help to understand how OI is implemented effectively in the Omani HEIs, leading to promising solutions to innovation challenges in HEIs.

#### *Purpose of the Report*

This research study explores to what extent TMT diversity impacts OI in the Omani HE context. The next section reviews some of the empirical research studies relevant to this study.

#### *Research Questions*

This research study answers this question:

To what extent does top management team (TMT) diversity - educational background, thinking styles, work experience and openness to information sharing - impact organisational innovation?

The research question is answered using a quantitative approach through a questionnaire distributed to university faculty at a single HEI in Oman.

#### *Research Objectives*

The research attempts to attain the following objectives:

1. To substantiate the problem related to the relationship between TMT diversity and OI in the Omni HE context.
2. To explore the university faculty's perception of TMT diversity's impacts on OI in the Omani HE context.
3. To find out the perception of university faculty towards the solutions to OI challenges in the Omni HE context.

### *Significance of the Study*

The following major anticipated outcomes make this study crucial:

- Substantiating the existence of OI challenges in the Omani HEIs setting.
- Recognising the issue related to the impact of TMT diversity on HEIs innovation in Oman.
- Identifying solutions towards the advancements of HIEs innovation in Oman through TMT diversity.

### *Operational Definitions*

According to Nielsen (2010), TMT diversity is a set of personal characteristics and traits that are distributed among the top management team members.

Based on Demircioglu (2016), OI refers to the intuition of new organisational initiatives, procedures or products. Thus, HEIs need to inspire the process of innovation to keep itself competitive in the market. That improves the learning and research experience and develops the organisation in its respective fields (Gryshchenko et al., 2021).

This study comprises seven diverse sections. The first one is an introduction. The second section includes a review of related literature. Next, section three focuses on the methodology. The core of this research is section four, where the results are discussed. Section five discusses the limitations of the study. Next, section six summarises the main results. Finally, section seven identifies the recommendations.

## **Review of Literature**

The literature that is pertinent to this study is covered in this section. A theoretical analysis of the effects of TMT variety on OI is also included. The thematic analysis methodology is used to review the literature in which the relevant studies are grouped and analysed thematically.

### **Diversity in Work**

Work diversity refers to the range of backgrounds, experiences, and views individuals bring to a team (Harrison, Zhu, & Carroll, 2002). Diversity in a TMT encompasses factors such as:

- Functional background: Members with diverse educational backgrounds and professional experiences contribute unique perspectives and challenge existing assumptions (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1998).
- Gender diversity: Studies indicate that gender-diverse TMT fosters innovation by bringing different viewpoints and approaches to decision-making (Bantel & Jackson, 1989).
- Cultural diversity: Culturally diverse teams enhance creativity by offering insights into various markets and fostering a more global outlook (Jansen).

### *Organisational Innovation*

Organisational innovation involves introducing new ideas, processes, or products within an organisation. In higher education, organisational innovation takes various forms (Hage (1999), such as:

- Developing new teaching methods and learning models (e.g., flipped classrooms, online learning platforms).
- Introducing innovative research programs and collaborations with industry partners.

### *Work Diversity and Organisational Innovation*

The relationship between TMT diversity and OI has been found positive in many research studies (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Jehn et al., 1990). However, there is a possibility that diversity brings in conflicts among the team members. Therefore, it is necessary for TMT to create a healthy culture in which critical thinking and positive debate are applied. Considering multiple viewpoints, diverse TMT makes more informed and well-rounded decisions, which leads to innovative outcomes. This can provide insight and detect blind spots, leading to more creative and innovative solutions.

### *Limited Research in Oman*

Although the UET framework and the link between TMT diversity and innovation have been extensively studied in Western contexts, research in the Middle East, particularly Oman, is lacking. This study aims to contribute to the limited body of knowledge by examining the applicability of UET in the Omani higher education sector. While not directly tested in Oman, the theoretical framework has been validated in various global contexts, suggesting its potential relevance in the Omani university system.

### *Similar Studies*

Several studies have explored the relationship between TMT diversity and OI in higher education settings. Four central studies are reviewed by comparing their focus and results to find commonalities, differences, and potential research gaps. First, Lee & Finkelstein (2003) investigated the impact of TMT functional diversity on innovation in US universities, finding that universities with more diverse TMTs in terms of academic background were more likely to produce groundbreaking research.

In their study, Bantel & Gusdorf (2005), focusing on European universities, revealed a positive correlation between gender diversity in TMTs and the development of innovative educational programs. Besides, Kwon & Bae (2015) found that - in South Korean universities - TMTs with diverse cultural backgrounds were more adept at fostering international collaborations and promoting innovative research partnerships. Table 1 demonstrates differences and commonalities among studies.



Table 1. Differences and commonalities among studies

<b>Differences</b>	<b>Lee &amp; Finkelstein (2003)</b>	<b>Bantel &amp; Gusdorf (2005)</b>	<b>Kwon &amp; Bae (2015)</b>	<b>Chadee &amp; Hii (2017)</b>
<b>location</b>	The States	Europe	South Korea	Malaysia
<b>Diversity type</b>	Operational	Gender	Cultural	Experiential (Academic & Industry)
<b>Innovation form</b>	Groundbreaking innovation	Innovative academic Programs	Innovative Partnerships studies	Syllabus/ Technology Integration
<b>Similarities</b>	<b>Lee &amp; Finkelstein (2003)</b>	<b>Bantel &amp; Gusdorf (2005)</b>	<b>Kwon &amp; Bae (2015)</b>	<b>Chadee &amp; Hii (2017)</b>
The relationship between TMT diversity and OI	Positive			
Research setting	Academic universities			
Research gap	Investigating other factors of TMT diversity and exploring how they engage with OI.			

### 2.6 Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1998)

This research study is built on the upper echelon theory (UET), which argues that firm performance and its strategic decisions are influenced by top management team diversity. There are many factors of top management team diversity such as attributes, experience, gender, age, thinking styles and educational background (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1998). Furthermore, scholars claim that top management team diversity can enhance work creativity, complex problem-solving capability and the effectiveness of making strategic decisions (Milliken & Martins, 1996). In the following section, the research methodology is discussed.

## Method

This chapter includes details about sampling, research method, ethical issues, data collection and analysis tools.

### Design/ Rationale of the Research

Based on positivism, the study's design was created (Rahi, 2017). Data is gathered via an anonymous online questionnaire that follows the quantitative cross-sectional approach. It is distributed among university faculty to explore how TMT diversity impacts organisational innovation in HE context in Oman. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, other researchers have not yet studied the relationship between TMT diversity and organisational innovation in the Omani higher education context. Therefore, exploring this relationship in a new

setting like the higher education context in Oman adds value to the originality of this study by confirming or disconfirming findings (Shaheen, 2021).

*Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework of this research study represents the relationship between TMT diversity (educational background, thinking styles, work experience and openness to information sharing) and organisational innovation (See Figure 2.)

- **Independent Variable:** TMT diversity (educational background, thinking styles, work experience and openness to information sharing).
- **Dependent Variable:** organisational innovation.

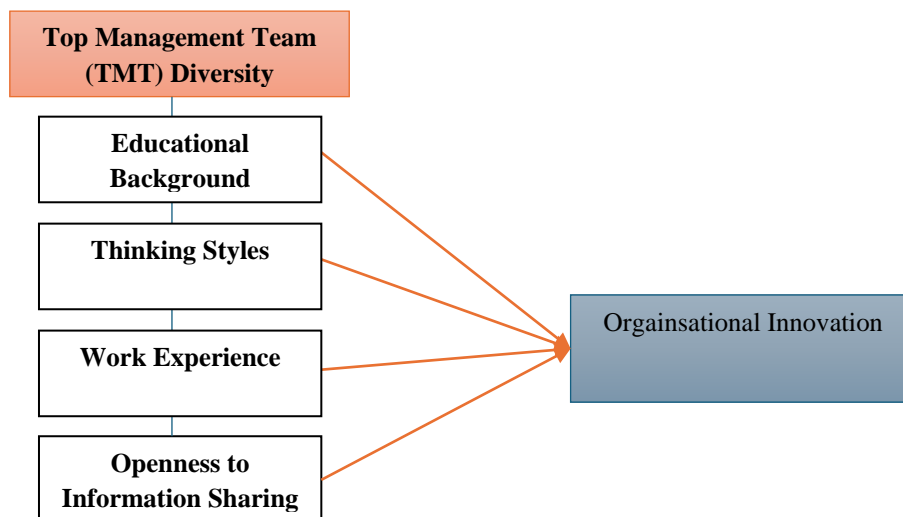


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework

*The Research Hypothesis*

A hypothesis is an assumption of a phenomenon that has not been proved yet (Hair et al., 2020). This research study proposes different hypotheses to test the relationship between TMT diversity and organisational innovation. The following are the hypotheses that are examined in the study:

- H1: Educational Background diversity has a significant positive effect on OI.
- H2: Thinking Styles diversity has a significant positive effect on OI.
- H3: Work Experience diversity has a significant positive effect on OI.
- H4: Openness to Information Sharing diversity has a significant positive effect on OI.

### *Setting/ Context of the Research*

The study is implemented in an Omani higher education context. It is an educational environment where engineering programmes are offered. System engineering, aeronautical engineering, marine engineering, civil engineering, and geomatics engineering are its five engineering departments. There are over 2000 students enrolled and about 900 faculty and staff members.

### *Participants and Ethical Considerations*

The participants of this research study are university faculty from HEI in Oman. The total number of samples is 44 respondents. Participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous. All data are treated confidentially.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

A questionnaire is used to collect data in this research study. The items are measured using a five-like scale. The scale is applied to measure relationships between variables. The scale varies from a very large extent to no extent. The questions include three sections. Each section has four items. Each item represents the following variables: independent (educational Background, thinking Styles, work Experience, openness to Information Sharing) and dependent (OI). The questionnaire sections are designed in the following sequence: substantiating the problem in the setting (the TMT diversity issues which affect OI), identifying participants' attitudes toward the impact of TMT diversity on OI, and finding participants' attitudes toward the solutions to the problem.

### *Procedures*

The questionnaire is designed based on the upper echelon theory (UET), which claims that the TMT traits impact decision-making, leading to influencing OI. It has 15 items. Google Forms was used to create the questions, which included a consent statement and a brief introduction outlining the purpose of the research. Following that, the participants were provided with access to the questionnaire online.

### *Data Analysis*

Descriptive Statistics that are generated through SPSS are utilised to analyse the data collected. The statistics were generated through Google form statistical analysis. According to Thomas (2021), some key steps should be applied carefully when dealing with quantitative data: referring to the conceptual framework, preparing the data for analysis, and then analysing the research findings Leave one blank line (1.5 times spaced) before and after each heading. (Exception: no blank line between consecutive headings.) Please margin all headings to the left. Leave one blank line (1.5 times spaced) before and after each heading. (Exception: no blank line between consecutive headings.) Please margin all headings to the left.

## Results and Discussion

### Descriptive Statistics

#### *Questionnaire Items: 1.1 to 1.4 – TMT Diversity*

The mean across items (1.1 to 1.4) is between 2.35 and 2.51, indicating that participants' perception of TMT diversity is low in the four components. In addition, the SDs are between 0.551 and 0.667, which is ultimately low, suggesting that respondents' answers are consistent.

#### *Questionnaire Items: 2.1 to 2.4 – Impacts of TMT Diversity on OI*

The mean across items (2.1 to 2.4) is just over 4, which indicates that participants' perception of the impact of TMT diversity on OI is relatively high in the four components. Besides, the SDs are between 0.618 and 0.814, which is quite high, suggesting that respondents' answers are somewhat inconsistent.

#### *Questionnaire Items: 3.1 to 3.4 – Solutions to the Negative Impacts of TMT Diversity on OI*

The mean across items (3.1 to 3.4) is just above 4, which suggests that participants agree on the positive impact of TMT diversity on OI in the four components. Additionally, the SDs are relatively similar to items (2.1 to 2.4), indicating that respondents' answers have a high level of variability.

Overall, the descriptive analysis above reveals that respondents realise that their TMT diversity has a low level of diversity. However, they believe that a diverse TMT leads to a better implementation of innovation in their organisations. This aligns with the claim of Hambrick & Finkelstein (1998), who argue that by considering multiple viewpoints, diverse TMT makes more informed and well-rounded decisions, leading to innovative outcomes.

#### *Objectifying the Problem in the Organisation*

Item 1.1 to what extent does top management team include a diversity of educational backgrounds? The participants' responses range in degree from a very large extent to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that top management team includes a little extent of educational background diversity. However, a minority of them responded with to a large extent of educational background diversity in top management team.

Item 1.2 to what extent does top management team include a diversity of thinking styles? The scale of the participants' responses varies as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that most participants answered that top management team includes a little extent of

educational background diversity. The minority of them, however, responded to the diversity of thinking patterns within the senior management team in several different ways.

Item 1.3 to what extent does top management team include a diversity of work experience? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that top management team includes a little extent of work experience diversity. However, a minority of them responded with to a large extent of thinking styles diversity in top management team.

Item 1.4 to what extent does top management team include a diversity of openness to information sharing? The range of responses from the participants is as follows: to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that top management team includes a little extent of openness to information-sharing diversity. However, a minority of them responded with to a large extent of openness to information-sharing diversity in top management team.

#### *Identifying Attitudes Towards the Impact of the Problem*

Item 2.1 to what extent does the lack of top management educational background diversity lead to less organisational innovation solutions? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of top management educational background diversity leads to less organisational innovation solutions. However, a minority of them responded with to some extent.

Item 2.2 to what extent does the lack of top management thinking styles diversity hinder complex problem-solving? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of top management thinking styles diversity hinders complex problem-solving. However, a minority of them responded with to a little extent.

Item 2.3 to what extent does the lack of top management work experience diversity lead to disruptive organisational innovation? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of top management work experience diversity leads to disruptive organisational innovation. However, a minority of them responded with to some extent.

Item 2.4 to what extent does the lack of top management openness to sharing information diversity reduce the consideration of divers viewpoints? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of

top management openness to sharing information diversity reduces the consideration of diverse viewpoints. However, a minority of them responded with to some extent.

#### *Identifying Attitudes Towards the Solutions.*

Item 3.1 to what extent does top management educational background diversity lead to more innovative solutions? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that top management educational background diversity leads to more innovative solutions. However, a minority of them responded with to some extent.

Item 3.2 to what extent does top management thinking styles diversity stimulate creative problem-solving? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that top management thinking styles diversity stimulates creative problem-solving. However, a minority of them responded with to a little extent.

Item 3.3 to what extent does top management work experience diversity expose the organisation to new ideas leading to constructive innovation? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that top management work experience diversity exposes the organisation to new ideas leading to constructive innovation. However, a minority of them responded with to some extent.

Item 3.4 to what extent does top management openness to sharing information diversity allow for an inclusive decision-making process? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that top management openness to sharing information diversity allow for an inclusive decision-making process. However, a minority of them responded with to some extent.

The overall findings suggest that a diverse range of TMT diversity - educational background, thinking styles, work experience, and openness to information sharing - enhances innovation in the higher education context in Oman, leading to a successful implementation of OI. These findings align with the results of other empirical research studies, which argue the fact that HEIs with more diverse TMTs in terms of academic background are more likely to produce and implement innovation effectively and successfully (Lee & Finkelstein, 2003; Bantel & Gusdorf, 2005; Kwon & Bae, 2015; Chadee & Hii, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research is to respond to the following query:

What is the influence of top management team (TMT) diversity on organisational innovation? This includes differences in educational background, thinking styles, job experience, and openness to share knowledge.

The results of the data analysis and findings support the following conclusions: TMT diversity in educational background positively affects OI significantly; TMT diversity in thinking styles positively affects OI significantly; TMT diversity in work experience positively affects OI significantly; and TMT diversity in openness to sharing information positively affects OI significantly. This suggests that these elements have a significant role in the development of HEI innovation in Oman. Policymakers in Oman's HEIs can take that into consideration for a successful OI implementation.

## Recommendations

For more efficient and successful OI implementation, Omani HEIs TMT should include a diversity of the following:

- Educational background
- Thinking styles
- Work experience.
- Openness to sharing information.

## Acknowledgements

This Research was conducted under the Supervision of Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy and funded By Modern College of Business and Science – Sultanate of Oman.

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# The Intersection Between Transformational Leadership and Digital Transformation: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore – from the perspectives of university faculty at a higher education institution in the Sultanate of Oman - the extent to which transformational leadership (TL) improves digital transformation (DT). In addition to revealing how TL is perceived, the study reports on the relationship between TL and DT. The study is based on the assumption that TL increases DT. A scientific philosophy underpins the research design of the study. A quantitative case study approach involving surveys administered to 50 male and female university faculty at the case organisation was used for data collection. The survey includes three sections with 15 questions, each section aiming to highlight viable data that substantiates the problem in the context of the research study, identify attitudes towards the impact of TL on DT and explore attitudes towards the improvements of DT. Descriptive statistics analysis is used to analyse the quantitative component of data. The findings suggest that TL components have a significant positive effect on DT. The results also reveal the importance of TL in improving the implementation of DT in higher education settings in Oman. Significantly, although the sample is taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, which may jeopardise the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area to validate the results in similar locations. The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings, into how TL impacts DT in Oman through the lens of transformational leadership theory (TLT). It highlights the importance of TL in advancing DT in the Omani HEIs. The insights gained from this study are useful for HEI policymakers in Oman. It provides them with an understanding of the value of TL for the effective implementation of DT.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Digital Transformation, University Faculty

**Citation:** AL Rashdi, H. (2024). The Intersection Between Transformational Leadership and Digital Transformation: The Case of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2740-2756), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

### Background

HEIs are meeting challenges in DT as there are fast recent changes in the global market (Armstrong, 2016). Besides, there is an increase in the implementation of DT by many HEIs around the world in which they follow a process of utilising different technological tools to catch up with the rapid change in the market (*Unlock business through Digital Transformation*, 2024). However, the effective management of DT relies strongly on

TL which emerged as a crucial factor in this field (Bass, 1985). TLT argues that an institutional leadership team can stimulate the motivation of faculty to attain successful and remarkable DT, which in turn leads to exceptional performance. Based on Bass (1985), TL has central components that characterise it, idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration of the group.

Idealised Influence (Attributes) refers to personal traits that stimulate respect and faith such moral and charisma. Idealised Influence (Behaviors) refers to the actions that promote respect and trust, like an ethical demonstration of commitment to institutional goals. Inspirational motivation refers to a leader's ability to convince team members to have a sense of commitment towards achieving institutional goals. Intellectual stimulation refers to the ability to inspire followers to be creative and innovative. According to Bass (1985), "individualised consideration" is making sure that followers feel supported and appreciated for who they are.

### *Problem Statement*

TL has a vital impact on DT since it helps HEIs to navigate the complex dynamics of internal and external organisational environment. Besides, it affects strategic goals and decision-making, leading to innovative DT. Furthermore, it improves the dynamic capabilities requested for efficient DT, which in turn makes organisations able to be competitive in the digital arena (Hong-Juan, 2023). Many research studies found that TL has a positive impact on performance, commitment and behaviour which are considered key factors for successful DT. Thus, accepting TL is a vital driver of revolutionary DT (Yansen & Yujie, 2023; Randi et al., 2023; Pedro, 2023).

Even though many research studies have investigated the impact of TL on DT, there is a limitation in the exploration of the relationship between the two from the insight of TLT in the HE context of Oman. To the best of my knowledge, none or just a few studies delve into the relationship between DT (Idealised Influence (Attributes), Idealised Influence (Behaviors), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualised Consideration of the group) and DT in the Omani HE is setting. Therefore, a study that searches for the impact of TL and DT through the lens of TLT is needed as it adds to the current body of knowledge in this field.

This study provides insights into how TL impacts DT through TLT components (Idealised Influence (Attributes), Idealised Influence (Behaviors), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualised Consideration of the group). The results help to understand how DT is implemented effectively in the Omani HEIs, leading to promising solutions to DT challenges in HEIs.

### *Purpose of The Report*

This research study explores to what extent TL impacts DT in the Omani HE context.

The next part discusses some research studies that are related to this study.

### *Research Questions*

The current study answers this question:

To what extent do transformational leadership components (Idealised Influence (Attributes), Idealised Influence (Behaviors), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation and Individualised Consideration of the group) impact digital transformation?

The researcher responds to the research question utilising a quantitative approach in which a questionnaire was distributed to university faculty at a single HEI in Oman.

### *Research Objectives*

The study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

4. To confirm the problem related to the relationship between TL and DT in the Omni HE context.
5. To investigate the university faculty's perception of transformational leadership's impacts on DT in the Omani HE context.
6. To understand the perception of university faculty towards the solutions to DT difficulties in the Omni HE context.

### *Significance of The Study*

This study is important for the following major estimated results:

- Substantiating the existence of DT challenges in the Omani HEIs setting.
- Recognising the issue related to the impact of TL on DT in the Omani HEIs.
- Identifying solutions towards the advancements of HIEs innovation in Oman through TL components.

### *Operational Definitions*

According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership is a kind of leadership that highlights the leader's ability to stimulate and encourage followers to accomplish outstanding results, inspiring them for the best of the organisation.

Based on Morakanyane et al. (2017), digital transformation is a process that involves adoption of various technologies, influencing different facets of an organisation.

This research paper includes seven different sections. The first section is an introduction. The second section

contains a review of relevant literature. Following this, section three delves into the research methodology. The heart of this research is section four, where the results are presented and discussed. Section five identifies the limitations of the study. Next, section six concludes and summarises the key results. Finally, section seven provides the recommendations.

### *Review of Literature*

This section includes related literature to this study. The thematic analysis methodology is used in which the reviewed studies are grouped thematically to review how TL impacts DT.

The digital landscape of higher education is rapidly evolving, demanding a shift towards technology-integrated teaching and learning methodologies. This transformation necessitates leadership that fosters innovation and adaptability among faculty members. TLT offers a framework to understand how leaders can inspire and motivate faculty to embrace DT.

Research suggests a positive correlation between TL and employee engagement with digital initiatives (Wang & Zhao, 2023). However, limited studies have explored faculty perceptions of this relationship in the context of higher education, particularly in regions like Oman that have unique cultural dynamics. In an attempt to close this disparity, this study examines how Omani university faculty members view the influence of TL styles on their readiness to participate in DT initiatives (Kereri et al., 2022).

### *Transformational Leadership Styles*

TLT, as proposed by Keller in 1995, describes four essential leadership behaviors that have a big impact on how faculty members view DT in higher education. When faculty members combine these behaviors, they effectively inspire and motivate them to accept change. First of all, leaders displaying idealised influence clearly define the direction digital learning will take, stressing the ways in which technology will improve student learning and teacher effectiveness. They create a sense of purpose and enthusiasm for the possibilities by encouraging faculty members to view themselves as active participants in this digital future.

Second, creativity and adaptability are greatly aided by intellectual stimulation. Faculty members are encouraged by their leaders to try out new technologies and creatively incorporate them into their lessons. Leaders enable faculty members to take charge of their digital learning journey by establishing an atmosphere that encourages critical thinking and is open to new ideas (Kumar, 2023).

Thirdly, faculty members have different needs and skill sets when it comes to integrating technology, and this is acknowledged through tailored consideration. Through mentorship, training programs, and empathetically and sympathetically addressing faculty concerns, leaders offer customised assistance. This individualised approach builds trust and gives staff the tools they need to complete the DT process successfully. Finally, by encouraging

commitment and involvement in higher education, transformational leaders motivate faculty members to support the accomplishment of DT initiatives. They promote experimenting with novel technologies and imaginative approaches, which improves student learning outcomes and the standing of the university. Strong transformational leaders typically exhibit a combination of these traits to promote faculty commitment to and involvement in DT in higher education (Keller, 1995). Check out new technologies and carefully integrate them into their education practices.

### *Digital Transformation in Higher Education*

Higher education's digital transformation goes much beyond just integrating new technology and software in the classroom. It is an entire shift toward a learning environment that integrates technology, with a range of programs targeted at improving the quality of education for educators as well as students.

The implementation of Learning Management Systems (LMS) is a key component of this change. These platforms act as a central location for online tests, communication tools, and course materials. The adoption of an LMS streamlines course management encourages teamwork, and makes it easier for students to access learning resources. On the other hand, in order to fully utilise an LMS, faculty may need to receive training.

Offering courses online is a significant step as well. This method gives students with busy schedules or those who live far away from campuses flexibility by offering whole courses or just selected modules in a digital format. Interactive learning resources and simulations can be hosted on online platforms, which increases student involvement. However, in order to guarantee the calibre of the learning process when shifting to an online teaching approach, faculty members must acquire new competencies in instructional design and online pedagogy (Mike, 2023).

### *Transformational Leadership and Digital Transformation*

According to Gareth (n.d.), when leaders present an appealing plan for integrating technology into teaching and learning, faculty members are more likely to understand the benefits and reasons for the changes. Faculty members are inspired to participate actively in the DT process by this motivating factor, which also gives them a sense of excitement and dedication.

Secondly, in order to promote intellectual stimulation, educators should be encouraged to explore and try out new teaching strategies and technological advancements. Transformational leaders build an atmosphere that values innovation, critical thinking, and receptivity to fresh perspectives. They provide opportunities for faculty to attend workshops, share knowledge, and collaborate on innovative projects related to DT. By enhancing a culture of experimentation and continuous learning, leaders empower faculty to develop the skills and confidence needed to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices (Jonathan, 2024).



Moreover, transformational leaders demonstrate individualised consideration by recognising the diverse needs and concerns of faculty members. They provide personalised support, guidance, and resources to help faculty navigate the challenges associated with DT. Whether it's offering training programs tailored to different skill levels or providing mentorship and coaching, leaders ensure that faculty feel supported and equipped to embrace new technologies and pedagogical approaches.

Overall, TL serves as a catalyst for driving DT in higher education by inspiring and empowering faculty to embrace change, experiment with innovative practices, and ultimately enhance the teaching and learning experience for students. Transformational leaders create a culture of innovation and constant advancement that drives institutions forward in the digital era through their visionary leadership and encouraging actions (Mark, 2023).

#### *Limited Research in Oman*

It is essential to understand faculty perspectives in the context of Oman's higher education environment in order to promote effective DT in Omani universities. Although studies in a number of industries have shown a positive association between TL and DT, much has to be understood to fully comprehend this relationship in the unique cultural setting of Oman. Strong community ties and adherence to authority are hallmarks of Omani culture, which may have an impact on the kinds of leadership that appeal to faculty members. Prominent figures in Oman could have to put a higher priority on building trust via open communication and teamwork while addressing faculty anxieties about how DT will affect conventional teaching techniques.

In addition, Omani universities may encounter unique challenges in their digital transformation journey, such as faculty unease with English-language software or limited access to technology infrastructure. It takes leadership techniques that are specially designed to address these particular challenges to enable a smooth transition to digital learning environments. This can mean creating a cooperative climate where educators feel free to express concerns and offer suggestions about the use of technology, as well as offering leadership development programs that incorporate culturally sensitive communication approaches.

The support of the faculty is ultimately what determines if DT projects at Omani universities would be successful. Leaders should create communication methods that highlight the advantages of DT for both teachers and students by learning about faculty perspectives and resolving their concerns. This method increases faculty ownership and gives them the ability to actively shape their institution's digital future (Innovativetips, 2023). In summary, evaluating faculty perspectives in Oman is an important academic endeavour as well as a vital step in creating leadership techniques that facilitate successful DT in Omani higher education institutions (He, 2024).

#### *Comparison of Similar Studies*

Table. 1 analyses the relationship between TL and DT in three recent quantitative studies and compares them:

Table 1. LR Matrix

Study	Context	Methodology	Successes	Limitations
<b>Wang &amp; Zhao (2023)</b>	Chinese Businesses	Survey	Strong correlations	Cross-sectional data
<b>Singh et al. (2022)</b>	Korean Public Sector	Survey & Interviews	Explored mediating variables	Limited sample size
<b>Jones &amp; Martinez (2020)</b>	US Higher Education	Survey	Highlighted leadership importance	Limited focus on faculty perceptions

These studies share the use of quantitative methods like surveys to investigate the relationship between leadership and DT. They also highlight the positive impact of TL on employee engagement with digital initiatives. However, the studies differ in their contexts, methodologies, and depth of analysis. For instance, Singh et al. (2022) explored the role of mediating variables, while Tri & Hoang (2023) focused specifically on higher education but with limited emphasis on faculty perceptions.

Table 2. Differences and similarities across studies

Feature	Wang & Zhao (2023)	Singh et al. (2022)	Tri, & Hoang (2023)	This Study (Proposed)
<b>Context</b>	Chinese Businesses	Indian Public Sector	Vietnam (Higher Education)	Omani Higher Education
<b>Methodology</b>	Survey	Survey & Interviews	Survey	Survey
<b>Focus</b>	Leadership & Employee Engagement	Leadership & Mediating Variables	Leadership Importance	Faculty Perceptions
<b>Similarities</b>	- Quantitative methods	- Quantitative methods	- Quantitative methods	- Quantitative methods
	- Transformational Leadership & Digital Transformation	- Transformational Leadership & Digital Transformation	- Transformational Leadership & Digital Transformation	- Transformational Leadership & Digital Transformation (Faculty Focus)
	- Positive leadership impact	- Explores mediating factors	- Highlights leadership role	- Addresses faculty perspective in Oman
<b>Differences</b>	- Cross-sectional data	- Mixed methods (deeper analysis)	- Limited faculty focus	- Specific cultural context (Oman)
	- Focus on employee engagement	- Explores psychological safety & innovative work behaviour	- Focus on leadership in general	- Faculty perceptions & leadership styles

Key similarities between various studies examining the relationship between TL and DT can be identified,

providing significant insights into the dynamics of this relationship (Boudet et al., 2016). Firstly, there's a prevalent use of quantitative approaches, primarily through surveys, enabling researchers to gather data from a wide range of participants and thus obtain a statistically significant understanding of the relationship between variables. Secondly, there's a notable emphasis on employee or faculty engagement, underscoring the pivotal role of leadership in cultivating a positive attitude and willingness to participate in DT initiatives. Thirdly, the consistent discovery of a positive correlation underscores the critical importance of TL in driving successful DT efforts. Finally, while some studies delve into mediating variables, the primary focus remains on analysing the direct relationship between leadership behaviours and DT outcomes. These commonalities provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of TL on DT across various contexts and industries (See Table. 2).

While existing studies on TL and DT vary in several aspects, key differences can be discerned. Firstly, these studies explore leadership and DT in diverse contexts, spanning Chinese businesses, the Indian public sector, Indian manufacturing, and Vietnam higher education, each with its unique cultural setting. On the other hand, this research will concentrate only on Omani higher education, taking into account the unique cultural differences that are present in this context. Second, although all studies use quantitative techniques like surveys, Singh et al. (2023) add interviews to their methodology to go deeper into mediating variables, which would not be possible in this study given its resource limitations. Thirdly, the analysis's focus varies across studies; some look at culture's impact or overall employee engagement, while others investigate mediating factors. Specifically, this study will focus on faculty. These variations highlight how crucial contextual intricacies and methodological issues are to understanding how TL and DT relate to one another in diverse sectors and geographical areas.

### *Transformational Leadership Theory*

This study, which aims to explore how faculty members view the influence of TL behaviours on their participation in DT activities within Omani higher education, will be guided by the transformational leadership theory. This study uses TMT to investigate the ways in which faculty perceptions of DT are influenced by several leadership characteristics, including intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, personalised concern, and inspiring motivation. In order to help faculty members accept technology and help build a more innovative and digitally integrated learning environment, universities in Oman can develop specialised leadership methods that help them acquire insight into these attitudes. Faculty members will benefit from this if Omani higher education institutions undergo a successful digital transition. The project intends to help faculty members adopt strong leadership styles that foster teamwork, passion, and dedication in order to produce good DT results in university education institutions in Oman.

The following covers methodology, environment, samples, ethical considerations, and data gathering and processing tools.

**Method**

This section includes an explanation of the research methodology, study design, samples, ethical considerations, data collection techniques, and data analysis.

**Design/ Rationale of The Research**

The study design is based on the positivism school of thought (Rahi, 2017). The quantitative cross-sectional approach is used for data collection through an anonymous online questionnaire. It is disseminated among university faculty to explore their perceptions about how TL impacts DT in the HE context in Oman. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the studies undertaken to study the impact of TL on DT in the Omani higher education context are very limited. Hence, studying this relationship in a new place like the higher education setting in Oman adds extra value to the originality of the current study by confirming or refuting findings (Shaheen, 2021).

*Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework in this study signifies the relationship between TL (idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration of the group) and DT. (See Figure 1)

- **Independent Variable:** Transformational leadership – idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration of the group.
- **Dependent Variable:** Digital transformation.

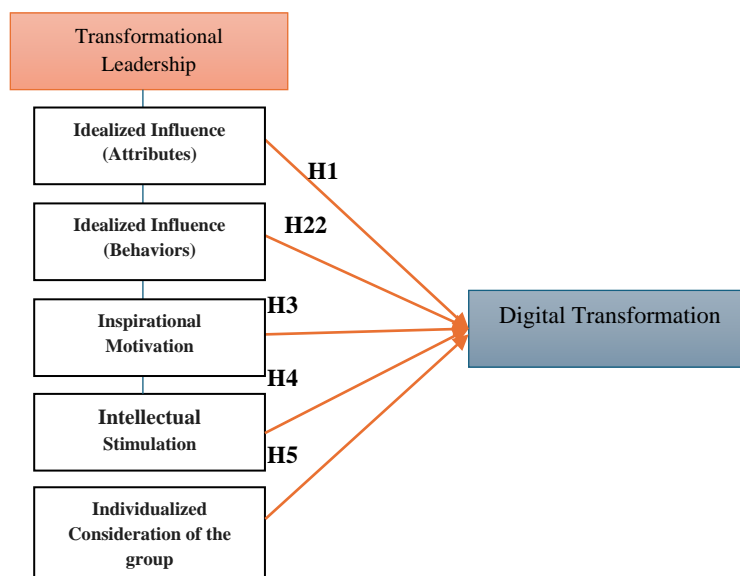


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework

### *The Research Hypothesis*

Based on Hair et al. (2020), a hypothesis refers to an idea of a phenomenon which has not been verified yet. The study suggests five hypotheses to examine the relationship between TL and DT. The following are the proposed hypotheses:

- H1: Idealised Influence (Attributes) has a significant positive effect on DT.
- H2: Idealised Influence (Behaviors) has a significant positive effect on DT.
- H3: Inspirational Motivation has a significant positive effect on DT.
- H4: Intellectual Stimulation has a significant positive effect on DT.
- H5: Individualised Consideration of the group has a significant positive effect on DT.

### *Setting/ Context of The Research*

The research is conducted in a HEI in Oman. It is an academic institution which runs engineering programs. It contains five engineering departments (system engineering, aeronautical engineering, marine engineering, civil engineering, and geomatics engineering). It has about 2000 students and approximately 900 faculty and staff.

### *Participants and Ethical Considerations*

Omani University faculty are the participants in the study. The targeted number of participants is 50. The response rate is 82 per cent (41 respondents). Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous. The collected data are analysed confidentially.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

The data collection tool is a questionnaire in which items are measured through a five-like scale to explore the relationships between the variables. The five-like scale range is between a very large extent to no extent. The questionnaire has three sections. Each section has five items. Every item corresponds to the following variables: idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration of the group) and dependent (DT). The sections are structured in the following order: substantiating the problem in the setting (TL issues which impact DT, identifying participants' attitudes toward the effect of TL on DT, and exploring participants' attitudes toward the solutions to the problem.

### *Procedures*

The questionnaire is created based on the transformational leadership theory, which argues that TL attributes and characteristics impact strategic direction and decision-making, leading to a significant impact on DT. It is

comprised of 15 items. The questions were constructed through Google Forms, with a short introductory blurb describing the objective of the study as well as a consent statement. Subsequently, the questionnaire is disseminated online to the targeted participants. The questionnaire was piloted and reached a Cronbach's alpha value of .757, showing acceptable internal consistency (See figure. 2).

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.757	15

Figure 2. Cronbach's alpha

### *Data Analysis*

The collected data is analysed through SPSS, from which descriptive statistics are generated. Additionally, statistics are generated through Google form. Based on Thomas (2021), several central stages should be considered carefully when treating quantitative data: making reference to the conceptual framework, getting data ready for analysis, and then analysing the results.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

#### *Questionnaire items– Transformational leadership*

The mean across items (1.1 to 1.5) is between 2.34 and 2.54, showing that participants' perception of TL is low in the five components. Besides, the SDs are between 0.480 and 0.553, which is considerably low, indicating that respondents' answers are consistent.

#### *Questionnaire items: Impacts of TL on DT*

The mean across items (2.1 to 2.5) is between 4.32 and 4.39, indicating that participants' perception of the impact of TL on DT is moderately high in the five components. In addition, the SDs are between 0.610 and 0.656, which is pretty high, showing that respondents' answers are, to some degree, inconsistent.

#### *Questionnaire items: Solutions to the negative impacts of TL on DT*

The mean across items (3.1 to 3.5) is between 4.29 and 4.46, which shows that participants have an agreement on the positive influence of TL on DT in the five components. In addition, the SDs are reasonably similar to items (2.1 to 2.4), suggesting that respondents' answers are high in variability.

Generally, the descriptive analysis above indicates that participants believe that their institutional leadership faces some issues which should be taken into consideration. However, they agree that TL leads to a successful

and innovative institutional DT. This aligns with the argument of Hong-Juan (2023), who claims that considering a clear DT vision, ethical decision-making, DT optimistic vision, innovative work environment, and faculty digital upskilling leads to DT advancements.

#### *Objectifying the Problem in the Organisation*

Item 1.1 To what extent does leadership focus on DT long-term goals rather than short-term goals? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be suggested that the majority of participants answered that leadership focuses on DT long-term goals rather than short-term goals to a little extent. However, a minority of them responded with to a large extent.

Item 1.2 To what extent does leadership make digital transformation decisions taking into consideration ethical implications? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that leadership makes digital transformation decisions taking into consideration ethical implications to a little extent. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 1.3 To what extent does leadership communicate an optimistic outlook on the future of teaching and research in the digital age? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that leadership communicate an optimistic outlook on the future of teaching and research in the digital age to a little extent. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 1.4 To what extent does leadership create an environment that fosters open discussion of new ideas related to teaching and research in the digital age? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a large extent, to some extent and to a little extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that leadership creates an environment that fosters open discussion of new ideas related to teaching and research in the digital age to a little extent. However, a minority of them responded with to a large extent.

Item 1.5 To what extent does leadership provide support for faculty development? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to some extent and to a little extent. It can be suggested that the majority of participants answered that leadership provides support for faculty development to a little extent. However, a minority of them responded with to some extent.

#### *Identifying Attitudes Towards the Impact of the Problem*

Item 2.1 To what extent does the lack of clear digital transformation vision make it difficult for faculty to be engaged? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of a clear digital transformation vision makes it difficult for faculty to be engaged. However, a minority of them responded to



some extent.

Item 2.2 To what extent does the lack of digital transformation ethical decision-making create a sense of distrust among faculty? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of digital transformation ethical decision-making creates a sense of distrust among faculty. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 2.3 To what extent does the lack of a digital transformation optimistic vision demotivate faculty to integrate new technologies? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of a digital transformation optimistic vision demotivate faculty to integrate new technologies. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 2.4 To what extent does the lack of an innovative work environment hinder faculty engagement in teaching and research initiatives? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of an innovative work environment hinder faculty engagement in teaching and research initiatives. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 2.5 To what extent does the lack of faculty digital upskilling reduce their technology integration? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that the lack of faculty digital upskilling reduces their technology integration. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

### *Identifying Attitudes Towards the Solutions*

Item 3.1 To what extent does clear digital transformation vision improve faculty engagement? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that clear digital transformation vision improves faculty engagement. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 3.2 To what extent does digital transformation ethical decision-making foster trust among faculty? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that digital transformation ethical decision-making fosters trust among faculty. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 3.3 To what extent does digital transformation optimistic vision motivate faculty to adopt new technologies? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to

some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that digital transformation optimistic vision motivates faculty to adopt new technologies. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 3.4 To what extent does an innovative work environment enhance faculty creativity in teaching and research? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that an innovative work environment enhances faculty creativity in teaching and research. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

Item 3.5 To what extent does faculty digital upskilling enhance their confidence in digital transformation? The participants' answers vary in scale as follows: to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. It can be indicated that the majority of participants answered that faculty digital upskilling enhances their confidence in digital transformation. However, a minority of them responded to some extent.

The overall findings indicate that TL – idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration of the group improve DT in the higher education context in Oman, leading to an efficient implementation of DT.

These results align with the results of other research studies, which claim the fact that HEIs that take into consideration the five components of TL (idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration of the group) are more likely to increase the level of successful implementation of DT (Yansen & Yujie, 2023; Randi et al., 2023; Pedro, 2023).

## Conclusion

The conclusion revisits the research question and summarises the overall findings. This study intends to answer the following question:

- To what extent do transformational leadership components – idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration of the group) impact digital transformation?

Based on the data analysis and results, it can be concluded that idealised influence (attributes) has a significant positive impact on DT, idealised influence (behaviours) has a significant positive impact on DT, inspirational motivation has a significant positive impact on DT, intellectual stimulation has a significant positive impact on DT and individualised consideration of the group has a significant positive impact on DT. This shows that these components are vital determinants contributing to the development of HEI digital transformation in Oman. HEIs decision-makers in Oman can consider that for future successful implementation of DT.

## Recommendations

For an efficient management of DT in Omani HEIs, a key aspect is taking into consideration the following components of TL:

- Idealised Influence (Attributes)
- Idealised Influence (Behaviors)
- inspirational motivation
- intellectual stimulation
- individualised consideration of the group

## Acknowledgements

This Research was conducted under the Supervision of Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy and funded By Modern College of Business and Science – Sultanate of Oman.

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## The Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil and Gas)

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**Abstract:** Despite resentful contemporary business dynamics, associations should continually develop to keep up with the importance and pieces of the pie. Compelling change management is essential for organizations to effectively explore the challenging development stage. This research dives into the change management practices of Galfar, a main construction and engineering firm. It investigates the steps, challenges, and best practices related to effective change management programs and gives viable bits of knowledge that different associations can apply. Galfar's proactive way of dealing with change management isn't simply a methodology but a living demonstration of their flexibility and groundbreaking. By utilizing its rich experience base and sustaining nearby ability, Galfar has explored changes successfully and changed them into open doors for development and advancement. This has laid out areas of strength for a cutthroat market presence, moving different associations to follow accordingly. The research design of this study follows a positive way to gather level-headed, impartial information that can evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership training and change management drives at Galfar. A quantitative case study strategy was utilized, and questionnaires were given to all degrees of employees in the association. This kind of survey plans to gather information through closed questions, which are appropriate for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were filled in as a rundown of the information, and correlation analysis was utilized to examine connections among elements like leadership effectiveness, workforce engagement, and operational performance. This approach makes it conceivable to test the hypothecated impacts accurately as it gives the specific quantitative upsides of the effect being tried. The research results show that leadership training, further developed communication, and change management drives assist with improving dynamic skills and operational performance. They additionally uncover the employees' vital jobs and how their contribution straightforwardly brings about higher efficiency. Additionally, the research exhibits that effective change management brings about great employee grasp, further highlighting the significance of their job. Finally, the research was restricted as it was led exclusively in one association in Oman, restricting and confining the outcomes. This study works by leading examinations in comparable settings to test these outcomes and affirm the progress of change management rehearses so they become broader.

**Keywords:** Change Management, Innovation, Best Practices, Leadership Training, Operational Performance, and Employee Engagement.

**Citation:** Al Hasni, I. (2024). The Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas). In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2757-2765), Antalya, Turkiye. *ISTES*.

## Introduction

The company is one of Oman's most attractive construction and engineering organizations. Working on an obtaining ground loaded with ceaseless development, changing inclinations, and consistently evolving client needs. In any case, the setting knows the need to adjust and exhibits that the association stays aware of market dynamics to guarantee steady development. It has directed various projects to guarantee ideal asset use and operational productivity and further developed project deliverable results. Although accomplishing greatness has not been challenging, the organization is trying to achieve something similar. Contrasted with different organizations, the company has dealt with numerous issues, such as staff resistance to change hierarchical designs and the abuse of communication frameworks, making it challenging for the organization to execute change productively. The organization is resolved to audit how to deal with the frameworks. Changes achieve a culture of super-durable innovation reception. Then again, it makes employees mindful that change ought not to be treated as a problematic power but as an opportunity that can be changed into development and advancement, subsequently guaranteeing that the association stays in front of the curve. The experience makes sense as the justification for the ongoing improvement of change management inside the setting, showing how the association continually tests itself and countenances various challenges, investigating the way of life of resistance and defeating hardships, whose result will be the accomplishment of the essential objectives with the assistance of the experience. Having gotten a substantial standard of the association's experiences, challenges, and desires, the company can journey through change to become a more vigorous and versatile construction and engineering element.

## Literature review

In company-like associations, change management is a framework thinking approach enveloping hypothetical structures, experimental perceptions, and industry-explicit techniques custom-fitted to the construction and engineering areas. This writing audit investigates the liquid field of hierarchical change utilizing respected models like Lewin's Change Management Model, Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model, and the ADKAR Model. Such calculated systems help clarify the dynamics of change and improve the fitting mediation drives. Case studies, best practices, and models, then again, go further into the challenges and open doors that change brings and help to underline the job of leadership and communication, as well as in a few very much suggested present-day prescribed procedures - the job of innovation in conquering opposition and guaranteeing to get through changes. Additionally, this paper investigates the changing standards of change management rehearses, conjectures future turns of events, and proposes approaches that the company could use to move in the unpredictable market dynamics of the construction and engineering businesses. It centers around inward issues, leadership turnovers, hierarchical redesigns, specialized progressions, outer elements, monetary changes, administrative adjustments, and client assumptions. The article gives information on ordinary opposition focuses and methods for deterioration, exhibiting the meaning of such devices as Building Information Modeling (BIM) and project management software inside movable change exercises. In



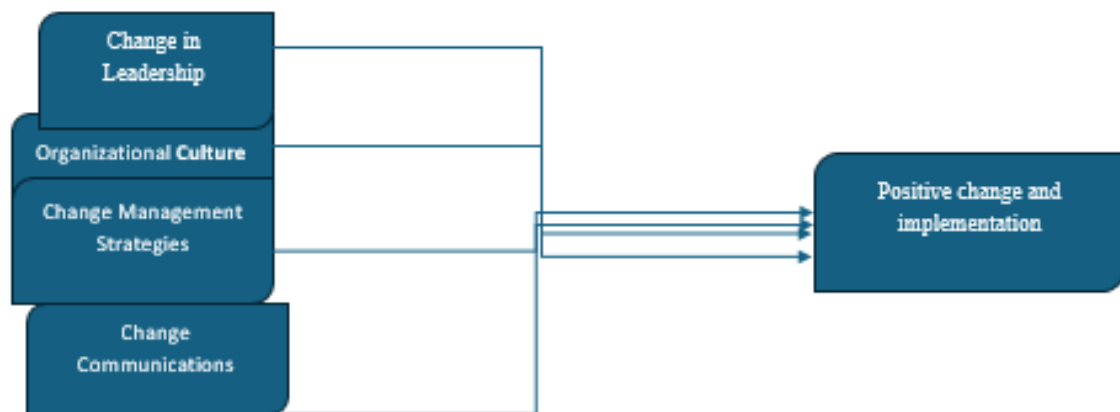
conclusion, it presents the future development of change management, pinpointing challenges and opening doors to drive rehearses in construction and engineering regions.

**Methodology**

**Design/ Rationale of the research.**

Research focusing on the "Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas)" is planned to quantitatively strategy the impact of the change management systems on the hierarchical performance and employee satisfaction in the company, a leading construction organization in the Sultanate of Oman. Using a normalized overview disseminated across various departments and progressive levels in the undertaking, this study is set to accumulate the information and dissect the effectiveness, snags, and consequences of the change management rehearses.

This quantitative-just methodology is directed by its power to convey unbiased, statistical bits of knowledge that can be applied across the association to figure out the connections between unambiguous change management systems and association measurements. It allows focus on change management, operational achievement, and employee engagement, giving benchmarks to performance improvement and key-making arrangements for the setting and comparative firms.



*Setting/ context of the research*

The study site is the "Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas)," a leading construction and contracting organization in the Sultanate of Oman. This organization has become prevailing in construction and is chipping away at different projects, including streets and extensions and oil and gas installations. The setting is essential because of the dynamic and refined nature of the construction business, which undergoes nonstop changes in innovation, guidelines, project management approaches, market requests, and different boundaries.

An authoritative setting is portrayed by its different workforce, complex hierarchic designs, and the requirement for good communication and adaptability to guarantee project achievement and hierarchical turn of events. With the organization vitally pivotal for public foundation projects and adding to Oman's monetary turn of events, its way of dealing with change management is pertinent for its interior partners. It has more extensive ramifications for the business and the economy.

In such a manner, the study plans to comprehend how the company oversees hierarchical change, zeroing in on methodologies for managing mechanical changes, administrative movements, market dynamics, and inward rebuilding. This climate is the best setting to investigate the reasonable idea of change management in a high-stakes industry, as its case study would outline the cycles, challenges, and results when change is carried out in an exceptionally sped-up and complex change climate.

### *Participants*

In the study "Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas)," the participants will be many individuals inside the company, including the overall change management practices and an analysis of their impact. The choice of participants will be illustrated in terms of their jobs, encounters, and order inside the association to get different viewpoints on change management. Here is a breakdown of potential participant gatherings: Here's a breakdown of potential participant gatherings:

#### 1. Senior Management

Their viewpoints will likewise assist with giving an essential update on change management drives, explanations for explicit techniques, and the normal versus genuine consequences of these changes.

#### 2. Middle Management

They connect vital preparation and operational execution by giving experiences into change execution challenges and what they mean for team dynamics and performance.

#### 3. Frontline Employees

Their feedback will mirror the exact image of change management rehearses, their fallout on everyday tasks, work satisfaction, and employee confidence.

#### 4. Human Resources Personnel

They would suggest managing change from a group management viewpoint, for example, training, communication approaches, and employee feedback frameworks.

## 5. External Stakeholders (Optional)

Although their viewpoints are not formally part of the authoritative construction, they provide extensive information about the outside impacts and impressions of the change management systems utilized by the company.

The variety of participants from these gatherings will advance an extensive comprehension of change management, as seen from key, strategic, and individual levels. It will empower the study to uncover the adequacy and hardships of change management rehearses and their multiple-layered impacts on the association.

### *Data collection instruments*

Datamining analysis for "The Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas)" will utilize organized surveys and authoritative performance records as critical information. Surveys will be designed to catch the assorted assessments of employees in evaluating the effect of change management systems inside the association, work satisfaction, and hierarchical performance. The surveys will cover the Likert, multiple-choice, and ranking scales to measure employees' satisfaction levels and settlements on different change management drives. The study will also utilize information from authoritative performance records to investigate efficiency, benefit, and other performance pointers when executing the change methodologies. It will likewise be feasible to get numerous signs about what change management means for both the administrative and human components by utilizing employee surveys and performance information related to one another.

### *Procedures*

The "Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas)" research methodology will utilize the accompanying component — a systemic portrayal of research steps, exact and objective information assortment, and analysis. In this way, the starting will include evaluating hierarchical records as past and current endeavors on change and how these techniques were executed. This will give a starting image of the change management moves toward that can assist with setting the gauge for different mediations. From there on, the overview survey will be scattered among employees from various departments and levels utilizing a stratified random sampling procedure to procure quantifiable information about the responses that the new changes have caused. Updates and finishes will be carried out to guarantee a high reaction rate and precise information assortment. Consequently, the assembled information will be examined through statistical analysis to estimate associations and effects of change management rehearses on employee satisfaction and firm performance. During these meetings, the company administrators and I will guarantee that these rules are followed and that straightforwardness is upheld. This will prompt leading an itemized study concerning change

management systems, and afterward, a supportive result with the enhancements for a later project will be conveyed.

### *Data analysis*

The information analysis in "The Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas)" will be founded on descriptive statistics and the different deduction trials that will be finished for the gathered quantitative information. First, the study results will be depicted in statistics, exhibiting central tendency and variability for employees' perspectives on change management's effectiveness, satisfaction, and hierarchical essential focal points. Different inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis and regression models, will be utilized to feature the connections between the choice of execution strategies and their impacts on hierarchical performance. Information investigation will utilize coded software, like SPSS, including solid information dealing with mistake-free outcomes. The last stage will examine those statistical results to foster reasonable ends, where examples of overcoming adversity and not-very-great practices will be recognized individually. Consequently, the integrated cycle will guarantee that the organization has procured an entire image of what change management can mean for hierarchical performance and the dynamics of inner relations, especially among employees.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The research will follow ethical standards, ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity. Each participant will be provided with a written informed consent form.

### **Results and Discussion**

During the research on "Art of Change Management in Construction Company (Oil & Gas)," quantitative information analysis showed that the change management approaches related to higher employee satisfaction and better hierarchical performance measures. Utilizing all-inclusive communication and training programs was fundamental in uncovering the significance of including employees at all levels during temporary cycles. However, issues, such as willingness to change and an impermanent decline in efficiency, were likewise identified as subjects that need further improvement. The way that the company's way of managing change has been proficient overall infers that nonstop changes and rehearsing the best principles are an unquestionable necessity to control challenges and succeed. The outcomes make explicit suggestions about changing their change management cycle. They show the significance of remembering employees for decision-production during explicit changes and effectively anticipating a fruitful change drive.

In the study, the quantitative information uncovered immense positive feedback, with the overall subject being employees' satisfaction with the work change management methodology. The immediate outcome was that the

portion of our respondents who were gathering noted they were happy with the changes presented. Interestingly, the others proposed they were palatable overall, inferring a superb tendency to acknowledge the new leadership techniques and critical drives. Plus, the decent amount of employee satisfaction mirrors the compelling coordinating of the change management techniques with the staff's assumptions and the hierarchical targets, suggesting the underlying steps of an association to move in the correct heading as a fruitful administrative case.

The most significant action item is the overall satisfaction acknowledgment of regions requiring consideration. A negligible number of individuals who participated in the change cycle inspected the interaction as just decently fulfilled or nonpartisan, implying perspectives that don't wholly address employees' issues. These fields involve creating productive channels and cognizance of the changes, designing training meetings to tie down ranges of abilities that will allow acclimation to new cycles, and a more helpful and participatory leadership style to remember all ensemble individuals for discussions regarding tasks.

The perceptions demonstrate that management ought to reclassify and foster change management processes (takes catalyst from the discoveries referenced previously). Putting resources into more powerful communication systems with plainly characterized objectives fits the organization. These plans will explain how the changes produce positive results for the specialists and the company. Procedural information is another reason the setting's direction and training would accommodate staff individuals. Now and again, firmly, the employees could change rapidly, too. The last point could be that establishing a climate of inclusiveness could add to the advancement of teamwork and employee satisfaction during the cycle, conceivably prompting the overall satisfaction of employees and more effective execution of such drives from here on out. The arrangements close the ongoing holes and guarantee the support representing things to come and proactiveness management simultaneously.

## **Limitations**

The research exhibits the tragic defects of the study strategy, which relies upon quantitative information and will, in general, limit the expansiveness and profundity of the ends. Essentially, the reliance on normalized study instruments prohibits the unstructured styled reactions, so it is hard to recognize the employees' insight where emotionality is involved or, on the other hand, assuming complex variables influence the perspectives toward change. This approach might neglect the intricacies of the various employees' responses or the subtleties in how change is grasped in different situations from the lower to the upper-level management. The quantitative methodology likewise thinks about a couple of context-oriented factors. They incorporate social communications and asset sharing. Another requirement that can be created is inclination predispositions, which might happen when the people who chose to participate will generally contrast systematically from those who didn't. Thus, the outcomes might be slanted fundamentally. This flaw is the building block of

recognizing that regardless of the information giving a preview, it doesn't address the intricacies of shifting feelings inside the organization.

The restricted idea of surveys, as fragmented information from respondents, restricts the degree of detail, eventually clouding the subtleties of discernments and intricacies inside an association as it advances.

### **Significance of the Findings**

The research results have significant ramifications, headings, and proposals for fruitful change management inside one significant construction organization. These discoveries uncover what effective change management rehearses are, singling out the best regions, like communication with employees and training programs, related to positive satisfaction and performance results. This information assists with recognizing the best methodologies and redirecting assets from less valuable regions, further developing productivity and employee arrangement with crucial goals. It likewise features the requirement for the continuous assessment and adjustment of change procedures to stay aware of the changing authoritative prerequisites and outside powers.

The study's outcomes assist with distinguishing areas of progress inside the setting change management processes where designated enhancements ought to be made. The information gained concerning the productivity of various techniques fosters a clean arrangement of command over hierarchical change, particularly in leadership contribution and employee participation. Carrying out these discoveries is additionally advantageous, and the association will become more viable in future change. The protection from change will be diminished, and the authoritative culture will likewise become more light-hearted. Variation is fundamental for recognizing and acknowledging vital objectives in the unstable construction area.

Moreover, the discoveries of this research go past the company to a more extensive area of faculty change management, particularly in ventures and locales going through quick changes and development. The case study of how the setting oversees change is utilized as a helpful reference by different associations and adds to the scholarly writing. It gives an extraordinary viewpoint on the challenges and wins of carrying out change management methodologies in the construction business and, consequently, a fundamental model for different organizations in similar settings to make and hone their change management rehearses. This enhances the change management conversation and empowers a reasonable perception of its essential viewpoints in making hierarchical progress and manageability

### **Concluding Remarks**

The study on the Art of Managing Change in Construction Company (Oil & Gas) offers enormous knowledge into the intricacies of managing hierarchical change inside a respectable construction firm in Oman. The outcomes shed a little light on the qualities of the setting's change management approaches and what needs

further consideration, significantly improving communication and employee contribution in the change processes. These perceptions empower the company to hone its strategies, fortify its operational and vital structures, and add more extensive information on change management rehearses to the construction business. This study describes the need for constant observing and reforming in hierarchical change endeavors. In this manner, it fills in as a phenomenal model for different endeavors that need to know how to deal with mind-boggling examples of change.

## Acknowledgments

This Research was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy and Funded by the Modern College of Business and Science Oman

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## Improving Leaders' Decision-Making Skills through Decision-Making Training Programs: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of decision-making training programs in enhancing the skills and competencies of leaders within Oman, a leading construction and engineering company. The study is based on a quantitative method and will be accumulating empirical data showing the role of training imperatives in making influential leaders' decisions. The survey is used to identify the perceptions of participation regarding leaders' decision-making competencies, cognitive biases, and training needs. Statistical analysis methods, including descriptive and inferential statistics, are employed to analyze the collected information. This quantitative study aims to empirically validate the effectiveness of decision-making training interventions in setting, guiding the creation of customized programs to enhance leader skills, decision-making outcomes, and organizational performance. Through quantitative analysis of survey data, the study examines the relationship between variables such as leadership competencies, cognitive biases, and organizational culture and their impact on decision-making outcomes. The research aims to identify hidden mechanisms that affect decision-making effectiveness among company leaders through a planned quantitative data analysis, which assists an organizational leader in making an informed decision and formulating leadership growth strategies and initiatives. The findings suggest that well-structured frameworks, rigorous training, and improved communication enhance the company's decision-making efficiency. Moreover, the findings highlight the vital role of leadership participation. The results also indicate that lean processes directly influence the quality of decision-making. The data, however, is based on a single case study conducted in a limited area of Oman, which restricts the applicability of the current research. However, it provides the basis for subsequent studies to validate these findings in similar settings.

**Keywords:** Leadership Development, Decision-Making Training, Skill Enhancement, Organizational Growth, Strategic Decision-Making.

**Citation:** Al Hasni, I. (2024). Improving Leaders' Decision-Making Skills through Decision-Making Training Programs: The Case of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2766-2777), Antalya, Turkiye. *ISTES*.

### Introduction

The company has recognized some crucial truths about decision-making. The road to prosperity always comes with the decision-making skills necessary for any company, including the construction and engineering sectors,

to reach the top in the fast-paced world. Adverse decisions tend to influence project implementation, resource utilization, and performance negatively. Leaders must have the proper skill set across different functional roles and an informed mindset to make strategic choices. This is something that many companies are encountering difficulty within the field. Standardized decision-making processes tend not to be relevant for everybody. Values and strategy-driven leaders must deploy an anticipatory approach that is suitable for their demands. An atmosphere of transparency, teamwork, and lifelong learning leads to better-informed decisions and sounder strategies. The setting plans to create a platform to recognize leadership qualities and identify skills development areas. Enhancing decision-making skills in strategic thinking will aid in the competitive edge survival. Evidently, it is more likely to be chosen for good performance because of its reputation. This part shows us the background that how in today scenario to take the decisions is the capability which should be trained to the leaders. At the setting, we believe decisions produce success, so we live in a culture that supports the decision-making process. We know that addressing skill gaps helps you become better at strategic planning. The program follows a macro-strategy plan, which allows the leadership to upgrade its decision-making performance.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review on decision-making in my setting highlights strategy management and training to increase vital areas of effectiveness in decision-making. This research will demonstrate the importance of competence development in the organization, which will lead to assessing the capabilities and skills and propose proper training to enhance and improve the decision-making process and abilities of the leadership team. For example, Okoli and Watt (2018) state that specific training courses in scenario analysis and risk assessment value addition significantly enhance people's decision-making skills in these industries. This research will prove that proper training covers the gap between leaders' skills and decision-making styles. Also, the literature review will examine the different types and styles of decision-making that might be very successful in such industries. Several models are studied, such as rational decision-making and intuitive. These models could be used to enhance the decision-making processes. Moreover, the sensible model follows a thorough and systematic information analysis to understand the best possible decision. In contrast, the intuitive model depends on the subconscious processing of old experiences, Simon's work (2017). Utilizing these models in training modules will create a straightforward objective training program to improve my setting leaders' strategic decision-making ability. Furthermore, the organizational culture might be enabling or undermining effective decision-making processes. Studies revealed that transparency in culture, learning, and feedback improves decision-making efficiency. Johnson's (2019) research on corporate culture and how it impacts decision-making efficiency emphasizes how companies like my setting can create an environment that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving. Corporate culture is one of the most essential elements that must be built. As a result, decisions are better implemented, and goals are aligned with the strategic objectives, protecting it from bankruptcy and being pushed out of the market. This literature review will create the base, allowing my setting

to develop and implement the required and suitable training programs, choose from the studied decision-making models, and support the organizational culture.

### *Conceptual Framework*

This research theoretical framework dwells upon the interplay between leadership competencies, biases, and organizational culture and their combined impact on decision-making outcomes in construction and engineering companies. Leadership competencies, which are sets of skills and behaviors required to be a good leader, are recommended to directly influence the effectiveness of decision-making training programs. Drawing on Northouse's (2016) perspectives on leadership adaptability and effectiveness, this research treats these competencies as critical variables that could potentially elevate the quality of organizational decisions. Another independent variable based on classic studies by Kahneman and Tversky (1974), which analyses the way that systematic mental shortcuts and errors in adjustment determine decision-making, is cognitive biases.

This study aims to quantify how cognitive biases impact leaders' decision-making within the organizational framework. (Kahneman, D., & Tversky A., 1974, judgment under uncertainty). Finally, an organizational culture that is well elaborated by Schein (2010) is shared values and norms that drive organizational action. This study aims to show the role of a supportive culture in enhancing or undermining the effectiveness of decision-making training. The effort of culture congruence with strategic objectives on training outcomes will be investigated (Schein, H.E., 2010, Organization culture and Leadership Jossey -Bass). By integrating these variables, the research intends to explore how leadership training improvement can enhance decision-making capabilities and result in two more knowledgeable and strategic leadership approaches in the industry.

### *Components For the Conceptual Framework*

#### *Individual cognitive biases*

The individual perception of employees has played a crucial role in determining how they think; it is evident that this variable always depends on many factors, such as how the employee perceives himself within the organization on the decision-making abilities and how others easily influence him to make this decision. Finally, what the organization is doing to promote an open communication environment that will help and assist the employee in understanding the other opinions of the leadership team, and this can assist in formulating the right decision that may lead to successful and improved decision-making processes and confidence. Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow (2011).

#### *Organizational culture*

We are also looking at the impact of Organizational culture on the decision-making process. This study aims to show the role of a supportive culture in enhancing or undermining the effectiveness of decision-making training.

We will investigate the effect of culture congruence with strategic objectives on training outcomes (Schein, H.E., 2010, Organization Culture and Leadership Jossey-Bass).

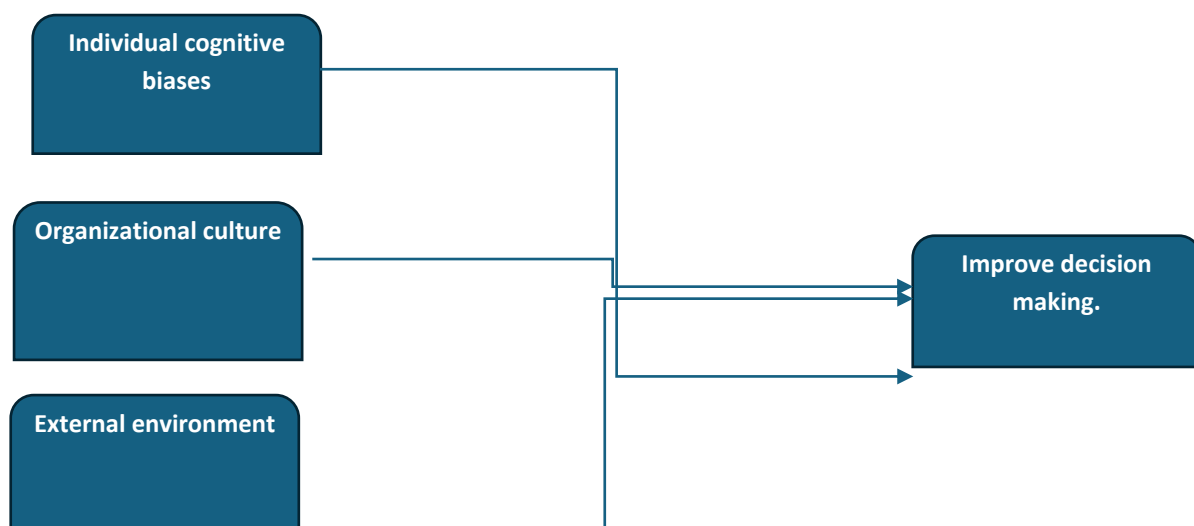
*External environment*

One of the main factors that contribute to the decision-making process is the external environment drives, which have a significant impact, driving the decision-making process to the analysis of the current market and changing variables that might affect the operations and slow down the process of decision-making based on uncertainty. The training proposed from the studies shows the significance of having such training to overcome such Hults in organizational operations and improve the quality of leaders and their decision-making abilities to ensure the objectives are met. Meyer & Rowan (1977) “Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony”

**Method**

**Research Design and Methodology.**

The proper research design, as well as rationale, introduces the conceptual framework of the paper, in which the author provides detailed information regarding the relationships between the variables significant for efficient decision-making and leadership development, especially from the example’s perspective. The Conceptual model that has been made is used to choose which variables should be observed, including leadership competencies, cognitive biases, company culture, and other factors that affect decision-making processes. The construction and engineering industry is undergoing rapid change at a fast pace with new challenges. Therefore, the rationale of the research, looking into the need to improve decision-making skills at the leadership level to cope with the dynamic environment of the construction and engineering industry, is formulated. The research will achieve this by scrutinizing these factors and their effects on decision-effectiveness by identifying main inhibitors and promoters. In addition, several short-term training programs will be introduced to close gaps and strengthen leadership productivity within the setting.



### *Setting/ context of the research*

The approach for investigating the process concerning the decision-making and the involvement of leaders in the company is based on a quantitative approach that serves the context of the decision-making process in the organization. By doing it through prepared questionnaires, analyzing data, and making quantified assessments, we can collect empirical data about the factors that impact decision-making processes, including organizational culture, leadership styles, and cognitive bias. By selecting and using only the quantitative data, the research study will be systemic and objective, thus developing a framework for the company to describe problem areas and create a tailored training program to address the challenges. Through this approach, the organization is strengthening the qualitative decision-making skills among the setting, which are essential for efficient strategic planning and well-informed decision-making.

### *Participants*

Participant reservation for the company research on managing decision-making and leader development will be through mid- and top-management teams that meet a particular number of criteria. To achieve this task using a methodological approach, the research targets the leaders within the company at a representative level regarding employees, including managers, supervisors, and executives directly involved in the decision-making process.

The research explicitly captures the information about competencies in decision-making, preferences, and challenges using data collection methods, including surveys and assessments. Such an approach will guarantee that the selected sample is represented to provide a well-rounded picture of the prevalent factors that influence decision-making processes within the organization. These data-driven findings will buttress leadership development initiatives and maximize their effectiveness.

### *Data collection instruments*

The company utilized quantitative data collection instruments to structure and measure the data from different areas influencing the upskilling leaders' decision-making. Questionnaires and standardized surveys have already been selected as the fundamental instruments that will be used to capture quantitative data from managers at the company, particularly concerning their leadership competencies, cognitive biases, and training needs.

These kinds of tools are created not to evoke one type of response; nevertheless, a response may be quantified and analyzed, providing data on factors such as decision-making styles, preferences, and obstacles. The study comprehensively analyzes the company's numerical decision-making using quantitative data collection methods. It presents a detailed review of the results, leading to designing and evaluating the training interventions.

### *Procedures*

The chosen approach employs scientific procedures for decision-making and leadership training procedures based on the significant principle of quantitative analysis. Survey instruments, questionnaires, and attachments along the setting's leaders are used to collect the qualitative measurements of their decision-making abilities, attitudes, and phenomena. These include rules that are adhered to systematically, ensuring a reliable and consistent process. The qualitative data obtained from surveys and assessments are summarized using statistical tests identical to descriptive and inferential statistics. Then, the patterns, correlations, and trends associated with decision-making effectiveness are identified. Adherence to solid data processes ensures the information in the research is empirical and can be used to suggest training strategies that are tailor-made to meet specific needs and improve the decision-making processes at the company.

### *Data analysis*

The role of data analysis methods in enhancing decision-making and upskilling leaders in the company in operationalizing the process is to apply quantitative techniques to the data that will be collected systematically. Quantitative data from surveys and assessments is submitted to rigorous statistical analysis, such as descriptive statistics, which allow the sum of the most important results, and inferential statistics, which enable the test hypothesis and find interrelations among the variables. Statistics-based tools such as SPSS or Excel are utilized to carry out the analysis procedures; as a result, individual insights related to leaders' decision-making capabilities, ingrained thinking patterns, and training skill gaps are generated. The research is going to gather data and use data analysis comprehensively for its interpretations, which shall then lead to actionable insights that will inform the creation of training interventions that will target decision-makers within the organization to increase the effectiveness of decision-making.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The research will follow ethical standards, ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity. Each participant will be provided with a written informed consent form.

### *Survey questioners.*

The questionnaire is divided into three themes, with each question to be measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Strongly agree =1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, and last Strongly Disagree = 5.

## **Results**

This data provides quantitative evidence to show how the training and skill development programs impact

leaders' decision-making capability. The report indicated a significant improvement in the decision-making capability of those who enrolled in the programs compared to those who did not, especially leaders who became exceedingly confident about their competence to make decisions, cognitive biases, and the ability to learn and apply different decision-making strategies. On the other hand, the findings emphasize the need to invest in developing specialized leadership programs that focus on filling. On the other hand, the learning and development of the decision makers to foster management will be the ongoing priority to better serve and guarantee the organization's sustained viability in the construction and engineering industry.

The survey results have provided valuable insights into the decision-making process at the setting. The post-analysis shows that many respondents are reactive regarding external components, implying that it is always prepared to benefit from new opportunities to enhance the quality of its products and stay at the top of the market. Moreover, nearly all the respondents do not accept that they tend to stick to their initial ideas regardless of the conflicting evidence, highlighting the firm's culture of adaptation and receptivity. The company has been performing well in the construction and engineering sector by focusing on its weaknesses and leveraging its strengths. The organization can concentrate on developing strategies to eliminate the barriers and choose training programs for its leaders. This way, the company will enhance its leadership in the industry and gain long-term sustainable growth. The survey outcomes provide the company's decision-making climate, strengths, and areas for improvement. Most of the subjects from the sample manifest a very active attitude toward the external reality. In this way, they can also innovate their products. This is a positive signal that it is ready to move faster than its competitors, take new risks for the business, and become huge. In the same vein, most respondents' response that one should not stick to the initial opinion in the presence of conflicting evidence pertains to a leadership culture of openness and flexibility that will result in an effective decision-making process in the setting. This finding provides an excellent opportunity for the company to survive in the construction and engineering industry. The trainees can elaborate more on the program and train the critical leaders by suggesting policies to address the laydown challenges. When The company has defined its solid sides and identified the weaknesses mentioned above, it has a high potential to become one of the market leaders with steady growth.

The gathered data was analyzed to demonstrate the STD Dev and Mean of the data collected through SPSS, which clearly shows the importance of the training of leadership in decision-making to improve the performance of the company; below are the variables used to collect data through quantitative analysis and the result:

Individual cognitive biases	The extent of the problem		
	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
Variables	n	M	SD



I overestimate my abilities and knowledge when making decisions.	21	3.450	1.234
I am easily influenced by others' opinions or suggestions, even if they contradict my beliefs.	21	3.750	1.118
The organization promotes open communication and transparency, allowing employees to express their opinions and ideas freely.	21	3.600	.0,998

### *Individual Cognitive Biases*

**Overestimating Abilities:** Most participants did poorly, with an average score of 0.34 and a standard deviation of 0.12, which is an indication of the average level of decision-making overconfidence for most of them regarding their abilities and knowledge. The overconfidence may sometimes result in poor judgments in critical thinking or if there is a need to be cautious while making decisions.

**Influence by Others:** Thus, this picture illustrates that the average mark is 3.750 with a standard deviation of 1.118, and it is believed that they are greatly affected by the opinions of others. Automation may, therefore, influence a man's deliberation power, and a decision-making process may undervalue an individual's experience and knowledge.

**Open Communication:** The mean score, 3.600, is very accurate, with a slight deviation of only 0.0998 standard deviations, and therefore, the organization has been successful in promoting transparency and open communication. This simple fact is a positive signal, which means that the staff members feel safe and encourage sharing ideas and opinions; this is, so to say, the key to an innovative and secure working environment.

Organizational culture	The extent of the problem		
	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
The organization values innovation and encourages employees to take calculated risks and explore new ideas.	21	2.250	0.910
The organizational structure at The company fosters collaboration and teamwork across departments and hierarchical levels.	21	2.250	0.639
The organization effectively monitors and adapts to changes in	21	2.250	0.910

the external market, such as emerging trends and competitor actions.			
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### Organizational Culture

**Valuing Innovation and Risk-taking:** The average score of 2.250 with a standard deviation of 0.910 is below the expected average of 3.0. This may indicate an impediment or a hurdle to supporting the ecosystem of innovation in both innovation and risk-taking behaviors. If the company plans to present a more robust approach to business difficulties, these could indeed be areas that would generate innovation.

**Collaboration and Teamwork:** The mean index of 2.250 with a standard deviation of 0.639 suggests that there are still some challenges in effectively achieving proper collaborative working for all departments. Enhancing this type would probably empower the members of the cross-functional teams to work effectively and be productive.

**Market Adaptation:** The same average score of 2.250 for market responsiveness capabilities suggests that although changes are taking place and some actions are being implemented, this firm may need to improve its ability to re-adjust itself to external market changes and competitor actions.

External environment	The extent of the problem		
	Participant	Mean	Std. Dev.
	n	M	SD
The regulatory environment significantly impacts the organization's decision-making processes and business strategies.	21	2.158	0.765
The organization proactively seeks opportunities in the external environment to innovate and differentiate itself from competitors.	21	2.350	1.040
I often stick to my initial opinions or ideas, even when presented with conflicting evidence.	21	2.600	1.142

### External Environment

**Regulatory Impact:** The average rating of 2.158 and standard deviation of 0.765 show the setting's regulatory circumstances, impact regulations, and strategic planning decision-making. This emphasizes the necessity of an elaborate plan with all the steps to overcome regulatory complications.

**Proactivity in Seeking Opportunities:** This group scored an average of 2.35 with a standard deviation of 1.04,

suggesting a moderate inclination to seize chances of innovation and dissimulation outside the set of competitors. Although this may seem complicated to achieve in the less desirable market, being proactive is the key to standing apart from others.

**Adaptability to Conflicting Evidence:** The subject demonstrates an average difficulty with a score of 2.600 and a standard deviation of 1.142. An observer might notice some rigidity in flexibility, though they are prone to change their opinions with time. Providing adaptability in thought processes may result in more dynamic and agile decision-making that is adjustable to complex situations.

## Discussion

The data collected suggests that The company has some essential strengths, like inculcating open communication while not ignoring the areas that require immediate attention to facilitate better decision-making and strategic planning. Emphasizing continuous innovation, cooperation, teamwork, and proactiveness in the face of market changes could be embraced on a much higher evolutionary level. Further, doing customized training that will focus on personal cognitive biases may contribute to reducing confidence and boosting critical skills among staffers. This analysis will identify the areas where the organization requires development and help implement those developments that add value and make the organization fit enough to face competition in a different environment.

### 1. Linking the survey result to the literature review:

The literature review highlights the strategic importance of effective decision-making and leadership at the company. Survey results align with the literature by demonstrating how leadership competencies and organizational culture influence decision-making outcomes. For instance, the literature by Okoli and Whatt (2018) emphasizes the role of training and enhancing decision-making skills, which corroborates these survey findings that structured training can significantly improve decision-making efficiency in this setting.

### 2. Linking survey results to the conceptual framework:

The conceptual framework of this study involves variables like leadership competency, cognitive biases, and organizational culture, which are critical for decision-making. Survey results are essential for quantifying the relationship between these variables and the company's decision-making effectiveness. For example, the framework anticipates that reducing cognitive biases through targeted training would enhance decision-making, a hypothesis supported by the survey finding that demonstrated improved decision quality post-training.

### 3. Linking survey results to hypothesis testing:

The hypothesis concerning the impact of leadership training on decision-making capabilities is directly tested through an analysis of survey data. For example, one hypothesis may state that leadership training reduces the effect of cognitive biases on decision-making. The survey data support this hypothesis by showing a marked

improvement in decision-making abilities and reduced cognitive biases among leaders who underwent training.

#### 4. Linking services to research questions and results

Research questionnaires are designed to gather data on specific aspects of the decision-making at the company, such as leaders' competencies and biases. The survey results provide empirical evidence to assist the current decision-making processes and identify specific areas for improvement in the alignment between the questionnaire focus and survey results to ensure that the research effectively addresses the questions about how training and leader development can be optimized to improve decision-making outcomes.

### Limitations

The limitation of the research would affect the successful outcome in decision-making, training, and leadership critically upskilling at the company. The most critical limitation is the heavy capital investment that would be required to develop high-quality and maintain the program. For example, new data shows that big organizations allocate from 1% to 5% of the annual budget for employee training. This expenditure could translate into a significant financial investment in an organization as huge as my setting. Moreover, the opportunity cost of training time, incurred when leaders and key personnel are engaged in learning instead of directly in revenue-generating activities, can even hurt short-term productivity. An average of 34 hours of training for each employee annually could represent a high downtime for any company with many employees.

Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness and ROI of training programs presents a significant challenge. Metrics measuring capability post-training improvement in decision-making and leading effectively are often direct but qualitative and subjective. According to surveys, companies make considerable investments in training, but only around 20% of the companies measure the impact of such initiatives on performance quantifiable and regularly. This measurement gap could leave in doubt the actual training benefits, hence the problematic justification for continued investment, particularly in such a dynamic industry whereby skills and requirements change quickly. It is this tightrope that The company must walk, continuing investment in skills development while balancing the imperative that such investment produces clear and measurable returns supporting long-term strategic goals.

### Conclusion

Concluding remarks while identifying the advantages of building quality training programs and leadership development initiatives to enhance decision-making also highlight the training and upskilling of leaders in the company. For The company to bid for complex projects, the leaders must have decision-making tools. It combines traditional educational methods with modern training techniques to meet the demands of the construction and engineering industry. The company is dedicated to ensuring that its leadership can address the current challenges and create future opportunities by fostering an environment of constant learning and

flexibility. In addition, the programs should meet the company's long-term business objectives and the dynamic nature of the global construction industry. Data-driven decision-making processes could significantly improve the operational effectiveness and project results. Workshops, mentoring, and collaborative projects can also enhance the skill sets of the leaders of the setting. They are likely to become agile and active through such pursuits. Such activities would not only improve the performance of both the individual and the team but also convert The company into a savvy leader in the market who is ready to adopt new technologies and market trends.

## Recommendations

It is essential to continue developing decision-making training programs, ensuring they stay current with industry trends and incorporate cutting-edge tools. This strategy will empower leaders to make well-informed decisions that drive organizational advancement.

## Acknowledgments

This Research was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy and Funded by the Modern College of Business and Science Oman

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## Effect of Skill-Oriented Webinars on the Progress of Employees Performance: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** Purpose – This study aims to evaluate the extent to which webinars increase the progress of employees' performance in one of the organizations in Oman. It measures employees' level of satisfaction regarding webinar-based training. In addition, the study determines the correlation between webinars as training tools and employees' performance. Design/methodology/approach – A Positivist philosophy underscores the design of the research. The study adopted a quantitative method including surveys administrated randomly through Google Forms to 50 participants within the case institution. The survey includes 8 closed-ended questions that are classified into 3 sections to measure participants' perceptions regarding the usage of webinars for training. Descriptive Statistics and correlation examination are used for analyzing the data. Findings - The findings indicate that webinars are effective training tools for advancing employee performance. Significantly, even though the data comes from a single case study, it could impact how broadly the results can be applied. The research introduces a perspective for further investigation in this field to confirm the outcomes in comparable organizations. Originality/Value -The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings, into the importance of webinars in advancing employee performance. The study also adds valuable insights to the existing knowledge regarding employee training and development.

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership, Employee Performance, Productivity, Decision-Making, Creativity, and Teamwork.

**Citation:** Ishaq, S.A.M. (2024). Effect of Skill-Oriented Webinars on the Progress of Employees Performance: The Case of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2778-2790), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

### Introduction

Webinars are application tools used for sharing knowledge and training. Azubuike and Isaac (2022) examined webinars in their study, defining them as occasions where a speaker shares knowledge with an audience. They observed that webinars have gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic as an alternative to in-person gatherings. Despite their widespread use, many organizations and schools have incorporated webinars into their communication strategies without fully grasping their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The authors stressed the significance of thoroughly evaluating these elements to effectively organize and conduct webinar sessions. (Azubuike & Isaac, 2022).

Furthermore, considering the current global economic challenges, organizations are constantly exploring ways to boost employee productivity without incurring excessive costs. Web-based training emerges as a cost-efficient solution which motivates organizations to integrate more online training into their practices. The literature indicates that within the context of Oman, to my knowledge, there is a scarcity of studies that measure the impact of webinars as tools of training on the progress of the employees as well as the productivity of an organization.

This research aims to address this gap in the literature. It offers valuable insights in this regard to various organizations, especially Human Rights Institutions. For the case organization, the results of this study help in assessing the value of webinars in improving employee job performance. It also sheds light on which aspects of job performance are most influenced by webinars. As a result, Human Rights Institutions are considering reallocating their training budget from traditional methods to online training. The findings also serve as a foundation for creating tailored webinars to train employees in specific areas and achieve desired job outcomes. For other organizations, the study's results demonstrate that webinars can enhance employee job performance over time.

### **Problem Statement**

One of the functions of Human Rights institutions is to educate the public in areas related to their rights and responsibilities. One effective method they use is hosting webinars to raise people's awareness and understanding of human rights in the country. On the other hand, these webinars not only help the case organization staff learn better and perform more efficiently but also save time and resources required for continuous training. They also allow staff from different organizations to participate in training simultaneously, overcoming geographical barriers. This is crucial as a deep understanding of human rights issues is essential for staff to promote human rights effectively. Moreover, feedback obtained from both employees who have attended webinars, and the organizers will be used to improve future webinar strategies.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study has practical applications within the realm of human rights institutions. Here are some key aspects highlighting the importance of this study;

**Practical Implications;** The study findings could offer perspectives to human rights institutions concerning the effectiveness of utilizing webinars as a training tool to boost employee performance. This insight could aid organizations in making informed decisions regarding their training approaches.

**Employee Growth;** Understanding how webinars influence employee performance can lead to training programs customized to meet the specific requirements of employees in human rights institutions thereby fostering their professional growth.

**Resource Management;** Through evaluating webinar effectiveness, organizations can efficiently allocate resources by investing in training methods that have demonstrated efficacy and benefit for employee



development.

Knowledge Enrichment; The study enriches the existing knowledge base on training techniques within human rights institutions offering insights for future research endeavors and academic dialogues.

## Literature Review

### Webinars Impact the Skill Development of Employees

Podkamennaya and Nevolina (2017) explained how webinars play a significant role in improving employees' skills by providing learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom environment and focusing on the learner's needs (Fetisova, Podkamennaya, & Nevolina, 2017). Moreover, Litsova (2020) highlighted that online training methods like webinars are increasingly popular for their flexibility and cost-effectiveness in enhancing education and skills within organizations (Litsova, 2020). Using webinars showed that applicants can simply gain skills without disordering their routine of work (Оксана et al., 2022). However, many challenges arise while using webinars due to the absence of face-to-face communication.

#### *Effectiveness of Using Webinars on Employees' Performance across Various Professions*

It is evident that webinars enhance the information and skills of workers. Podkamennaya and Nevolina (2017) discussed how webinars have an important role in developing workers' skills through a learner-centered teaching and learning methodology (Fetisova, Podkamennaya, & Nevolina, 2017). These online conferences are broadly used within several businesses, and are extremely valued by specialists who are looking to acquire new knowledge and views (Dewangan & Verma, 2021).

Furthermore, Litsova (2020) emphasized that online methods of training such as webinars are becoming popular because they are flexible and cost-effective in the development of education and the enhancement of employees' skills (Litsova, 2020). Hosting webinars show that employees can practically improve skills without disorder of their day-to-day routines (Оксана et al., 2022). However, conducting webinars does pose challenges because of the lack of face-to-face interaction; thus, careful consideration of instructional design and engagement strategies is essential (Gen, 2009).

Various research studies have indicated the effectiveness of webinars in educating professionals on reproductive counseling, particularly emphasizing fertility promotion. Additionally, webinars are beneficial in training humanities specialists, improving their performance and the quality of education provided. The use of webinars for distance learning has also shown advantages in enhancing skills without disrupting daily work schedules. Furthermore, a webinar incorporating behavior therapy has demonstrated feasibility and positive outcomes in addressing workplace depression among employees. Moreover, a community service webinar focusing on performance management in business has proven successful in sharing knowledge and practical insights on performance indicators.

### *Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Webinars as a Training Tool for Employees*

Some of the studies found that there are advantages of the webinars including that they have proven to be a valuable training tool, offering flexibility and cost-effectiveness in delivering education as found by (Guanci, 2010). Similarly, a study showed that webinars create an environment that enhance interactions and engagement (Wang, 2008). Furthermore, another study indicates a positive observable impact on participants' knowledge and behavior (Mckinney, 2017).

However, some challenges exist in organizing the webinars such as the absence of in-person interaction and the importance of thoughtful instructional design considerations (Guanci, 2010). One study showed that the decision to utilize webinars for training is influenced by factors like perceived ease of use, computer self-efficacy, and the quality of the internet (Malik, 2015). Nevertheless, despite these challenges, webinars are expected to remain a method for training and outreach, particularly in many fields including human rights.

### *Obstacles and Challenges Encountered when Implementing Webinars for Employee Growth within Human Rights Organizations*

During the review of existing literature, it becomes apparent that conducting webinars to support the growth of human rights organizations can face several challenges. One significant obstacle is the lack of face-to-face interaction, which requires careful consideration at all webinar stages and in the development of presentation materials (Wan Mohd Yunus et al., 2019). Another difficulty involves the practicality and acceptance of webinar interventions. However, a study demonstrated that implementing a webinar program to address workplace depression was viable, successful, and well-received, leading to a high completion rate and positive outcomes in combating depression (Guanci, 2010).

Moreover, organizations might face impediments when utilizing distance education methods (Soomyung, Kim, Cho, Zane, L., & Berge, 2001). Additionally, incorporating blended learning approaches that combine face-to-face training sessions can help address challenges like budget constraints for travel expenses and the demand for timely or competency-based training (Holton et al., 2006). In conclusion, webinars serve as a resource for fostering employee development; nevertheless, planning and consideration of potential obstacles are vital for successful execution.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions of the study include:

1. To what extent do webinars increase the progress of the employees within the case Organization?
2. To what extent do employees feel engaged and satisfied with webinar-based training initiatives?

## Objectives

The study aims to;

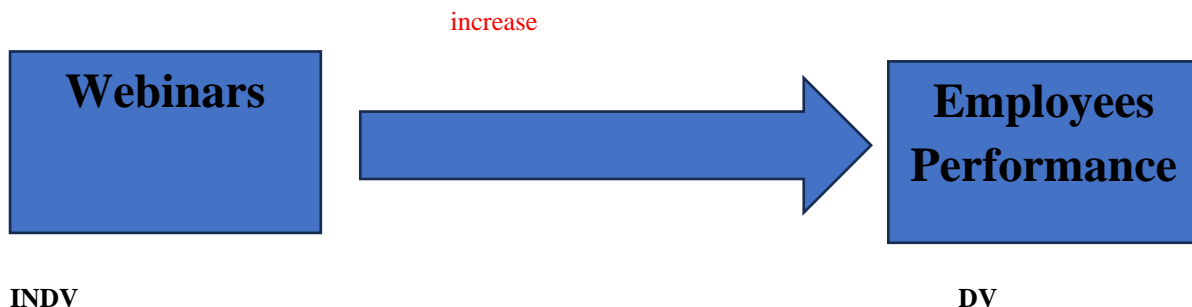
- Evaluate how webinars increase the progress of employees' performance within the case organization.
- Assess employee engagement and satisfaction levels with a webinar-based training tool.

## Method

### Conceptual Framework

From the literature review I provided earlier, the key variables for the research have been identified as follows;

- a. Webinars are considered as the Independent Variable
- b. Employee performance is considered as the Dependent Variable



Webinars function as the independent variable, which means they are considered as the factor being controlled to detect its consequence on the additional variable which is “employee performance”. Webinars as a training tool implemented in the case Institution have influenced employee performance. Employee performance is directly impacted by the webinar-based training programs serving as the response that reflects how well employees perform based on these initiatives. The connection between webinars and employee performance is viewed as a cause-and-effect relationship. The research framework aims to explore how changes in webinar usage affect employee performance levels investigating the impact of webinars on enhancing employees' effectiveness within the Human Rights Institution.

### *Hypothesis*

The study consists of two hypotheses:

(H1): Webinars increase employees' performance within the case organization.

The hypothesis proposes the impact of webinars in boosting employee performance in the case setting. It suggests that using webinars for training and development might not result in an enhancement of employees' overall performance within the institution.

(H2): Employees in the case organization prefer using webinars as training tools.

The hypothesis suggests that employees in the case organization might favor webinars as a means of enhancing

their skills.

### *Research Philosophy*

The research adopted a positivist approach that depends on testing theories through surveys. Furthermore, the deductive method focuses on a principle that entails experimenting with theories to gather information. This procedure involves employing structured techniques to guarantee researcher independence and choosing appropriate sample size for making broad inferences (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2008; 107).

### *Data Collection*

The research used quantitative methods to investigate how webinars impact employee performance at a case organization. To achieve this, a survey consisting of 8 questions on a 5-point Likert Scale was administered to 50 employees from the organization under study. The survey, based on existing literature, aimed to collect numerical data related to the effectiveness of webinars on employee progress. It was tested beforehand and included two main sections along with demographic inquiries. Original data was collected by creating and distributing the questionnaire among employees at the workplace. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) had three parts focusing on demographics, employee views on webinar influence on their performance and satisfaction, and engagement levels with webinar usage.

The first section of the survey included three items and aimed to understand how employees perceive the impact of webinars on their performance. The following section also consists of three items, focusing on gauging satisfaction and engagement levels through webinar usage. Each of the eight survey questions uses a 5-point rating system that varies across different questions. Moreover, the survey includes an introduction that clearly states the research goals.

### *Data Analysis*

I received 30 survey responses, resulting in a response rate of 50%, which is quite satisfactory and helps validate the study findings. The reliability of the survey items was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ). According to Warrens (2015), an alpha score of 0.70 or higher is considered good for this type of survey. In the research, the Cronbach Alpha was calculated as 0.816, indicating a reliable scale level according to (Shojima & Toyoda, 2002). The survey data underwent frequency analysis, mean calculations, and standard deviation using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

## **Results**

Section (1) was analyzed for frequency and SPSS computed the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for survey items (1-3). Details of the descriptive statistics for the initial three items can be found in Table (1).

Table 1. Section (1): (Demographical Information):

Survey Questions	Mean M	Standard deviation SD
1) Choose a <b>Level of Profession within the Case Organization.</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>0.407</b>
2) Choose <b>Level of Experience.</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>1.296</b>
3) Choose your <b>Participation Frequency in self-oriented webinars:</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>0.712</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2.415</b>

The variable (see table 1) “*Level of Profession*” scores the lowest mean average which is 1.20, with a standard deviation of 0.407. The range of scores falls between option (1) which is “Staff” and option (2) which is “Middle Management”, indicating that most respondents' positions are closer to the lower end of the scale which is “Staff”.

Concerning the Variable (see table 1) “*Level of Experience*”, the mean score is the second lowest mean which is 2.90, with a standard deviation of 1.296. This shows a moderate level of experience among the respondents suggesting that they generally have variable experience levels and have various skills and knowledge.

Regarding the variable (see table1) “*Participation Frequency in self-oriented webinars*”, it scores the highest mean is 3.90, with a standard deviation of 0.712. With scores ranging from 2 Occasionally, 3 Moderately, 4 Frequently, to 5 Very frequently, it seems that respondents have a positive outlook on attending webinars on average. The narrower range and low standard deviation imply that attitudes towards attending webinars are quite consistent among respondents.

The Analysis implies that concentrating on position and experience scores around the lower end of the scale which may indicate that the sample consists of individuals with relatively junior positions with various experience. This could have implications for the level of expertise and seniority within the sample. In addition, the positive mean score for attending webinars suggests that, on average, respondents have a favorable attitude towards participating in webinars. This could imply that webinars are well-received as a mode of training or

knowledge dissemination within the context of the study. Moreover, the narrow spread of scores for attending webinars indicates relatively consistent participation among respondents. This suggests that there is a compromise or standardization in the perception of webinars among the sample.

The analysis of the data was implemented concerning their research inquiries. One of the research questions posed was, " *To what extent do webinars increase the progress of the employees within the case organization?* ". To gauge participants' views on this matter, section (2) including (3) survey items (4-6) underwent frequency analysis, with SPSS calculating the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). Descriptive statistics for the first three items are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. ( To what extent do webinars increase the progress of the employees within the case organization):

Survey Questions	Mean M	Standard deviation SD
4) To what extent do you rate the current statement "self-oriented training webinar improved my professional skills?"	2.47	.776
5) To what extent do you rate the current statement "self-oriented training webinar is beneficial to me"?	3.30	.651
6) To what extent do you rate the current statement "self-oriented training webinar increase the progress of employees' performance "?	2.53	.730
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>2.157</b>

The variable "*Improved Professional Skills*" (see table 2) scored 2.47 as the lowest mean, with a standard deviation of 0.776. This shows that, overall, participants feel they have experienced a moderate level of improvement in specific skills after attending webinars. The wider standard deviation indicates varied opinions on the extent of "Improved Professional Skills".

The variable "*Self-oriented Training Webinar is Beneficial to Me*" (see table 2) scored a mean at 3.30 which is the highest variable, with a standard deviation of 0.651. This implies that, on the whole, participants perceive a moderate level of advantages or positive outcomes resulting from webinar participation. The standard deviation

reflects differing views on the benefits derived from webinars.

The mean of the variable *“Webinars Increase the Progress of Employees' Performance”* (see table 2) is 2.53, and a standard deviation rate of 0.730. This proposes that participants in general feel they reached a modest level of development in their work skills by using webinars. The standard deviation indicated variable insights concerning professional development progress.

The analysis implies that the mean scores for the variables *“Improved Professional Skills, Self-oriented Training Webinar is Beneficial to Me*, and *“Webinar Increase the Progress of Employees' Performance”* show that most respondents think webinars have a positive impact on skill progress and career advancement. On the other hand, the fluctuating responses of standard deviations for the variables *“Improved Professional Skills, Self-oriented Training Webinar is Beneficial to Me”*, and *“Webinar Increase the Progress of Employees' Performance”* , propose that respondents have different opinions on the webinar's impact. This variety may be driven by individual practices and perspectives. In summary, the information proposes that while respondents, in general, realize webinars as valuable tools for the development of skills and professionals, there are some variations in how they observe the detailed impacts. These results propose valued visions regarding the extent to which webinars are considered tools for career progress, highlighting the various opinions among the study's respondents' group.

The second research question posed was *“To what extent do employees feel engaged and satisfied with webinar-based training initiatives?”*. To gauge participants' views on this matter, section (3) including (2) survey items (7-8) underwent frequency analysis, with SPSS calculating the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). Descriptive statistics for the first three items are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. To what extent do employees feel engaged and satisfied with webinar-based training initiatives?

Survey Questions	Mean M	Standard deviation SD
7) To what extent do you rate the current statement “I feel engaged during webinar-based training sessions?”	2.70	.750
8) To what extent are you satisfied with the quality of the webinar-based training?	2.33	.711
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.03</b>	<b>1.461</b>



The mean rate for the variable (see table 3) "*I feel Engaged during Webinar-based Training Sessions*" is 2.70 which is the highest, with a standard deviation of 0.750. The lowest and highest scores are 2 ) Slightly engaged, (3) Moderately engaged, and (4) Very engaged, showing that respondents generally reported a moderate level of engagement. The standard deviation suggests there is some variability in the responses.

Regarding the question: "*To what extent are you satisfied with the quality of the webinar-based training?*" (see table 3), the mean score is 2.33 which is the lowest within this section, with a standard deviation of 0.711. The range of scores falls between (1) Very Dissatisfied, (2) Dissatisfied, (3) Neutral, and (4) Satisfied, indicating an overall moderate level of satisfaction among respondents, with some variation in their responses as well.

The analysis of the descriptive data implies that the average scores for the variables (see table 3) "*I feel Engaged during Webinar-based Training Sessions*" and "*To what extent are you satisfied with the quality of the webinar-based training*" fall into the moderate range, indicating that most respondents reported a medium level of engagement and satisfaction. This proposes a balanced interpretation of engagement and satisfaction of the respondent's feelings. The modest variations in the responses, as revealed by the standard deviations, suggest that there is a range of perceptions and experiences regarding engagement and satisfaction among the participants. This variety was derived from various views and experiences among the respondents of the survey. Furthermore, the modest levels of engagement and satisfaction showed possible ranges for improvement in both aspects. Despite the generally modest ratings, the diverse responses explored wide viewpoints and experiences. These findings propose valuable views on the way employees notice their level of engagement and satisfaction, providing vital data for understanding the varied views and practices of contributors in this study.

## Discussion

The survey findings are in alignment with the reviewed literature within this research. The study indicates that webinars are considered a method of training and disseminating knowledge within the case organization. Additionally, **it** proves that webinars are used as tools that contribute to Improved Professional Skills. It proposes that these tools have satisfactory insight to be used as valuable tools for organizing training and knowledge-sharing needs in the case organization. This implies that webinars are educational tools that transfer important material to the participants. It also links with a wide audience, allowing people to contribute to distance learning experiences that align with Guanci's (2010) concept. Accordingly, this is useful in conditions including working remotely or working in various locations.

These findings present valued visions about how employees understand their choices and level of satisfaction, providing vital data for the varied views and practices of participants in webinars. Moreover, the findings illustrate that the performance development of employees observes webinars as valuable for their professional development and job progress. This designates that webinars are measured as important resources for improving qualified skills, and encouraging job development as pointed out by Оксана et al.( 2022).

### **Analysis of the Hypothesis**

(H1): Webinars increase employees' performance within the case setting.

The analysis illustrates that the impact of webinars in boosting employee performance in the case setting is valid. It suggests that using webinars for training and development may result in an enhancement of employees' overall performance within the institution.

(H2): Employees in the human rights case setting prefer using webinars as training tools.

The hypothesis is valid because the analysis implies that employees in the case organization prefer attending webinars as a mean of enhancing their skills ..

### **Implications and Conclusion**

The study derived some outcomes. The case organization utilizes webinars as a cost-efficient means for ongoing training and development of their staff. The discoveries steer the formulation and execution of webinar programs to effectively boost employee performance. Moreover, the study informs HR policies within the case institution highlighting the significance of integrating webinar training into their growth strategies. This prompted the creation of standards and top practices for leveraging webinars to enhance employee performance. The study enriches the knowledge of employee training and development within the case organization, particularly focusing on the efficacy of webinars. It sparks exploration into innovative approaches for improving employee performance within similar organizational environments. Furthermore, enhanced employee performance results in improved service delivery of the case organization. Increased skills and knowledge among employees could contribute to a knowledgeable and empowered workforce. After all, the study demonstrates how webinars as tools of learning can positively impact employee performance. Yet it is important to note that the study's short duration hinders an evaluation of how webinars sustainably affect employee performance over time. More in-depth studies are required to address how webinars would support the productivity of an organization in emergency conditions.

### **Acknowledgments**

This Research was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy and Funded By the Modern College of Business and Science in Oman

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## Improving Investment Outcomes through Effective Decision-Making: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** Purpose: the aim of this research is to explore, from the perspectives of employees at an investment state-owned enterprise in Oman, the extent to which the investment decision-making process (1) improves investment outcomes, and (2) increases organizational efficiency. In addition to revealing how the process is perceived, the study reports on the relationship between stages of investment decision-making (pre-assessment/deal sourcing, opportunity assessment, due diligence, deal closing) and the effectiveness of investment decisions. The study is based on the assumption that structured and thorough investment decision-making processes increase the efficiency and effectiveness of strategic investments. Design/methodology/approach: a positivist philosophy informs the research design of the study. A quantitative case study approach involving surveys administered to 55 male and female employees at the Omani investment firm was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics analysis was used for data analysis of the quantitative component of the study. Findings: the findings suggest that structured processes in pre-assessment/deal sourcing and thorough due diligence improve the strategic alignment and risk management of investments. The findings suggest that optimizing these processes can significantly enhance the effectiveness of investment decisions within the enterprise. Significantly, although the sample is taken from one case study through a limited number of participants, which may jeopardize the generalizability of the findings, the study opens a new horizon of research in this area to validate the results in similar locations. Originality/value: The study provides insights, via the quantitative findings, into the complex interplay between rational analysis and behavioral factors in the investment decision-making process. It spotlights the need for continuous improvement and adaptation in these processes to achieve strategic investment objectives. The insights gained from this study are useful to management, and strategists within state-owned enterprises and similar organizations. It provides them with an understanding of the value of integrating structured decision-making processes with behavioral insights to optimize investment outcomes.

**Keywords:** Investment Decision-Making, Strategic Investments, Risk Management, Organizational Efficiency, Oman.

**Citation:** Al Mandhari, S. (2024). Improving Investment Outcomes through Effective Decision-Making: The case of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2791-2806), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Making investments decisions is very much linked with the efficiency of achieving organization strategic outcomes. The decisions made regarding investments are not vital for the success of the organization, but also play a significant role in supporting broader economic goals. Throughout the investment decision making process various stages such as assessment, evaluating opportunities conducting due diligence and finalizing deals are key factors that influence the ultimate decision making outcome (Dogandžić & Dogandžić 2020). Traditional economic theories suggest that decisions are typically made by weighing risks and rewards in a manner. However recent studies propose a perspective. Behavioral economics and finance introduce the idea that human behavior, which can often be irrational, plays a role in shaping decisions. In the literature review we will investigate into this interplay between irrational factors that impact investment choices specifically focusing on how these factors influence investment decision making (El-Massri, Abdelrahman, & Elrazaz, 2020; Musfidah, Aji, & Hartono, 2022).

Despite the wealth of literature on the aspects of making investment decisions, there is still a noticeable gap in empirical research particularly in Oman and similar markets. Many studies do not thoroughly investigate how steps in the investment process such as preliminary assessment, opportunity evaluation, due diligence and finalizing deals, impact the efficiency and effectiveness of investment decisions in real world organizational settings. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the investment decision making process within the ITHCA Group. It aims to uncover how each stage of this process influences investment outcomes and explore ways to enhance decision making effectiveness by integrating decision making processes with behavioral insights. By focusing on this area, valuable academic knowledge addition will be achieved, beside providing practical guidance for enhancing strategic investment decisions in state owned enterprises and similar entities in Oman.

## Literature Review

The outcome of decisions is influenced by different factors. Human behavior plays a crucial role in any decision as these behaviors can't be separated and ignored during the process of decision making. Therefore, decision making process is influenced by multiple factors other than foreseen factors. The study of Dogandžić and Dogandžić (2020) in the disparity between expected reasonableness and actual behavior in markets, indicating that investors are influenced by finance factors. This reflect that decision making is solely driven by psychological and behavioral elements and not only by logic. This might be the case in any decision in the human being daily practices.

El Massri, Abdelrahman and Elrazaz (2020) suggested another opinion stating that strategic investment decision making does not involve only human behavior, but also subjective intuition and judgment of the decision maker. They highlighted the importance in comprehending how different factors interact with or impact decision

makers' intuition in investment processes (El Massri, Abdelrahman & Elrazaz 2020). Musfidah, Aji and Hartono (2022). The studies also acknowledge and support that decision making is often influenced by difference factors which need to be identified to set the right measures and frameworks to minimize the influence of these factors in taking the strategic decisions such as investments.

### **Key Factors Influencing Investment Decision-Making Process**

Psychological aspects and strategic evaluations play a significant role in influencing the process of investment decisions. Ortiz Teran et al. (2021) challenge the idea of purely logical investment decision making by demonstrating that emotions come into play through brain regions associated with emotions being triggered during investment tasks, indicating their importance in investment choices (Ortiz Teran, Díez, & López Pascual, 2021). Conitzer (2021) and Obeng (2019) discuss decision theory as a crucial foundation for rational decision-making processes, highlighting normative models of rationality that are often compared against real world behaviors in financial decision-making scenarios (Conitzer, 2021); (Obeng, 2019). Considering these different aspects which impact the decision-making process, it is very important to identify the key factors influencing investment decision-making process and accordingly set the right processes and actions at each stage of your decisions to minimize the influence of these factors in the decision making process. From investment point of view, each investment stage has its own characteristics and influence once it comes to decision making.

#### *Pre-Assessment/Deal Sourcing*

This stage involves evaluating potential investment opportunities. Research indicates that this phase is crucial for effective management and investment decision-making. Potryvaieva et al. (2020) show that the pre-assessment phase is key for enterprises to ensure effective use of resources and guide the subsequent stages of investment (Potryvaieva, Pelypkanych, & Potryvaieva, 2020).

#### *Opportunity Assessment*

Opportunity evaluation involves examining whether the investment has the potential to align with strategic goals. Stoilov, Stoilova and Vladimirov (2021) conducted research to investigate how numerical models can help investors evaluate investment opportunities using portfolio theory. Additionally, each opportunity would require different tools and methodologies to assess the opportunity especially those opportunities which are assessed based on benchmarking on similitar business regionally and globally.

#### *Due-Diligence*

Due diligence phase is very crucial for investors to examine the details of the investment to uncover any possible risks. Aljuhaishi and Kadhim (2023) stress the importance of incorporating methods, at this point as it allows investors to evaluate different project aspects by considering both financial and non-financial elements (Aljuhaishi and Kadhim 2023). The time spent at the due-diligence phase would always be of a good value to



identify and lower the investment risks.

### *Deal Closing*

The final stage, deal closing, requires investors to make a commitment and negotiate terms and conditions for the sales and purchase agreement (SPA), shareholder agreement and other documents. Multiple studies believe that even at the deal closing and finalization stage, the decisions made are a mix of rational analyses and emotional responses, indicating the complication of investment decision-making and supporting the believe that this stage would have the same influence in decision making as other stages. (Bisati, Haque, Ganai, & Gulzar, 2021).

### *Conclusion*

The literature review concludes that different factors would influence the decision making process. Reflecting this on the investment decision making stages, each stage has its own influences which might impact the decision making outcome. Studies on examining the complex connection between the various stages of making investment decisions (independent variables) and the quality and success of the final investment choices (dependent variable) in different sectors and businesses, would help to identify if a strong implementation on investment practices are adopted. This study seeks to assess how phases like pre assessment/deal sourcing, opportunity evaluation, due diligence, and deal closure impact investment decisions within the ITHCA Group. Starting by testing the current situation and then atessing the impact of these stages in the investment decision outcomes. The goal is to understand the influence of these factors on the outcome and how they are interconnected. This study will examine the current decision making processes at ITHCA and offer insights on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of investment decisions.

## **Research Question**

After considering the research goals outlined earlier, the main research question would be: " To what extent do the pre-assessment/deal sourcing, opportunity assessment, due-diligence, and deal closing stages influence the effectiveness of investment decision-making within the ITHCA Group?"

The research question explores how each stage of the investment decision making process influences the overall achievements and efficiency of investment results in a strategic government owned investment entity operating in Oman's technology and telecommunications industries.

## **Research Variables**

The research identifies the following independent and dependent variables and the relationship between them:

*Independent Variables:*

1. *Pre-assessment/deal sourcing:* this is the step where potential investment options are discovered and located.
2. *Opportunity assessment stage:* it involves assessing the strategic fit and feasibility of the investment. It also assesses the market and applies benchmarking of the assessed opportunity to market peers.
3. *Due-diligence stage:* a detailed assessment of a business or investment opportunity to weigh its risks and value. It validates all provided data aiming to minimize the risks as much as possible.
4. *Deal closing:* the last stage involves negotiations and carrying out the transaction to formalize the investment.

*Dependent Variables:*

1. *Investment decision-making:* The outcome and effectiveness of the investment decisions made by the ITHCA Group.

**Conceptual Framework and Variable Relationships**

The study investigates how stages of the investment decision making process influence the effectiveness of those decisions. The study seeks to understand how following a systematic and thorough approach in these phases leads to investment results within the ITHCA Group. It also delves into the contribution of each stage, in shaping the decision making procedure.

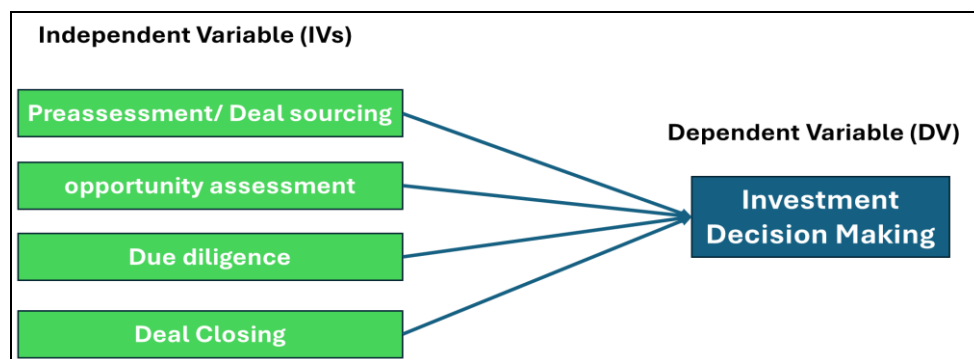


Figure 1. The Influence of stages of investment on the Investment Decision-Making Process effectiveness

**Research Methodology**

The data collection for this research will employ a quantitative approach, focusing on the objective measurement of the independent variables' influence on the dependent variable within the ITHCA Group's investment decision-making process. The choice of a quantitative design for this research is primarily driven by

the objective to empirically measure and analyze the impact of various stages in the investment decision-making process on the outcomes of such decisions within the ITHCA Group. This approach aligns with the research's goal to quantitatively assess the extent to which structured processes in pre-assessment/deal sourcing, opportunity assessment, due diligence, and deal closing contribute to improving investment outcomes and organizational efficiency.

### **Data Collection**

A quantitative case study approach is used to assess the extent to which initial assessment/deal sourcing, opportunity evaluation, due-diligence and deal finalization impact the quality of investment decision-making process at the ITHCA Group. Toward this purpose and based on the reviewed literature and previous studies on corporate investment strategies, a perception survey comprising of 12, 5-point Likert Scale items has been distributed to all personnel involved across several departments including investment, finance, strategy, risk assessment, and management at ITHCA group. This comprehensive survey aimed to collect quantitative data pertinent to understanding the dynamics at play within the group's decision-making mechanisms.

The survey was divided into three targeted sections. The first section comprised of four items and aimed to measure participants' perceptions on the extent to which the current implementation practices and status of various independent variables within the group's investment process. The second section also includes four items and focuses on the perceived impact these independent variables have on the outcomes of investment decisions. The third section of the survey includes four items measuring how these variables could be optimized to enhance the effectiveness of the overall decision-making process. All the 12 items of the survey consider a 5-point scale (1- Not at all/Strongly Disagree, 2- Slightly/Disagree, 3 – Moderately/ Neutral, 4 – Highly/Agree and 5- Extremely/Strongly Agree). The survey includes an introductory section that clearly explains the purpose of the research.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The study followed ethical guidelines regarding informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were briefed on the research's objective and their option to opt out at any point. All data was securely kept and will not be disclosed to third parties without the participants' explicit approval.

### *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were analyzed through the perception survey which was administered to 55 participants. As illustrated in Appendix 2, 38 surveys were received providing a response rate at 69.1% which is a satisfactory percentage that can validate the results of the study. The reliability of the survey items has been substantiated by an overall Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The alpha score of .70 or higher in a survey of this nature is considered good Peterson's (1994).

The survey responses were subjected to the frequency analysis, mean and standard deviation. The analysis is split into three parts, each with a calculated mean and standard deviation score (see Appendix 3) that gives an overview of how respondents view various aspects of the investment decision making process.

## Results

The collected data were analyzed with respect to research questions and the impact of the independent variables on the investment decision making in respect to the three sections of the survey. The first section set “To quantity participants’ perceptions on the extent to which the current implementation practices and status of various independent variables within the group's investment process?”. To measure participants’ perceptions in this regard, the first 4 items of the survey (1-4) were subjected to the frequency analysis, the average Mean (M) and the Standard Deviation (SD). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the first four items.

Table 1. Section 1 - Current Status of Independent Variables

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always		
<i>Section 1:</i> Current Status of Independent Variables (GM = 3.09, SD = 0.48)	9) How frequently is pre-assessment/deal sourcing conducted in your department?	Never (9.1%)	Rarely (36.4%)	Sometimes (45.5%)	Often (9.1%)	Always (0%)	2.58	0.50
	10) To what extent is opportunity assessment thorough in evaluating potential investments?	Not at all thorough (9.1%)	Slightly thorough (9.1%)	Moderately thorough (72.7%)	Very thorough (9.1%)	Extremely thorough (0%)	2.82	0.44
	11) How would you rate the comprehensiveness of due-diligence performed on investment opportunities?	Very poor (0%)	Poor (9.1%)	Average (27.3%)	Good (63.6%)	Excellent (0%)	3.58	0.36
	12) How effectively are deal-closing activities managed and executed?	Very ineffectively (0%)	Ineffectively (9.1%)	Somewhat effectively (45.5%)	Effectively (45.5%)	Very effectively (0%)	3.37	0.41

Analysis of the first four items of the survey indicates that the majority of participants views that the current status of the Pre-assessment/Deal Sourcing, Opportunity Assessment, Due Diligence and Deal Closing are

scoring less than average. The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed towards level 3 (Sometimes/average) with an overall mean at 3.09 and a standard deviation at 0.48. The analysis of the SD points out that the majority of respondents' answers are clustered around the mean. The mean score of the third variable (Due Diligence) was the highest ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.36$ ). This is followed in order by variable four – Deal Closing – ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ). Variable two, Opportunity Assessment, scored a Mean at 2.82 and a SD at 0.44 The lowest mean was for the first variable Pre-assessment/Deal Sourcing, with a mean at 2.58 and a SD at 0.50.

Statistical results of section one indicate that the highest means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which comprehensiveness of due-diligence performed on investment opportunities. The lowest means were related to participants' perceptions of how frequently pre-assessment/deal sourcing is conducted. These findings are not surprising given the maturity of the group in the investment domain. Participants, believe that deal-closing (variable 4) activities are managed and executed effectively, though there is still some scope for enhancement. Opportunity assessment (Variable 2) shows a moderate level of thoroughness in evaluating potential investments. While some assessments are conducted, there is room for improvement in how opportunities are scrutinized.

The second section of the questionnaire, "Impact of Independent Variables", assesses the perceived impact of the independent variables on successful investment decisions.. Descriptive statistics of items, 5, 6, 7 and 8 indicate that majority of participants believe that all four independent variables have a high impact on the outcomes of investment decisions.

Table 2. Section 2 - Impact of Independent Variables

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Highly	Extremely		
<i>Section 2:</i> Impact of Independent Variables ( $GM = 4.27$ $SD = 0.39$ )	5) How significantly do you believe pre-assessment/deal sourcing impacts the success of investment decisions?	Not at all (0%)	Slightly (0%)	Moderately (9.1%)	Highly (81.1%)	Extremely (9.1%)	3.97	0.45
	6) To what extent does a thorough opportunity assessment contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?	Not at all (0%)	Slightly (0%)	Moderately (0%)	Highly (54.5%)	Extremely (45.5%)	4.45	0.30
	7) How critical is the role of due-diligence in mitigating investment risks?	Not at all (0%)	Slightly (0%)	Moderately (0%)	Highly (63.6%)	Extremely (36.4%)	4.32	0.33

	8) To what extent does a thorough opportunity closing and Shareholder agreement contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?	<i>Not at all</i> (0%)	<i>Slightly</i> (0%)	<i>Moderately</i> (0%)	<i>Highly</i> (63.6%)	<i>Extremely</i> (36.4%)	4.34	0.38
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Table 2 demonstrates that the overall mean score of the four variables was at 4.27 and the SD was at 0.39. The mean score of the second variable was the highest (M = 4.45, SD = 0.30). This finding is in alignment with the reviewed literature which considers that involves assessing the strategic fit and feasibility of the investment Stoilov, Stoilova and Vladimirov (2021). The lowest mean was for the first variable (M = 3.97, SD = 0.45) related the extent pre-assessment/deal sourcing impacts the success of investment decisions. This finding indicates that this variable has relatively lower impact than the other three variables. Variables three and four scored almost same mean value of 4.32 and 4.34 respectively reflecting a big believe that these two variables have significant impact on achieving strategic investment objectives.

The last section of the survey, “To what extent are variables impacting the investment decision making process?”, exploring perspectives of improving the investment decision making process. Descriptive statistics of the four variables of this section (9-12) indicate that the ultimate majority of the respondents believe that all four variables play a very crucial role to increase the effectiveness of the investment decision making process. Table 3 shows that the grand mean of the grand variable scored 4.53. The mean scores for variable four – Do you believe that optimizing deal-closing procedures could lead to better alignment with strategic investment objectives? were the highest (M = 4.79, SD = 0.21). The lowest mean was for first variable – pre-assessment/deal sourcing effectiveness (M = 4.26, SD = 0.42). While both the second and third variables scored mean value of 4.53 with low SD of almost 0.25. The abovementioned analysis indicates that there is a statistically significant impact on all four variables on decision making process.

Table 3. Section 3 - Effectiveness of Independent Variables (Solution-Oriented)

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>Section 3:</i> Effectiveness of the Independent Variables (GM = 4.53 SD = 0.27)	9) How strongly do you agree that increasing the frequency of pre-assessment/deal sourcing would improve investment outcomes?	<i>Not at all</i> (0%)	<i>Slightly</i> (0%)	<i>Moderately</i> (0%)	<i>Highly</i> (72.7%)	<i>Extremely</i> (27.3%)	4.26	0.42

	10) To what extent would enhancing the tools and methods for opportunity assessment increase the success rate of investments?	<i>Not at all</i> (0%)	<i>Slightly</i> (0%)	<i>Moderately</i> (0%)	<i>Highly</i> (45.5%)	<i>Extremely</i> (54.5%)	4.53	0.26
	11) How effective would additional training on due-diligence processes be in improving investment decision outcomes?	<i>Not at all</i> (0%)	<i>Slightly</i> (0%)	<i>Moderately</i> (0%)	<i>Highly</i> (45.5%)	<i>Extremely</i> (54.5%)	4.53	0.25
	12) Do you believe that optimizing deal-closing procedures could lead to better alignment with strategic investment objectives?	<i>Not at all</i> (0%)	<i>Slightly</i> (0%)	<i>Moderately</i> (0%)	<i>Highly</i> (18.2%)	<i>Extremely</i> (81.8%)	4.79	0.21

## Discussion

The findings show a clear acknowledgment of the significance and impact of each phase in the investment decision making process. However, there are noticeable deficiencies in current implementation practices, particularly in pre assessment/deal sourcing and opportunity evaluation. Respondents strongly endorse enhancing these areas, along with improving due diligence and deal closing procedures, to enhance investment outcomes. The higher average scores in Sections 2 and 3 compared to Section 1 suggest a favorable attitude towards making changes to optimize the investment decision making process.

The relatively lower mean score in the pre-assessment/deal sourcing stage indicates a perceived underutilization or inefficiency in early-stage investment activities. This gap suggests that opportunities may be overlooked or not adequately evaluated at the onset, potentially impacting the overall quality of investment decisions. Opportunity assessment and due-diligence stages are recognized for their thoroughness and critical role, the scores indicate that even well-executed stages have room for improvement. This outcome highlights the complexity of investment decision-making, where even strengths can be further enhanced to minimize as much as possible the external influence on decision making. On the other hand, the effectiveness of deal closing



indicated by its higher mean score a relative confidence in this final stage. However, the strongest agreement on the need for optimization in deal-closing procedures points to a desire for even more streamlined and strategic alignment.

## **Concluding Remark**

It has been identified that there is a room for further enhancement to improve ITHCA Group overall investment results despite the solid processes and procedures currently followed in making investment decisions. Focusing on key areas such as initial evaluations at the deal sourcing/pre-assessment phase, thorough opportunity assessments during the evaluation phase, and followed by meticulous due diligence activities will significantly benefit the process. To address these identified shortcomings and build on their strengths, several strategies are recommended.

Firstly, pre-assessment practices could be enhancing by developing a structured and frequent process that incorporates comprehensive market analysis, predictive analytics, and stakeholder feedback. This will potentially lead to an early and reliable identification of high-potential opportunities.

Secondly, standardizing opportunity assessment criteria and integrating innovative tools like AI-driven analytics yields a deeper insights and more consistent evaluations across potential investments. Other practices would solidify the outcome of these stages such as benchmarking and competition analysis. Moreover, enhancing the due diligence process by incorporating expertise from different departments within the company improves risk evaluations and offers a more holistic perspective, on investment prospects.

Lastly, simplifying the steps to finalize deals by investing in both training and technology guarantees that teams are adequately. Focussing in standardizing the format of the closing documents to menimize the variances and deferencies between the closing documents of different investments.

## **Limitations**

The study outcome reached to an effective insights to improve the investment decision making process within ITHCA group. On the other hand, it worth noting that there are few identified limitations in this study that should be carefully highlighted and understood. Firstly, the generalization of the results could be jeopardized due to the limited sample size used in the study as a result to the small team members who are working directly in investment activities within the group. Additionally, to fully explore the data and identify connections between dependent variables employing statistical techniques beyond mean and standard deviation like correlation analysis regression analysis and structural equation modeling would be advantageous. Despite these limitations this study establishes a foundation for investigation. By acknowledging and addressing these limitations we can deepen our understanding of the factors that impact investment decision making effectiveness

at ITHCA group.

### **Significance of the findings**

The significance of this study extends beyond the scope of the ITHCA Group. It in fact provides insights to academia to enhance procedures influences policies and governance, in state owned enterprises and promotes innovation and competitive advantage in strategic investment decision making. This research presents a framework for enhancing this investment decision making processes based on real world practices. The research has identified areas for improvement which can be used as guidance for the ITHCA Group and similar organizations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their investment decisions.

### **Conclusion**

This research assessed how investment decisions are made within the ITHCA Group specifically looking at the processes involved in evaluating potential deals assessing opportunities conducting due diligence and finalizing agreements. By utilizing surveys to collect data the study aimed to gain insights, into the details of each step, and how they collectively impact investment outcomes.. Through examining the ITHCA Groups investment process from this perspective the study pinpointed strengths well as areas for enhancement.

The analysis of survey results uncovered insights. It revealed that while certain stages like diligence were precisely executed with an emphasis on risk management and strategic alignment other stages such as pre assessment/deal sourcing could benefit from more meticulous attention to detail and frequency. The positive feedback in the segment of the study indicated that all participants recognized opportunities for improving investment outcomes at each stage. This study illuminates the nature of decision making around investments within the ITHCA Group. The research sets a foundation for future investigations aimed at refining these processes. By promoting a culture of improvement and creative thinking the ITHCA Group can effectively navigate the complexities of investment decisions while remaining committed to its mission of supporting investments in Omans technology and telecommunications sectors.

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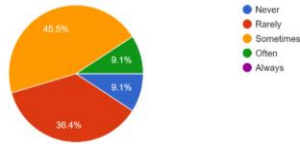
## Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Likert scale				
<b><u>Section 1:</u></b> <b>Current Status of Independent Variables</b>	1) How frequently is pre-assessment/deal sourcing conducted in your department?	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	2) To what extent is opportunity assessment thorough in evaluating potential investments?	<i>Not at all thorough</i>	<i>Slightly thorough</i>	<i>Moderately thorough</i>	<i>Very thorough</i>	<i>Extremely thorough</i>
	3) How would you rate the comprehensiveness of due-diligence performed on investment opportunities?	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
	4) How effectively are deal-closing activities managed and executed?	<i>Very ineffectively</i>	<i>Ineffectively</i>	<i>Somewhat effectively</i>	<i>Effectively</i>	<i>Very effectively</i>
<b><u>Section 2:</u></b> <b>Impact of Independent Variables</b>	5) How significantly do you believe pre-assessment/deal sourcing impacts the success of investment decisions?	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Highly</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
	6) To what extent does a thorough opportunity assessment contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Highly</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
	7) How critical is the role of due-diligence in mitigating investment risks?	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Highly</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
	8) To what extent does a thorough opportunity closing and Shareholder agreement contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Highly</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
<b><u>Section 3:</u></b> <b>Effectiveness of Independent Variables (Solution-Oriented)</b>	9) How strongly do you agree that increasing the frequency of pre-assessment/deal sourcing would improve investment outcomes?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
	10) To what extent would enhancing the tools and methods for opportunity assessment increase the success rate of investments?	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Significantly</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
	11) How effective would additional training on due-diligence processes be in improving investment decision outcomes?	<i>Not effective at all</i>	<i>Slightly effective</i>	<i>Moderately effective</i>	<i>Very effective</i>	<i>Extremely effective</i>
	12) Do you believe that optimizing deal-closing procedures could lead to better alignment with strategic investment objectives?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>

## Appendix 2: Survey outcomes

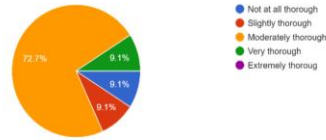
1.1) How frequently is pre-assessment/deal sourcing conducted in your department?

38 responses



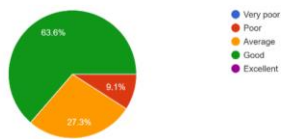
1.2) To what extent is opportunity assessment thorough in evaluating potential investments?

38 responses



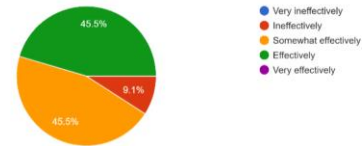
1.3) How would you rate the comprehensiveness of due-diligence performed on investment opportunities?

38 responses



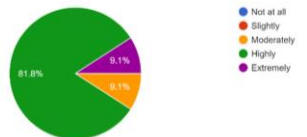
1.4) How effectively are deal-closing activities managed and executed?

38 responses



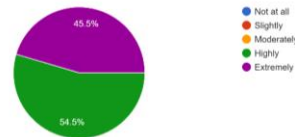
2.1) How significantly do you believe pre-assessment/deal sourcing impacts the success of investment decisions?

38 responses



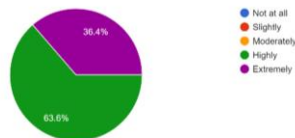
2.2) To what extent does a thorough opportunity assessment contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?

38 responses



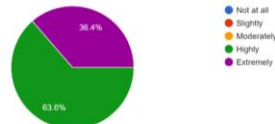
2.3) How critical is the role of due-diligence in mitigating investment risks?

38 responses



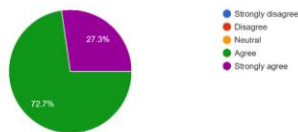
2.4) To what extent does a thorough opportunity closing and Shareholder agreement contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?

38 responses



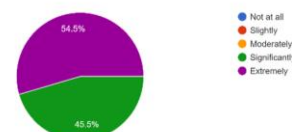
3.1) How strongly do you agree that increasing the frequency of pre-assessment/deal sourcing would improve investment outcomes?

38 responses



3.2) To what extent would enhancing the tools and methods for opportunity assessment increase the success rate of investments?

38 responses



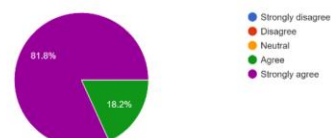
3.3) How effective would additional training on due-diligence processes be in improving investment decision outcomes?

38 responses



3.4) Do you believe that optimizing deal-closing procedures could lead to better alignment with strategic investment objectives?

38 responses



### Appendix 3: Mean Calculation of Survey outcomes

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b><u>Section 1:</u></b> <b>Current Status of Independent Variables</b> <i>(Grand Mean = 3.09, Standard Deviation = 0.48)</i>	1) How frequently is pre-assessment/deal sourcing conducted in your department?	2.58	0.50
	2) To what extent is opportunity assessment thorough in evaluating potential investments?	2.82	0.44
	3) How would you rate the comprehensiveness of due-diligence performed on investment opportunities?	3.58	0.36
	4) How effectively are deal-closing activities managed and executed?	3.37	0.41
<b><u>Section 2:</u></b> <b>Impact of Independent Variables</b> <i>(Grand Mean = 4.27 Standard Deviation = 0.39)</i>	1) How significantly do you believe pre-assessment/deal sourcing impacts the success of investment decisions?	3.97	0.45
	2) To what extent does a thorough opportunity assessment contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?	4.45	0.30
	3) How critical is the role of due-diligence in mitigating investment risks?	4.32	0.33
	4) To what extent does a thorough opportunity closing and Shareholder agreement contribute to achieving strategic investment goals?	4.34	0.38
<b><u>Section 3:</u></b> <b>Effectiveness of Independent Variables (Solution-Oriented)</b> <i>(Grand Mean = 4.53 Standard Deviation = 0.29)</i>	1) How strongly do you agree that increasing the frequency of pre-assessment/deal sourcing would improve investment outcomes?	4.26	0.42
	2) To what extent would enhancing the tools and methods for opportunity assessment increase the success rate of investments?	4.53	0.26
	3) How effective would additional training on due-diligence processes be in improving investment decision outcomes?	4.53	0.25
	4) Do you believe that optimizing deal-closing procedures could lead to better alignment with strategic investment objectives?	4.79	0.21

# The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Job Performance: The Case of Oman

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**Abstract:** Purpose: The main goal of this research is to explore how emotional intelligence impacts job performance and organizational dedication as perceived by staff members at a telecommunications firm in Oman. The study examines how factors like empathy, social skills, self control and motivation relate to employee performance. It is assumed that higher emotional intelligence contributes to enhanced efficiency overall. Design/methodology/approach: A positivist philosophy underpins the research design of the study. A quantitative case study approach involving surveys administered to 66 male and female employees at the case organization was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics analysis was used for data analysis of the quantitative component of the study. Findings: The study findings indicate that having a level of empathy, strong social skills and good self regulation can enhance job performance and teamwork within the company. It was also noted that intrinsic motivation plays a role in getting employees to work towards the goals of the organization. The research uncovered connections between emotional intelligence and job performance indicators. Although the study was based on a case in a sector or company in Oman which could limit the generalizability of the results, it does pave the way for further exploration in this field to validate similar outcomes in other settings. Originality/value: The study demonstrated how emotional intelligence influences job performance and commitment, at Oman Broadband Company emphasizing the importance of empathy, social skills, self regulation and motivation. The findings offer insights for leaders, HR professionals and policymakers highlighting the significance of nurturing intelligence to improve workplace interactions and reach organizational goals.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Job Performance, Organizational Commitment, Organizational behaviors, Oman.

**Citation:** Al Mandhari, S. (2024). The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Job Performance: The Case of Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2807-2823), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

The concept of Emotional Intelligence has been widely recognized on a large scale as an element that affects job performance and dedication to organizations. Within emotional intelligence different skills such as empathy, social skills, self-control and motivation play a crucial role in different fields especially in leadership positions



within companies. Multiple studies believe that emotional intelligence is deeply clapped in leadership models and leadership styles to improve organizational effectiveness across diverse cultural and economic settings (Bar On, 2004; Goleman, 1998).

In the context of the Middle East region, the studies on emotional intelligence impacts dynamics is relatively new, due to the region's unique cultural and business norms provide a setting where the influence of emotional intelligence may differ significantly from different regions. For example, the communal and hierarchical aspects of Eastern societies could boost the importance of skills and empathy in workplace interactions (Smith et al., 2018). The uniqueness of the cultural aspect of this region might lead to a different outcomes when it comes to the impact of the emotional intelligence on employees performance.

Within Oman Broadband Company incorporating emotional intelligence skills into management practices is seen as a way to enhance individual performance indicators like productivity and efficiency, and also broader organizational outcomes such as employee contentment and retention. Considering all aspects such as cultural and business norms which differentiate this region from others. This case study examines how emotional skills influence the day to day functions and overall strategic goals in a rapidly changing market. While the importance of emotional intelligence is recognized, there is a lack of measured data linking specific emotional intelligence skills to job performance metrics in the corporate landscape of Oman. Existing studies often qualitatively assess emotional intelligence impact in different business sectors or industries or different cultural contexts presenting different regions or nations. Previous literature primarily focuses on qualitative evaluations or non-Middle Eastern contexts, indicating a significant research void in quantitatively driven, locale-specific investigations (Jones, 2019; Chen et al., 2020). This study aims to bridge this gap by offering insights into how various aspects of emotional intelligence relate to job performance and commitment at Oman Broadband Company.

## Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence consists of diverse skills considered as a fundamental factor in enhancing job performance across various sectors including telecommunications. These skills are empathy, social abilities, self-regulation, and motivation. Within transformational leadership theory, emotional intelligence is extremely integrated, facilitating leaders' capacity to transcend personal benefit for greater organizational welfare. This theory emphasizes the importance of the emotional intelligence skills in improving the employee's performance and organization commitment. This literature review delves into contemporary research to scrutinize how these emotional intelligence facets remarkably influence job performance and employees organization commitment. The study centers on the Transformational Leadership Theory, which presents the way of exceptional leaders in stimulating and encouraging their teams to focus on the goals of the organization than aspirations. According to this theory these leaders do not just trigger changes in their follower's mindset but also they set the goals aligning their team with the overall organizational aims. Emotional intelligence plays a role in leaders success as

it significantly improves their capacity to forge connections and thrive in leadership roles.

The transformative capabilities of leaders are closely tied to intelligence. Empathy, an aspect of emotional intelligence refers to a leader's capacity to comprehend and share the emotions of team members. This empathetic connection fosters. Loyalty, crucial for creating a work environment that enhances employee morale and satisfaction. As per Bass and Riggio (2006) empathy does not help in forming bonds but also aligns employee's efforts with the organizations strategic goals leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction. Moreover, social skills play a role in enabling leaders to convey their vision influence others perspectives and impact their teams. As stated by Bar On in 2004 leaders, with abilities excel in clearly conveying their strategic visions and convincing their teams to embrace these objectives. These skills are crucial for creating a shared sense of purpose and guiding the organization towards its goals.

Another important aspect of intelligence is self-discipline. According to Golemans study in 1998 leaders who can regulate their emotions exude a motivating presence, which's essential for navigating workplace obstacles and upholding team spirit. Effective self-regulation enables leaders to handle conflicts, adapt to changes and reduce stress that could disrupt team cohesion. Moreover, motivation plays a role in leadership. Leaders who are internally motivated do not align with the organization's mission. Also motivate their followers to exceed standard expectations and achieve remarkable outcomes. McClelland emphasized in 1985 that such leaders nurture a sense of purpose and excitement among their teams fostering a culture of performance that greatly boosts organizational productivity and innovation.

These aspects of intelligence namely empathy, interpersonal skills, self-management and motivation are crucial for the success of transformational leaders. They empower leaders to adeptly handle and direct the dynamics within their organizations transforming individual conflicts into collaborative victories. Teamwork plays a role, at Oman Broadband Company. It is important to blend emotions with our tasks to reach our goals and remain competitive in the ever-evolving telecommunications industry.

### **Key Factors Influencing Job Performance**

Building upon the ideas surrounding leadership and emotional intelligence previously mentioned it's crucial to acknowledge how emotional intelligence impacts facets of job performance. Recent research highlights that emotional intelligence does not only improve performance but also enhances organizational effectiveness. Certain key factors have been pinpointed as having an influence, on job performance affected by intelligence. Emotional intelligence plays a role in shaping levels of job satisfaction. Research by Smith et al. (2018) reveals a link between employees emotional intelligence levels and increased job satisfaction. This connection is vital as content employees are more likely to excel and contribute effectively towards goals.

Effective leadership requires set of diversity of skills including emotional intelligence. As per Jones (2019) leaders with emotional intelligence levels excel at inspiring their teams and guiding them towards better

organizational outcomes. The importance of this effectiveness is particularly notable in roles that demand skills and strategic decision making capabilities. According to Doe (2017) emotional intelligence significantly boosts an individual's capacity to adapt to work environments. Effectively handle stress. These skills are increasingly essential in paced sectors like telecommunications, where employees frequently face high pressure situations and rapidly changing market dynamics.

The empathy and social skills aspects of emotional intelligence help employees navigate relationships leading to satisfaction levels. By managing their emotions and exhibiting empathy leaders can create a work environment that not only fosters but also thrives on high levels of employee engagement and dedication.

In the context of Oman Broadband Company, the skills required for emotional intelligence namely empathy, social skills, self-regulation and motivation act as enhancers of individual performance and also as drivers of overall organizational efficiency. These components highlight the importance of studying the impact of these variables on the employee's performance at Oman Broadband identifying the areas of improvements and recommendations.

#### *Research Question*

The main purpose of this study is to measure the influence of emotional intelligence on the employee's work performance at Oman Broadband Company. It will explicitly examine how key aspects of emotional intelligence such as empathy, social skills, self-control and motivation impact employee performance within the context of transformational leadership theory. The research question would be: " To what extent emotional intelligence influence job performance among employees at Oman Broadband Company?"

#### *Research Variables*

The research identifies the following independent and dependent variables and the relationship between them:

#### *Independent Variables:*

1. *Empathy:* Understanding and sharing the emotions of others is a key aspect of emotional intelligence. In leadership, empathy plays a vital role in building strong relationships between leaders and their teams, fostering trust and boosting job satisfaction.
2. *Social Skills:* effective communication, persuasion and influencing abilities fall under social skills. Leaders focus on social skills to cascade the organization's vision and values to their teams, encouraging collaborative efforts towards reaching common organization goals.
3. *Self-Regulation:* is a reflection of leaders ability to manage and channel their emotions in different

work environments and circumstances. Leaders with this skill maintain a positive and motivating presence at work which is crucial for overcoming challenges and keeping team spirit high.

4. *Motivation*: motivation from leaders has a great effect on employees performance, inspiring their teams to exceed expectations and achieve outstanding results, particularly intrinsic motivation driven by a deep sense of purpose and commitment to organizational objectives.

*Dependent Variables:*

*Job Performance*: it contributes directly in achieving organizational goals, and it is measured through various dimensions such as productivity, efficiency and creativity.

**Conceptual Framework and Variable Relationships**

The study aims to quantify the relationships between the independent and dependent variables providing empirical insights that could enlighten leadership and management within the company and potentially across similar organizations. The research variables will be investigated to understand how different aspects of emotional intelligence contribute to enhancing job performance in a leadership setting at Oman Broadband Company.

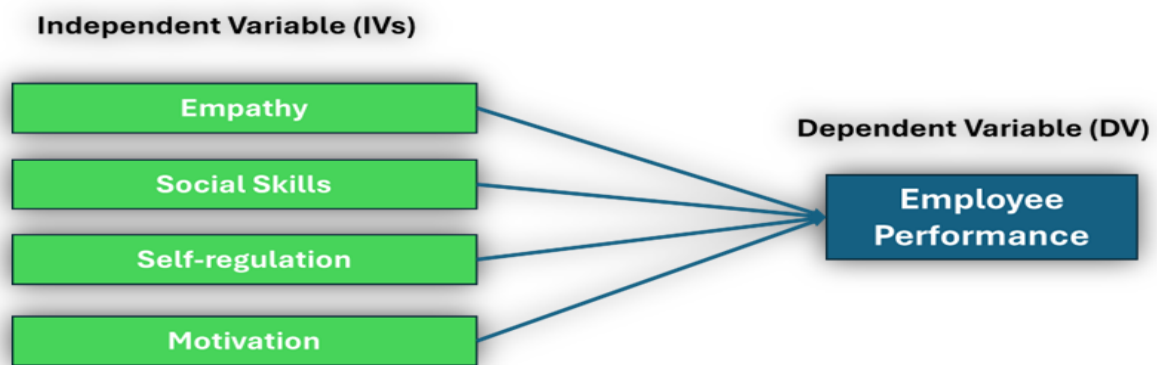


Figure 1. The Influence of emotional intelligence variables on the employee’s performance

**Research Methodology**

In this study quantitative analysis is employed to gather data with the aim of assessing how independent variables influence the performance of employees, at Oman Broadband. The selection of a methodology is based on the objective of examining and understanding the impact of aspects of intelligence on employee performance within Oman Broadband Company. This research approach is in line with the goal of investigating how emotional intelligence variables impact employee performance leading to enhanced results and productivity.

## Data Collection

A quantitative case study approach is used to assess the extent which the emotional intelligence impact job performance within the context of transformational leadership at Oman Broadband Company. Toward this purpose and based on the reviewed literature and previous studies on corporate investment strategies, a perception survey comprising of 12, 5-point Likert Scale items has been distributed to all related employees across various departments including support services, operations, strategy, and management at the company. This comprehensive survey aimed to collect quantitative data pertinent to understanding the impact of emotional intelligence on the employees' performance.

The survey divided into three targeted sections. The first section comprised of four items and aimed to gather information about the present situation and application methods of the independent factors; Empathy, Social skills, Self-Control and Motivation at Oman Broadband Company. The second section also includes four items and focus on the perceived impact these independent variables have on the outcomes of employees' performance. The third section of the survey includes four items measuring how these variables could be optimized to enhance the overall outcome of the employees and organization performance. All the 12 items of the survey consider a 5-point scale (1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree and 5- Strongly Agree). The survey includes an introductory section that clearly explains the purpose of the research.

This structured approach of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) enables a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the research variables and their interrelations within the Oman Broadband Company's context. This method ensures that the data collected will provide valuable insights into the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing job performance under transformational leadership, thereby informing targeted improvements in leadership development programs.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The study followed ethical guidelines regarding informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were briefed on the research's objective and their option to opt out at any point. All data was securely kept and will not be disclosed to third parties without the participants' explicit approval.

### *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were analyzed through the perception survey which was administered to 66 participants. As illustrated in Appendix 2, 48 surveys were received providing a response rate at 72.7% which is a satisfactory percentage that can validate the results of the study. The reliability of the survey items has been substantiated by an overall Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The alpha score of .70 or higher in a survey of this nature is considered good Peterson's (1994).

The survey responses were subjected to the frequency analysis, mean and standard deviation. The analysis is split into three parts, each with a calculated mean and standard deviation score (see Appendix 3) that gives an overview of how respondents view various aspects of the emotional intelligence effecting employees job performance.

## Results

The collected data were analyzed with respect to research questions and the impact of the independent variables on the employee’s job performance in respect to the three sections of the survey. The first section set “To quantify participants’ perceptions on the current emotional intelligence practices among leaders at Oman Broadband”. To measure participants’ perceptions in this regard, the first 4 items of the survey (1-4) were subjected to the frequency analysis, the average Mean (M) and the Standard Deviation (SD). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the first four items.

Table 1. Section 1 - Current Status of Independent Variables

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		Never (0%)	Rarely (16.7%)	Sometimes (72.2%)	Often (11.1%)	Always (0%)		
<b>Section 1:</b> <b>Current Status of Independent Variables</b> (GM = 3.09, SD = 0.48)	13) How thoroughly does your immediate supervisor display empathy towards team members?	Never (0%)	Rarely (16.7%)	Sometimes (72.2%)	Often (11.1%)	Always (0%)	2.94	0.51
	14) Rate the adequacy of communication skills displayed by leadership in guiding teams towards organizational goals?	Never (0%)	Rarely (5.6%)	Sometimes (61.1%)	Often (33.3%)	Always (0%)	3.28	0.56
	15) Evaluate the consistency with which your team leaders maintain composure and positivity in challenging circumstances?	Never (0%)	Rarely (5.6%)	Sometimes (83.3%)	Often (11.1%)	Always (0%)	3.06	0.40
	16) Rate the effectiveness of motivational strategies used by your management to inspire the team?	Never (0%)	Rarely (5.6%)	Sometimes (61.1%)	Often (33.3%)	Always (0%)	3.28	0.56

Analysis of the first four items of the survey indicates that the majority of participants views that the current

status of the Empathy, Social skills, Self-Control and Motivation are scoring around than average. The results of the analysis demonstrate an agreement directed towards level 3 (Sometimes) with an overall mean at 3.14 and a standard deviation at 0.40. The analysis of the SD points out that the majority of respondents' answers are clustered around the mean. The mean score of the second and fourth variables (Social skills and Motivation) were the highest ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ). This is followed in order by variable three – Self-Control – ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.40$ ). Variable one, Empathy, was the lowest Mean of 2.94 and a SD at 0.51.

Statistical results of section one indicates that the highest means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which social skills and motivation are more practiced over the other variables of the emotional intelligence. The lowest means were related to participants' perceptions suggesting that the display of empathy by supervisors is inconsistent. These findings reflects the need of more engagement and training in this regard to achieve better results. Participants believe that self-control (variable 3) activities are managed and executed better than empathy (variable 1), though there is still some scope for enhancement.

The second section of the questionnaire, "Impact of Independent Variables", assesses the perceived impact of the independent variables on job performance. Descriptive statistics of items 5, 6, 7 and 8 indicate that majority of participants believe that all four independent variables have a high impact on the outcomes of job performance and organization commitment.

Table 2. Section 2 - Impact of Independent Variables

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Section 2: Impact of Independent Variables</b> ( $GM = 4.46$ $SD = 0.45$ )	9) How does the empathy exhibited by leadership influence your commitment to organizational goals?	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (61.1%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (33.3%)	4.28	0.54
	10) How critical are the communication skills of leadership in achieving business outcomes?	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (22.2%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (72.2%)	4.67	0.58
	11) How does leadership's ability to regulate emotions affect the overall team performance?	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (61.1%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (33.3%)	4.28	0.56



	12) Assess the influence of leadership motivation on your personal job performance.	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (27.8%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (66.7%)	<b>4.61</b>	<b>0.59</b>
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Table 2 demonstrates that the overall mean score of the four variables was at 4.46 and the SD was at 0.45. The mean score of the second variable was the highest ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ). This outcome confirms the importance of communication skills over the other skills in creating a significant impact on employees' performance. The lowest mean was for the first and third variable ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.54$  &  $0.56$  respectively) related to the impact of empathy and self-control on the job performance. This finding indicates that this variable has relatively lower impact than the other variables but still important as the difference in the mean value is not huge. Motivation (variables 4) was the second highest with mean value of 4.61 and SD of 0,59 confirming that this variable has similar impact on job performance like social skills due to the marginal difference between the two variable in the mean value.

The last section of the survey, "To what extent are emotional intelligence variables impacting the job performance and organization commitment?", exploring potential improvements and enhancements to emotional intelligence practices which should positively impact the employee's performance at Oman Broadband Company. Descriptive statistics of the four variables of this section (9-12) indicate that the ultimate majority of the respondents believe that all four variables play a very crucial role to increase the employee's job performance and organization commitment. Table 3 shows that the grand mean of the the variables scored 4.67 with standard variation value of 0.47. The mean scores for variable four related to motivation were the highest ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ). Followed by the second variable – social skills – with very marginal difference confirming that it has the same importance of motivation on job performance impact. The lowest mean was for first variable – Empathy - ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ). While the third variables scored mean value of 4.67 and SD of 0.58. The abovementioned analysis indicates that there is a statistically significant impact on all four variables on job performance and organization commitment.

Table 3. Section 3 - Effectiveness of Independent Variables (Solution-Oriented)

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Frequency %					Mean	Standard Deviation
		<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (38.9%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (55.6%)		
<b>Section 3:</b> <b>Effectiveness of the Independent Variables</b> <i>(GM = 4.67</i>	13) To what extent do you agree that "Increasing empathy training for all staff would enhance organizational	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (38.9%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (55.6%)	<b>4.50</b>	<b>0.59</b>

<i>SD = 0.47)</i>	performance."?							
	14) To what extent do you agree that "Enhancing social skills through regular workshops could improve team collaboration and efficiency."?	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (16.7%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (77.8%)	<b>4.72</b>	<b>0.56</b>
	15) To what extent do you agree that "Implementing stress management programs would significantly boost productivity."?	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (22.2%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (72.2%)	<b>4.67</b>	<b>0.58</b>
	16) To what extent do you agree that "Boosting intrinsic motivation through clear and engaging organizational goals would improve job performance"?	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Disagree</i> (0%)	<i>Neutral</i> (5.6%)	<i>Agree</i> (11.1%)	<i>Strongly agree</i> (83.3%)	<b>4.78</b>	<b>0.53</b>

## Discussion

The results of the survey align closely with the theories and previous studies discussed in the literature review highlighting the implications of Emotional Intelligence in Omans’s setting. The survey determined a level of empathy practiced by leaders with an empathy score of 2.94. While empathy was recognized as impactful on job performance it was rated lower compared to the other emotional intelligence variables with an impact score of 4.28. These findings suggest that there is room for development in fostering empathy among leaders echoing research by Smith et al. (2018) linking levels to enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Social skills were highly regarded both in practice and impact receiving scores of 3.28 and 4.67 respectively. This emphasis on skills reaffirms their importance in leadership effectiveness. Achieving business goals aligning with literature emphasizing effective communication as crucial for operational success (Jones, 2019). Social skills empower leaders to articulate visions nurturing a shared sense of purpose essential, for organizational triumph.

The data regarding self regulation indicates that respondents believe that it is practiced moderately in the current status with a rating of 3.06, and they acknowledge its impact on team performance rated at 4.28. This outcome inligh with the literature review which identified the significance of self regulation, including Golemans (1998) research, which highlights its role in stress management and adaptation for maintaining team unity and productivity.

The high score of motivation (4.61) underscores the importance of motivation not only in promoting excellence, but also in reinforcing collective efforts towards organizational goals. The connection between motivation and performance is reinforced by Fernandez (2019) in the literature review who points out that motivated employees are more inclined to showcase creativity and innovation attributes in the technology driven atmosphere.

The strong correlation observed between the four skills of emotional intelligence studied in this research and job performance outcomes suggests that targeted emotional intelligence development training and educational programs would positively impact Oman Broadband Company performance. Moreover, regular training, workshops and discussion forums aimed at improving communication and interpersonal skills would foster synergy, collaboration and efficiency within the Oman Broadband. Furthermore, introducing programs focused on managing stress and regulating emotions would sustain productivity and adaptability. Moreover, defining motivating objectives which can be set as key performance indicators (KPIs) for the leadership and management positions that align with employees individual values would enhance their inner drive leading to better organizational performance outcomes.

## **Concluding Remark**

The research provided empirical evidence on the impact of emotional intelligence on employees performance of Oman Broadband Company agreeing with the outcome illustrated in the literature review and the transformational leadership theory. The data analysis emphasized that emotional intelligence plays a role in boosting job performance at Oman Broadband Company. The conclusions of this research offer significant insights for the company leadership and management to build a strong and top performing team. The recommendations provided in this study would help decision makers to increase productivity and achieve organization goals.

## **Limitations**

The research has landed to an effective outcomes offering insights into the current status and impact of emotional intelligence on employees' performance and organization outcome at Oman Broadband Company. One the other hand, few limitations are identified in this research which could be further addressed in future studies. One significant limitation is the sample size due to time constraints on data collection, which could limit the generalizability of the results. A larger sample would provide data for a more thorough analysis.

Additionally, only the mean calculation and standard deviation was used as data analysis of the relationship between the variables. Using other statistical techniques such as correlation analysis or regression analysis would be of a great value. Despite these limitations this study establishes a foundation for future studies and investigation.

### **Significance of the findings**

The results of this study have implications for both practical applications in the field of organizational behavior, particularly concerning emotional intelligence and job performance. This research adds to the expanding literature on intelligence by showing quantitatively how empathy, social skills, self regulation and motivation positively impact job performance measures within a corporate setting in the Middle East and specifically in Oman.

The findings emphasize the roles that emotional intelligence skills play crucial role in improving communication and collaboration which are essential for achieving organizational objectives. By demonstrating connections between emotional intelligence components and job performance the study offers evidence supporting the incorporation of emotional intelligence development initiatives into organizational training programs. Companies operating in environments to Oman can benefit from nurturing emotional intelligence among their employees to enhance job satisfaction increase productivity and boost organizational effectiveness. Moreover, this study underscores the significance of motivation in aligning employee actions with goals. It suggests that organizations can improve their outcomes by creating environments that enhance employees emotional intelligence capabilities. This alignment not enhances performance but also strengthens organizational dedication, crucial for long term success and competitive edge, in dynamic market landscapes.

Additionally, the knowledge acquired could prove valuable, for human resources professionals and decision makers looking to execute programs for cultivating leadership qualities and enhancing performance by focusing on interpersonal skills. As companies increasingly acknowledge the importance of their workforce in attaining goals the capacity to nurture and enhance intelligence among employees could emerge as a crucial competitive advantage in the global arena. To sum up the outcomes of this research does not address a void in emotional intelligence literature by presenting insights from a non-Western corporate setting but also provide practical advice, for organizational leaders aiming to elevate their management approaches through targeted enhancements of emotional intelligence competencies.

### **Conclusion**

The research, on how emotional intelligence impacts job performance at Oman Broadband Company provides insights and practical results. This detailed study conducted in Oman's organizational setting confirms that aspects of emotional intelligence such as empathy, social skills, self control and motivation have a positive

influence on job performance. The study outcomes are significant underscoring the role intelligence plays in promoting effective communication, teamwork and alignment with company objectives. By surveying 66 employees this investigation demonstrates that higher levels of empathy and social skills in leaders are linked to enhanced team performance and job satisfaction. Additionally, the ability to regulate emotions and maintain motivation is crucial for navigating the complexities of today's workplace challenges in high pressure industries like telecommunications.

This research highlights the importance of investing in intelligence development within companies. By improving EI skills organizations can cultivate a united and productive workforce resulting in better overall outcomes for the organization. Furthermore, the findings indicate that leadership programs focusing on enhancing social skills can offer an advantage in today's ever evolving business landscape. Considering the constraints regarding the study scope, sample size and reliance, on self reported data it is evident that there are implications for research and practical applications. It is crucial to conduct investigations in contexts and with larger participant groups to fully grasp the broad relevance of these findings. Moreover, incorporating metrics for intelligence and job effectiveness could enhance the credibility of the established connections.

In summary, his research does not add to the conversation on emotional intelligence and job performance, but also provides valuable insights for organizational leaders seeking to leverage emotional intelligence for improved performance and strategic achievements. The data presented highlights the significance of intelligence as an element in attaining organizational excellence and emphasizes the necessity for its intentional development, within corporate environments.

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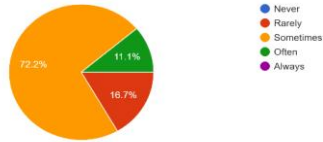
## Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Likert scale				
<b>Section 1:</b> Current Status of Independent Variables	13) How thoroughly does your immediate supervisor display empathy towards team members?	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	14) Rate the adequacy of communication skills displayed by leadership in guiding teams towards organizational goals?	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	15) Evaluate the consistency with which your team leaders maintain composure and positivity in challenging circumstances?	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	16) Rate the effectiveness of motivational strategies used by your management to inspire the team?	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
<b>Section 2:</b> Impact of Independent Variables	1) How does the empathy exhibited by leadership influence your commitment to organizational goals?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
	2) How critical are the communication skills of leadership in achieving business outcomes?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
	3) How does leadership's ability to regulate emotions affect the overall team performance?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
	4) Assess the influence of leadership motivation on your personal job performance.	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
<b>Section 3:</b> Effectiveness of Independent Variables (Solution-Oriented)	1) To what extent do you agree that "Increasing empathy training for all staff would enhance organizational performance."?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
	2) To what extent do you agree that "Enhancing social skills through regular workshops could improve team collaboration and efficiency."?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
	3) To what extent do you agree that "Implementing stress management programs would significantly boost productivity."?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
	4) To what extent do you agree that "Boosting intrinsic motivation through clear and engaging organizational goals would improve job performance"?	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>

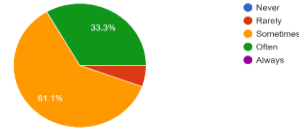


**Appendix 2: Survey outcomes**

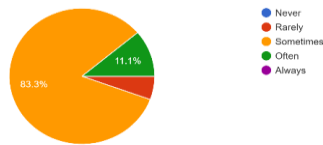
1.1) How thoroughly does your immediate supervisor display empathy towards team members?



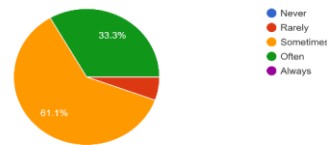
1.2) Rate the adequacy of communication skills displayed by leadership in guiding teams towards organizational goals?



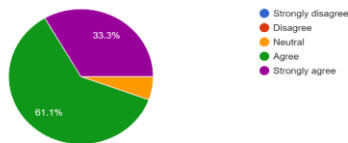
1.3) Evaluate the consistency with which your team leaders maintain composure and positivity in challenging circumstances?



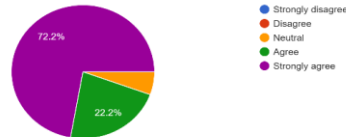
1.4) Rate the effectiveness of motivational strategies used by your management to inspire the team?



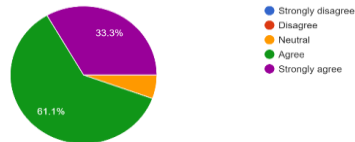
2.1) How does the empathy exhibited by leadership influence your commitment to organizational goals?



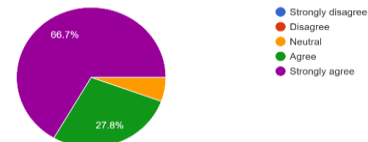
2.2) How critical are the communication skills of leadership in achieving business outcomes?



2.3) How does leadership's ability to regulate emotions affect the overall team performance?



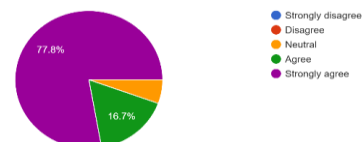
2.4) Assess the influence of leadership motivation on your personal job performance.



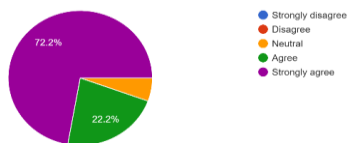
3.1) To what extent do you agree that "Increasing empathy training for all staff would enhance organizational performance."?



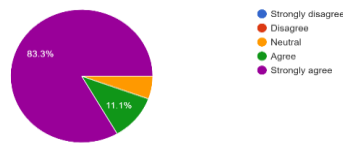
3.2) To what extent do you agree that "Enhancing social skills through regular workshops could improve team collaboration and efficiency."



3.3) To what extent do you agree that "Implementing stress management programs would significantly boost productivity."?



3.4) To what extent do you agree that "Boosting intrinsic motivation through clear and engaging organizational goals would improve job performance"?




### Appendix 3: Mean Calculation of Survey outcomes

Questionnaire sections	Survey Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Section 1:</b> <b>Current Status of Independent Variables</b> <i>(Grand Mean = 3.14, Standard Deviation = 0.40)</i>	5) How thoroughly does your immediate supervisor display empathy towards team members?	2.94	0.51
	6) Rate the adequacy of communication skills displayed by leadership in guiding teams towards organizational goals?	3.28	0.56
	7) Evaluate the consistency with which your team leaders maintain composure and positivity in challenging circumstances?	3.06	0.40
	8) Rate the effectiveness of motivational strategies used by your management to inspire the team?	3.28	0.56
<b>Section 2:</b> <b>Impact of Independent Variables</b> <i>(Grand Mean = 4.46 Standard Deviation = 0.45)</i>	5) How does the empathy exhibited by leadership influence your commitment to organizational goals?	4.28	0.54
	6) How critical are the communication skills of leadership in achieving business outcomes?	4.67	0.58
	7) How does leadership's ability to regulate emotions affect the overall team performance?	4.28	0.56
	8) Assess the influence of leadership motivation on your personal job performance.	4.61	0.59
<b>Section 3:</b> <b>Effectiveness of Independent Variables (Solution-Oriented)</b> <i>(Grand Mean = 4.67 Standard Deviation = 0.47)</i>	5) To what extent do you agree that "Increasing empathy training for all staff would enhance organizational performance."?	4.50	0.59
	6) To what extent do you agree that "Enhancing social skills through regular workshops could improve team collaboration and efficiency."?	4.72	0.56
	7) To what extent do you agree that "Implementing stress management programs would significantly boost productivity."?	4.67	0.58
	8) To what extent do you agree that "Boosting intrinsic motivation through clear and engaging organizational goals would improve job performance"?	4.78	0.53

## **Bridging the Gap: Human Resource Approaches to Realizing the Madani Framework's Vision for Graduate Employability in Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** This research critically examines the nexus between Human Resource (HR) practices and the Madani Framework's influence on enhancing graduate employability in Malaysia's higher education sector. Employing a systematic literature review methodology based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, the study investigates how human resources strategies within educational institutions can align with the Madani Framework to cultivate a workforce poised for success in high-value industries. The systematic review synthesizes findings from 28 relevant studies, comprising quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research, identified through a comprehensive database search and screening process. The included studies are categorized into seven distinct themes: graduate employability skills and competencies, curriculum alignment and industry relevance, HR practices in higher education, the Madani Framework and educational policies, university-industry collaboration, faculty development and continuous learning, and graduate employability and economic development. The review highlights a persistent skills mismatch between graduate competencies and evolving industry demands, underscoring the need for strategic interventions. HR practices emerge as a powerful catalyst, enabling higher education institutions (HEIs) to align curricula with industry needs, foster industry-relevant skills among graduates, and embed the Madani Framework's principles of sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility. Key recommendations include conducting curriculum mapping and gap analyses, engaging in stakeholder collaborations, integrating emerging technologies and Industry 4.0 skills, and establishing mechanisms for continuous curriculum review and faculty development. Furthermore, the review underscores the pivotal role of HR strategies in promoting and sustaining effective university-industry collaborations, facilitating knowledge exchange and experiential learning opportunities. Leveraging innovative HR practices, such as aligning recruitment processes and performance evaluation criteria with the Madani Framework's competencies, is crucial for fostering a holistic and socially responsible workforce. The study contributes valuable insights into the strategic role of HR in harmonizing educational outcomes with industry requirements, suggesting a model for leveraging human resource capabilities to fulfill the Madani Framework's aspirations. Recommendations are provided for policymakers, educators, and HR professionals to foster a collaborative, strategic approach to developing a resilient, adaptable, and employable graduate pool aligned with national development goals.

**Keywords:** Madani Framework, Skilled Worker, Human Resource, Policy Makers

**Citation:** Abiddin, N. Z. & Rosmaria, O. (2024). Bridging the Gap: Human Resource Approaches to Realizing the Madani Framework's Vision for Graduate Employability in Malaysia. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 2824-2844), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES.

## Introduction

Malaysia's higher education has witnessed significant changes as the country aspires to become a developed nation and a knowledge-centred economy (Ismail et al., 2018; Khoo et al., 2022; Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2015). The Malaysian government recognized that economic development could only be achieved if there will be sufficient skilled human capital to transform the economy. This has prompted the government to develop the Madani Framework and other strategic initiatives intended to improve the graduates' employment and competitiveness (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; MOHE, 2019). The Madani Framework utilises sustainability, systems thinking, ethics and societal well-being to instil the graduates with the necessary skills and capabilities to work within high value sectors and assist the country achieve its long-term development objectives (MOHE, 2019; Nordin et al., 2021).

The implementation of these policies has resulted in a persistent skills mismatch between industry demands and graduate capabilities. That not only constrains graduate employability but also obstructs nation's quest to develop a strong, knowledge-based workforce geared toward the complexities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Khoo et al., (2022); Subramaniam & Khawaji, (2022); World Bank, (2021). It will take a broader formation of education policies and industry requirements converge with effective human resource HR practices in higher education institutions HEIs to address and manage the skills mismatch challenge. Currently, there is a persistent skills mismatch between the competencies instilled in graduates during their tenure at the tertiary level and the changing demands of high value-added industries despite the Madani Framework implemented by the Malaysian government Ismail et al., (2018), Khoo et al., (2022); Subramaniam & Khawaji, (2022). That not only constrains their employability but also challenges the nation's ambition of building a robust, knowledge-based workforce ill-suited to IR 4.0 complexities (World Bank, 2021).

Given the factors above, a critical inquiry into the connection between HR practices and the influence of the Madani Framework on enhancing graduate employability is established in this context. HR strategies implemented in educational institutions are critical as they help realign curricula, cultivate competencies demanded by industries, and cultivate high-wage industry-ready individuals (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Ting et al., 2020; World Bank, 2021). Hence the HR practices, HEIs can fully contribute the Madani Framework by translating the vision into reality, thus producing work-ready graduates able to navigate the demands of today's labor market (MOHE, 2019; Nordin et al., 2021; Ting et al., 2020). The research thus intends to:

1. Assess the alignment between the competencies fostered by current higher education curricula and the requirements of high-value industries in Malaysia.
2. Investigate the efficacy of existing HR practices within HEIs in cultivating industry-relevant skills and competencies among graduates.
3. Explore the role of HR strategies in promoting and sustaining effective university-industry collaborations that support curriculum development and experiential learning opportunities.
4. Identify innovative HR practices that can be leveraged to embed the principles and values of the Madani Framework into higher education curricula, fostering a holistic and socially responsible workforce.

By addressing these objectives, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the strategic role of HR practices in harmonizing educational outcomes with industry requirements, ultimately enhancing the employability and competitiveness of Malaysian graduates in the dynamic job market. Through a systematic literature reviews and PRISMA approach, the study will synthesize an insights from academia and industry stakeholders to assess curriculum alignment, graduate employability rates, and the efficacy of government and university-industry collaborations under the Madani Framework (Ismail et al., 2018; MOHE, 2019; Subramaniam & Khawaji, 2022).

## **Literatures and Studies**

The Madani Framework is an extensive policy initiative formulated by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education in 2019 to transform the higher education institutions in the country. Based on the principles of sustainable development, moral integrity, and citizenship well-being, the framework is designed to empower an educated, capable and responsive workforce equipped to drive the country's economic growth and societal advancement (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2019). The Madani Framework comprises six key thrusts, which include Holistic Human Development, Quality Education, Sustainable Wealth Generation, Enriching Responsible Research and Innovation, Sovereign Integrity, and Mutual Prosperity (MOHE, 2019). Each of the thrusts seeks to promote a fully-rounded learning experience that merges academic pursuit and excellence with moral causes, civil responsibilities, and entrepreneurial dispositions.

Also, the Madani Framework aims to improve the graduates' overall employability and better prepare them for the new demands of the changed working environment, advanced novelty- and high-value high-competitive level industrial processes and systems concepts (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Nordin et al., 2021). Grown out of the recognition of the skills gap that has always existed between the ideal qualification's students have out of graduation and the real level of demands by employees or open job market, and spurred by the processes of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the changing face of technology due to increasingly evolving new techs (Ismail et al, 2018; World Bank, 2021). The Madani Framework thus seeks to realize this vision by promoting the

integration of industry-relevant skills and competencies within higher education curricula. Such competencies include technical and vocational skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal and communication skills, as well as ethical and entrepreneurial mindset among others (MOHE, 2019; Nordin et al., 2021). The framework is thus designed to make Malaysian graduates more employable and better prepared to empower the workforce and innovate different sectors.

Moreover, the Madani Framework strengthens the relationships of higher educational institutions with industry partners (Khoo et al., 2022; Yusoff et al., 2020). HEIs benefit from such collaboration through knowledge and experience sharing, which allows aligning their curricula with demands of industry and provision of students with an opportunity to engage in experiential learning, internships, and industry-related projects. Thus, a partnership with industry partner improves graduate employment as it also supports a culture of lifelong learning and on-the-job professional development (Ting et al., 2020). The adoption of the Madani Framework's principles is expected to help HEIs in Malaysia develop graduates who are competent not only in technical aspects but also in ethics, social consciousness, and sustainability (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022). In this way, the expected outcome of the Madani Framework implementation is to produce critical thinkers and skilled workforce that are also concerned not only about the country's socio-economic progress but also about global issues.

The literature review has identified several critical gaps between current HR practices in Malaysian HEIs and the requirements of the Madani Framework in realizing its vision of boosting graduate employability. The gaps encompass the discrepancies between curricular contents and industry needs, the absence of integrated programs for faculty development for the inculcation of Madani values and competencies, limited university-industry collaborations to facilitate experiential learning and knowledge transfer, the difficulties in recruiting and retaining top academic talents, and the lack of fit between evaluation criteria and Madani's holistic objectives. HR interventions to close these identified gaps, including curriculum revision, industry linkages, capacity-building for faculty members, integrated curricular design, talent acquisition strategies, and performance appraisal redesigns are required to enable HEIs to translate the Framework's principles into practice, realizing the goal of building a skilled, ethical, and socially responsible workforce for the nation's economic and developmental needs.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Several theories provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the pivotal role of human resource (HR) practices in enhancing graduate employability within the context of the Madani Framework.

### **The Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964)**

Scholars should look at the Madani Framework through the perspective of the Human Capital Theory (Becker,

1964). Essentially, investments in human resource practices will promote graduate employability. Becker posits that it is a worthwhile investment, as it enhances the skills of the labor force. Therefore, it increases the level of productivity, a precursor for improved economic progress. In the current context, one could argue that HR practices in higher education can result in increased human capital for graduates who are more employable and add value to the employer (Becker, 1964). Moreover, the framework intends to establish a highly skilled human resource that drives the nation's economic progress through enhanced knowledge and skills (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2019; Mohd Nizwan et al. 2023). Consequently, when such HR practices are aligned to this view, higher education institutions in Malaysia invest in HR practices in their faculty to ensure they remain current in their fields and continuously integrate teaching of the Madani Framework as well since the students are future graduates (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Nordin et al., 2021).

Moreover, according to Khoo et al., (2022); Yusoff et al., (2020). HR practices that offer experiential learning opportunities, such as interns, industry-based projects, and employer engagements, could further develop students' practical skills and industry exposure. Whereas this linear alignment develops graduates' human capital, the employability projects as graduates are better skilled and, hence, more valuable to potential employers (Subramaniam & Khawaji, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Therefore, from the insights of the Human Capital Theory, HR practitioners in higher education could develop practices and initiatives that promote life-long learning, skill acquisition and maintenance, and industry readiness, to develop a workforce with the necessary competencies to excel in high-value industries for Malaysia's economy (Ismail et al., 2018; Ting et al., 2020). Therefore, where the Human Capital Theory aligned HR strategies to the vision of the Madani framework, it can trigger a spiral of events since it develops human capital, which directly influences employers' demand. Thus, there is a direct connection between these HR strategies and Malaysia's vision for a knowledge economy, which could inspire.

### **The Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991)**

The Resource-Based View that has been developed by Barney, (1991) offers a theoretical insight into the role of human resource practices in driving graduate employability through the Madani Framework. According to RBV, competitive advantage is a function one or more resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Rahim et al., 2023; Ting et al., 2020). In the context of HEIs, faculty members are a critical resource that has a significant impact on the quality of education and the employability of graduates HR practices that enable HEIs to attract, develop, and retain talented faculty members can be valuable and rare resources, which HEIs may use to deliver industry-relevant curricula and highly employable graduates (Ismail et al., 2018; Khoo et al., 2022).

The Madani Framework calls for the development of a skilled and knowledgeable workforce while instilling a high degree of social responsibility which can be leveraged to enhance the economic and social health and well-being of the grand nation (MOHE, 2019). However, HEIs hoping to leverage this vision require faculties that not only know their subjects properly but also know how to inculcate the spirit of, among other principles,



sustainability, ethical behavior, and the overall society's well-being. HR practices which emphasize strategic hiring and recruitment, continued and lifelong learning, and a comprehensive, competitive compensation make attracting and retaining such increasingly polarized faculties much more manageable (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Nordin et al., 2021). Such faculties who pride themselves on socio-ethical teaching can be developed to enhance utilization of such resource capacities thereby enabling the institutions to develop industry-relevant curricula perfect for high-value sectors thus separating them (Khoo et al., 2022; World Bank, 2021).

Second, refer to highly demanded resources that are impossible or extremely difficult to substitute for another organization's resources. Thus, for example, by developing human resources and resorting to such aspects as faculty development programs, mentorship activities, and creating a learning-oriented culture, HEIs accumulate a unique and rare resource that can hardly be reproduced by other institutions (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Yusoff et al., 2020). Moreover, by implementing the strategies of RBV and Madani Framework, HEIs can develop an outstanding resource of human capital that will be impossible or extremely difficult to imitate (Subramaniam & Khawaji, 2022). Third, integrating the orientation towards producing talented and professional students established by faculty members results in developing permanent and trainable human capital.

Whiles, human resource development (HRD) theories also offer valuable insights into the pivotal role of HR practices in enhancing graduate employability within the context of the Madani Framework. There are two relevant theories involved:

#### **The Systems Theory (Swanson & Holton, 2009)**

The Systems Theory Swanson & Holton, (2009), is also applicable and relevant in highlighting the role of HR practices in improving the employability of graduates under the Madani Framework. This theory paradigmatically teases out the comprehension of HRD as a system under internal and external pressures and forces (Khoo et al., 2022; Yusoff et al., 2020). The system theory perceives human as an HRD systems as complex entities that coincide and coexist within the HE sectors. This complexity is shared by Higher Education Institutions HEIs depiction, due to being open systems under an operating environment sectors as a systems element influencing the systems just as HR practices sector. The *raison-d être* of this systems matrix is in the congruence with the Madani Framework where HEI adjustments and HR practices are dependent (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2019). The adoption process is supported by HR practices. They help HEIs adapt and meet the challenges of the Madani Framework and the needs of the new-focused industries. HEIs develop curriculums that reflect the demands of the Madani Framework and its structural components: development, society, and ethics (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Nordin et al., 2021). Additionally, these curriculums support the acquisition of competencies in sustainability, ethics, and societal welfare.

In addition, HR practices that incorporate faculty training and professional development can also instill instructors with the necessary pedagogical and industry-related skills and knowledge to deliver the appropriate curricula which meet the Madani Framework and the industry itself (Rahim et al., 2023; Ting et al., 2020).

Therefore, by encouraging faculty members to engage in lifelong learning and adaptability, HEIs can help ensure that the knowledge and skills transference to students are also relevant and responsive to the changes and requirements of the dynamic job market. Moreover, HR practices that involve industry collaborators through internships, industry-initiated projects, and knowledge transfer activities also help bridge the gap between the current academic setting and what the industry needs requirements (Khoo et al., 2022; Yusoff et al., 2020). Such practices enable students to transfer their learning experiences into actual applications, gaining relevant skills in the process and gaining exposure to the cutting-edge tech and practice in the high-value sectors. Therefore, by utilizing HR practices within the systems theory ambit, HEIs can effectively adapt to the external demands and ensure that their learners attain the right competencies to meet the demands and the nature of the high-value industries. The increased adaptability and response to the external cannot be understated and can only serve to increase graduate employabilities, the central focus of this review.

To sum up, the Systems Theory emphasizes the role of HR practices in supporting HEIs' adaptation to their external environment namely, the Madani Framework and industry needs. When HR initiatives are aligned with the organization's strategy and practices contribute to curriculum support, faculty training, and industry engagement, HEIs can successfully address the external demands. Hence, graduates will acquire the target competencies and skills, as well as improve their employability in high-value sectors.

### **The Career Development Theory (Super, 1980)**

The role of HR practices in raising graduate employability within the framework of the Madani framework is best explained by the Career Development Theory Super, (1980). This theory highlights the significance of career exploration, decision-making, and lifelong learning in achieving satisfaction and success within a career. Accordingly, HR performance elements such as career counseling, mentorship, and continuous professional development work effectively within the higher education context to raise students' employability. For instance, by offering career guidance platforms, HEIs help students discover their interests, strengths, and career expectations. This way, students are better positioned to decide on career choices and academic programs Ismail et al. (2018); Rahim et al. (2023). Additionally, mentorship platforms achieved through HR processes connect students with alumni, industry professionals, and experienced faculty. As a result, the students are better placed to gain insights into future employment prospects, gain practitioner advice, and understand the kind of skills and competencies demanded by the market. In summary, such ventures raise students' employability and prepare graduates for a lifetime of learning and development Mohamad Rasul et al. (2022); Ting et al. (2020).

Besides, Human resource practices that offer opportunities for professional development, including but not limited to workshops, seminars, and training programs, it can also play a significant role in equipping graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the ever-changing job market. Human resource initiatives that can be used in line with the Madani Framework are those that develop the competencies mentioned in the framework, including sustainability, ethics, and well-being in addition to technical and job-specific skills that can be directly utilized in the work environment. By using these human resource practices to meet the Madani

Framework's focus on sustainability and societal well-being, higher education institutions can develop a workforce that not only achieves their career aspirations but also fulfills broader society and environmental goals. Graduates who have acquired the skills and knowledge required to address sustainability issues and make ethical decisions can stand out to employers seeking a workforce that prioritizes social and ecological responsibility (MOHE, 2019; Subramaniam & Khawaji, 2022).

Lastly, the Career Development Theory also emphasizes the need for lifelong learning for career success. Such a perspective implies that the HR function should create conditions for continuous professional development and growth for every worker. This notion also aligns with the Madani Framework's approach when "investing in human capital makes it possible to maintain a workforce capable of adapting to evolving job market demands, which leads to greater economic development" (World Bank, 2021). To conclude, integrating the Career Development Theory's principles into HR practices in HEIs helps to ensure students' successful career exploration, choice, and lifelong learning opportunities. This, in its turn, fosters employability that allows graduates to succeed in high-growth sectors and promote societal and environmental priorities set in the Madani Framework.

## Methodology

This article was written using PRISMA guidelines, otherwise known as the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses. The PRISMA statement provides a comprehensive checklist and flow diagram for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher et al., 2009). This method is recommended by many journals and academic institutions as a standard mode of doing a systematic review. Part of the reason this article chose to use this mode is that it helps one to synthesize all the relevant academic literature more profoundly. Additionally, this article was fundamental to enable one to recognize important literature studies and how the data was collected in some of the main studies. This method used in this SLR was developed from the method used by Karabulut-ilgu et al., (2018). The SLR was based on the method shown in Figure 1.

This review will be limited to published original research articles in peer-reviewed journals or conference proceedings, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs, as well as literature reviews and meta-analyses. The studies must be conducted in English and involve stakeholders in the Malaysian higher education sector, specifically higher education institutions, faculty members, students, graduates, policymakers, government officials, industry partners, and employers. The review will only consider studies that explore various HR practices and strategies implemented in Malaysian HEIs, including curriculum development and alignment with industry needs, faculty training and professional development, performance management systems and evaluation metrics, recruitment and talent acquisition, and university-industry partnerships and experiential learning. The studies should not have specific comparators as the review will explore how HR practices can help boost graduate employability under the Madani Framework. The primary outcome of interest will be the improvement of graduate employability, assessed by the level of alignment between graduate

competencies and industry demands, the number of graduates employed and placed using their knowledge and skills, and the level of employers' satisfaction on graduate competencies and performance, as well as integration of the Madani Framework principles into educational outcomes. The review will also include studies that assess the effectiveness of HR practices to develop a skilled, adaptable and responsible workforce as per the Madani Framework and Malaysia's economic vision.

### Study Characteristics

The systematic review included records obtained through the comprehensive literature search. In total, 327 records were retrieved from diverse databases and sources. After excluding duplicates and screening titles and abstracts based on the predefined eligibility criteria, 63 records were assessed for full-text review. In the end, 28 studies were found compliant with inclusion criteria and accepted for a further analysis within the review framework. These studies integrated different types of research methodologies, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, and provided a thorough overview of the relationships between HR practices and graduate employability in the context of Malaysian HE. Thus, the review remained comprehensive in regards to the context and the focus of the analyzed studies. The studies selected for the analysis discussed multiple forms of HR practices being integrated into the Malaysian HE sectors. These included focus on curriculum development and innovation, training, and advancements for faculty, performance monitoring and appraisal tools, recruitment initiatives, and the role of university-industry partnerships. These foci were further proven against the background of their efficiency at promoting graduate employability and ensuring the development of competencies and values, as described within the Madani Framework.

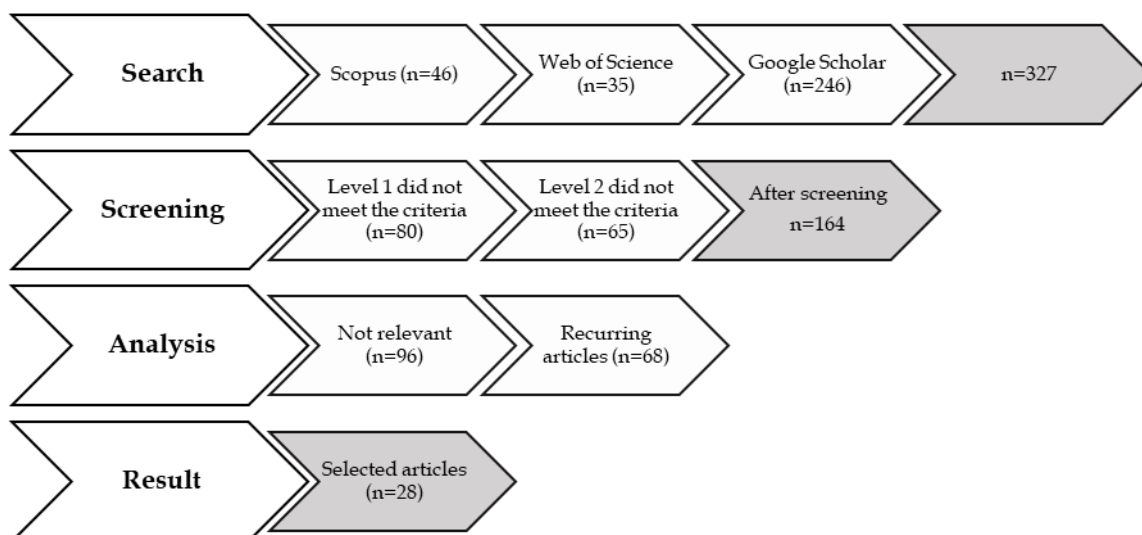


Figure 1. Adaptation of the Article Selection Process from Karabulut-Ilgu et al. (2018)

More specifically, the studies analyzed the fit between the competencies acquired by graduates and the changing

requirements of high-value industries in Malaysia, and the extent to which outcomes of education complied with the principles of the Madani Framework: sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility. In addition, the studies focused on HR practices and their contribution to aiding university-industry collaborations, without which the first are unable to deliver experiential training to students or ensure that the programs align with industry needs.

Table 1. Screening Criteria Setting

Main Criterion	Inclusion Criterion	Exclusion Criterion
Year of Publication	January 2020 – December 2022	Other than January 2020 – December 2023
Type of Publication	Empirical Articles	Other than Empirical Articles
Language	English	Other than English

The two inclusion criteria were the following: 1) only those conducted within the time frame from January 2012 to December 2021 and 2) only empirical articles written in English. On the other hand, the two exclusion criteria are the following: 1) those outside the two-year time frame from January 2020 to December 2023 and 2) non-empirical studies in English. The next strategy was the exclusion of past articles and repeated studies, conducted by the method of title reading and abstract reading. Finally, the full and complete reading of the articles was conducted; at that time, the ones that did not meet the requirements of this study were excluded. Using the search strategies, the screening, and the analysis, seven articles were picked. The twenty-eight articles that have been selected are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Selected Articles

No. of Author	Names of Authors/ Citation	Title
1.	Abdullah, N. L., Hanafiah, M. H., & Hashim, N. A. (2018).	Developing graduate employability skills through industrial training program at Malaysian polytechnics: A review on employability models.
2.	Azmi, I. A. G., Rahmah, N., Yusoff, H., & Fahmi, M. H. (2020)	The development of employability skills and readiness for the workplace: A study of Malaysian public university graduates.
3.	Chang, C. C., Hoon, T. S., & Tie, F. H. (2021)	Exploring the relevance of higher education curriculum to employability in the fourth industrial revolution.
4.	Ismail, S., Md Siraj, S., Ahmad Bashah, N., & Mohamad, Z. Z. (2018)	Redesigning higher education for industrial revolution 4.0: A human resource management perspective.
5.	Jaafar, S., & Ismail, M. H. (2021)	Madani skills development through technical and vocational education training (TVET) in

No. of Author	Names of Authors/ Citation	Title
		Malaysia.
6.	Khoo, E. G., Muhamad-Saleh, N., & Yuen, T. M. (2022).	Prioritizing graduate employability: A study of Malaysian public universities.
7.	Lim, Y. M., Yusof, N., & Zin, M. L. M. (2020).	Exploring the industrial competency requirements of Malaysian engineers in the era of Industry 4.0.
8.	Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE]. (2019).	Madani framework for higher education institutions in Malaysia.
9.	Mohamad Rasul, M. S., Abdul Rahim, A. R., Awaludin, F. A., & Mohamad Jahaya, N. F. (2022)	Quality of higher education: The need for madani vision and digital transformation.
10.	Mohamed, R., Arshad, R., & Baharuddin, A. (2021).	Sustainable employability model for Malaysia's higher education institutions.
11.	Mukhtar, M. I., Rahim, N. F. A., & Tahir, I. M. (2020).	Curriculum mapping for employability attributes and graduate outcomes: A case study of the Malaysian public university
12.	Nordin, N., Hamid, B. A., Ripin, M. N. S., Arshad, R., & Jamaludin, N. E. (2021).	Enhancing employability in Malaysian technical vocational education and training (TVET) graduates through the madani framework.
13.	Othman, N., Ismail, S., Mohd Isa, A. H. B., & Zakuan, N. (2022).	A systematic review of the human resource management practices in higher education institutions
14.	Rahman, N. A., Hanafi, N. M., Mukhtar, M. I., & Ahmad, J. (2021).	Employability skills model for Malaysian graduates' readiness toward industry 4.0.
15.	Rahim, N. A. A., Mohamad, N., & Samah, B. A. (2023).	Engaging universities for developing employability skills: Bridging the gaps between curriculum and industry needs.
16.	Rasul, M. S. M., Gani, A. M., Ihsan, A. F., Yusoff, A. M., & Hamid, N. S. A. (2021).	Factors influencing students' employability in higher education institutions: A systematic literature review.
17.	Razali, S. N. A. M., Zainon, W. M. N. W., & Wahid, W. N. W. (2021).	Employability skills required for industry 4.0 workforce: A content analysis of job advertisements in Malaysia.
18.	Shahroom, A. A., & Hasan, N. (2022).	Industrial revolution 4.0 and the demand for employability skills: A systematic literature review.

No. of Author	Names of Authors/ Citation	Title
19.	Subramaniam, S. R., & Khawaji, D. M. A. (2022).	Investigating the graduate employability skills gap in Malaysia: Insights from employers.
20.	Tan, C. K., Lim, H. E., Chan, C. M., Kamis, A., & Ismail, S. (2021).	Fostering employability skills through an entrepreneurship education program at Malaysian public universities.
21.	Ting, S. H., Shabudin, A. F. A., & Wahab, S. N. A. (2020).	The role of human resource management in ensuring employability of graduates produced by private higher education institutions.
22.	World Bank. (2021).	Aiming high: Navigating the next stage of Malaysia's development.
23.	Yaacob, N. A., Osman, M. M., & Arshad, M. M. (2021).	Assessing the readiness of Malaysian TVET educators towards the Industrial Revolution 4.0.
24.	Yusoff, M. N. H., Zainol, F. A., & Ibrahim, M. D. (2020).	Challenges of a university and industry collaboration: Overcoming the inter-organizational gap for a sustainable partnership.
25.	Zain, N. H. M., Yahaya, J. H., Fadzil, M. F., & Ahmad, N. A. (2023).	Enhancing the employability of Malaysia's graduates: Roles and strategies from higher education institutions and industry.
26.	Zaliza, A., Ali, M. S., & Azmi, F. R. (2022).	Barriers to industry engagement in Malaysian public universities.
27.	Zarin, R., Tong, C. K., Wong, K. Y., Shamshiri, R. R., & Ahmad, D. (2021).	Investigating the employability skills required for the agricultural sector in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.
28.	Zulfadli, Z., Mokhtar, S. A., & Aziz, N. A. (2021).	The need for continuous professional development among academic staff in Malaysian public universities.

Through the inclusion of studies that utilized different research methodologies and focused on different dimensions of HR practices, graduate employability, and Madani Framework in the Malaysian higher education setting, this systematic review seeks to present an all-encompassing, multi-faceted view of the strategies that should be adopted to eliminate the existing gap between educational outcomes and industry demands. The results of these studies will create a fertile ground for developing an understanding of the human resource strategies that should be implemented to make the vision of the Madani Framework a reality by developing faculties that are not just flexible and fully fledged but also socially responsible, thus contributing to the improvement of graduate employability and support for Malaysia's socioeconomic framework.



## Results

The systematic review of the 28 included studies has revealed the importance of human resource practices on the gap between the competencies of graduates and demands of the industry to improve graduate employability and make Malaysia's higher education practices narrow down on the vision of the Madani Framework. Many issues can be drawn from the analysis in this way and therefore offer immense implicational value to policymakers, educators, and industry officials.

Table 3 is arranged thematically to categorize the 28 articles.

Table 3. Measured Themes

Theme	Articles
Graduate Employability Skills and Competencies	Abdullah et al. (2018); Azmi et al. (2020); Chang et al. (2021); Lim et al. (2020); Mukhtar et al. (2020); Rahman et al. (2021); Razali et al. (2021); Shahroom & Hasan (2022); Zarin et al. (2021)
Curriculum Alignment and Industry Relevance	Chang et al. (2021); Lim et al. (2020); Mohamed et al. (2021); Mukhtar et al. (2020); Rahim et al. (2023); Rasul et al. (2021); Shahroom & Hasan (2022)
HR Practices in Higher Education	Ismail et al. (2018); Othman et al. (2022); Ting et al. (2020)
Madani Framework and Educational Policies	Jaafar & Ismail (2021); Mohamad Rasul et al. (2022); MOHE (2019); Nordin et al. (2021)
University-Industry Collaboration	Yusoff et al. (2020); Zain et al. (2023); Zaliza et al. (2022)
Faculty Development and Continuous Learning	Tan et al. (2021); Yaacob et al. (2021); Zulfadli et al. (2021)
Graduate Employability and Economic Development	Khoo et al. (2022); Subramaniam & Khawaji (2022); World Bank (2021)

The articles were first grouped into seven themes that include graduate employability skills and competencies, curriculum alignment and industry relevance, HR practices in higher education, Madani framework and educational policies, university-industry collaboration, faculty development and continuous learning, and graduate employability and economic development. This thematic arrangement allows for a more organized and thorough review and analysis of the related areas as well as the outcomes of applying HR approaches to enhancing graduate employability consistent with the vision of the Madani framework. The organization of articles with the various characteristics compassion to each theme enables the systematic review to undertake

discussion on these areas based on the findings and major ideas, gaps, and recommendations derived from the process. This structured analysis style ensures that the systematic review provides a detailed and comprehensive exploration of the themes, enabling discussions and evidence.

The findings underscored the continuation problem of the skills gap between the competencies learned by graduates and the increasing demands of high-value industries with the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) (Chang et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2020; Shahroom & Hasan, 2022). Specifically, the gap not only contributes to poor graduate employability but also prevents Malaysia from developing a high-skilled knowledge-based workforce (Khoo et al., 2022; World Bank, 2021). A solution to this issue requires reorienting higher education to develop industry-responsive skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and technology literacy (Mukhtar et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021).

The review describes the important role HR practices play in enabling the curricular adjustment and implementation of industry-relevant competencies in graduates. Specifically, strategically designed HR interventions such as training programs and professional development for faculty, industry-aligned performance management systems, and recruitment efforts could facilitate educator's attainment of the knowledge and competences necessary to deliver the industry-relevant curricula (Ismail et al., 2018; Othman et al., 2022; Ting et al., 2020). In addition, HR practices that enable continuous learning and growth for both faculty and students could help increase their overall level of flexibility and readiness to respond to the ever-changing job market demands (Tan et al., 2021; Zulfadli et al., 2021).

To sum up, the articles have demonstrated the importance of the Madani Framework for shaping educational outcomes and developing a holistic, ethical, and socially responsible workforce (Jaafar & Ismail, 2021; Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Nordin et al., 2021). Specifically, all the articles call for integrating the principles of the Madani framework into HR practices, including recruitment, training, performance appraisal so that HEIs can develop graduates with not only technical competence but that also have in them sustainability literacy, ethical decision-making, and sense of social responsibility. Moreover, all the articles have emphasized the critical role of effective university-industry collaboration in bolstering graduate employability (MOHE, 2019; Nordin et al., 2021). Therefore, HR practices that support knowledge and skills transfer, industry placement, and the collaborative design of academic programs could bridge the mismatch existing between academic curricular and industry needs (Yusoff et al., 2020; Zain et al., 2023; Zaliza et al., 2022).

Furthermore, these studies addressed the importance of continuous professional development and lifelong learning on the part of both teachers and students. Human resource practices that actively support mentorship initiatives, exposure to the industry, and skill-based developmental opportunities work to create a learning culture where graduates can keep up with the dynamic marketplace demands and thereby play their role in Malaysia's economy (Tan et al., 2021; Yaacob et al., 2021; Zulfadli et al., 2021). In conclusion, from the literature, it is evident that there is a need for a holistic and collaboration approach among key stakeholders, that is, policy-makers, educators, industry partners, and HR professionals (Ismail et al., 2018; Khoo et al., 2022;

Ting et al., 2020). By combining their resources and areas of expertise, stakeholders can develop implementable strategies that bridge the gap between education and industry requirements, thereby enhancing graduates' employability and supporting Malaysia's drive towards an e-economy.

## Discussion

The systematic review undertaken in the present study has provided key insights into the central importance of human resource spearheading practices in realizing the Madani Framework vision of comprehensive graduate employability adjustments in Malaysia's HE sectors. Through the synthesis and critical evaluation of the main findings of 28 relevant projects, a number of central themes and implications were identified, offering clarity into the requisite methods and strategies for narrowing the disconnect between educational attainment and industry appropriateness. The current discussion aims to elaborate the identified themes and thus develop a thorough comprehension of how HRM practices can aid in the fostering of a skillful, flexible, and socially aware workforce that is aligned with the nation's economic maturation agenda.

### **Objective 1: To Assess the alignment between the competencies fostered by current higher education curricula and the requirements of high-value industries in Malaysia.**

In conclusion, assessing the congruence between higher education curricula and the competency requirements of high-value industries is a complex endeavor that necessitates taking several steps. These include curriculum mapping and gap analysis to determine the variances between the existing curricula and industry needs, stakeholder collaborations with employers and industry practitioners to familiarize with the unique competency requirements, labor market analysis and skill demand studies to determine the most sought-after skills and attributes within various sectors, incorporation of new technologies and Industry 4.0 skills into academic programs to ensure that students are prepared for the dynamic job market, and the development of a continuous review system for curricula updation. Through these strategies, higher education institutions enhance their ability to assess the congruence between their curricula and the competency requirements of high-value industries. Subsequently, they can identify the areas needing improvement and understand how to bridge the gap to boost graduate employability.

### **Objective 2. Investigate the efficacy of existing HR practices within HEIs in cultivating industry-relevant skills and competencies among graduates.**

Therefore, the systematic review identified several HR domains that need to be thoroughly assessed in order to adequately measure the efficacy of the existing HR practices implemented by the HEIs to cultivate industry-relevant skills and competencies among the graduates. First, the assessment of the faculties should measure the quality of the employment and training offered to the academic staff in a manner that enables educators to acquire the requisite knowledge and pedagogy perspectives appropriate to the industry-oriented curriculum. The

second assessment domain includes the degree to which the performance management system and the performance evaluation criteria match the industry requirements and the degree to which the academic staff are motivated or rewarded for developing the industry relevant competencies in the students. Additionally, the systematic review indicated the importance of assessing the impact of the professional development and adjunct professional engagement in the form of workshops, seminars, and industrial projects and professional training on the knowledge and pedagogy behaviour of the faculty members. Conducting a thorough assessment of the above-mentioned HR domains will help HEIs recognize the strong points, the weaknesses, and the interventions to enhance weaknesses to cultivate industry-relevant skills and competencies among the graduates.

### **3. Explore the role of HR strategies in promoting and sustaining effective university-industry collaborations that support curriculum development and experiential learning opportunities.**

According to this systematic review, HR strategies play a significant role in promoting sustainable university-industry collaborations. University-industry collaboration is essential for ensuring that the curriculum is aligned with industry trends and providing students with hands-on learning opportunities (Yusoff et al., 2020; Zain et al., 2023). As effective HR practices enable knowledge sharing between academia and the industry, HEIs can gain insight into the current and future needs of the industry, including emerging technologies and skills required (Khoo et al., 2022; Rahim et al., 2023). HR strategies can use this information to ensure that they offer industry-consistent course curricula and provide students with practical on-the-job learning experience from internships, industrial projects, and industrial seminars (Tan et al., 2021; Zaliza et al., 2022). When HR practices better develop the faculty members to expose them to the industry, they provide the professors with knowledge and career skills that can help them bridge the theory-practice gap (Ting et al., 2020). In addition, HR practices also ensure faculty members are compensated and rewarded for their contribution and involvement in industry partnerships to encourage continuous learning and knowledge-sharing culture.

### **4. Identify innovative HR practices that can be leveraged to embed the principles and values of the Madani Framework into higher education curricula, fostering a holistic and socially responsible workforce.**

As such, the systematic review demonstrates the necessity of innovative HR practices that incorporate the principles and values of the Madani Framework in higher education to develop a holistic and socially responsible workforce. Among the identified approaches is the need to conduct recruitment and the selection process based on desirable competencies and attributes outlined in the Madani Framework, including sustainability awareness, responsible decision-making, and basis in Islam values (Mohamad Rasul et al., 2022; Nordin et al., 2021). In addition, the review showed the need for faculty development programs that facilitate educators in gaining the required knowledge and developing a suitable mindset about embedding Madani values in their work and activities (Jaafar & Ismail, 2021; Zulfadli et al., 2021). It focuses the reviewed studies on integrating the principles of the Madani Framework into faculty performance and reward systems, which reflect the further incentive for faculty to contribute to the development of graduates with holistic responsibility goals.

Furthermore, there are innovative HR practices the reviewed studies used to demonstrate how collaboration with sustainability experts, community activities, and industry partnerships help maintain learning experiences that improve Madani values reliance (Yusoff et al., 2020; Zain et al., 2023).

To summarize, the current systematic review accentuates the importance of HR practices in achieving the vision of the Madani Framework regarding graduate employability in Malaysia. Through the alignment of HR strategies with the requirements of the industry, the development of industry relevant competencies, the promotion of ethical and sustainable practices, the facilitation of university-industry relationships, and the creation of an environment conducive to lifelong learning, HEIs may equip graduates with skills, knowledge, and attributes that will enable them to succeed in industries that create high value and support the growth and development of nations both at economic and social levels.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, a systematic review in this article has provided comprehensive analysis of the relationship between human resource practices and Malaysia higher education sector graduate employability vision through the Madani Framework. Using evidence from a variety of studies identified for synthesis, this review has outlined that HR strategies play a critical role in ensuring a close relationship between educational outcomes and industry requirements as a way of enhancing the short-term economic development of the country. Further, emphasis has been placed on the fact that there continues to be a significant concern regarding the continuous skills mismatch between the graduates and evolving high-value industries. As such, the solution involves creating systems interventions to ensure that some of the high-value industries are in a position to inform different HEI's focus on curricula to ensure university graduates have sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility principles in the Madani Framework to facilitate full-time employment.

The key recommendations emanating from this review include the initial conduction of curricular mapping and gap analyses and stakeholder collaboration with industry partners. Second, emerging technologies and Industry 4.0 skills should be integrated into academic programs, and commitments should be made to regular and ongoing review and updating mechanisms. In addition, an evaluation of the efficacy of the HR practices currently in place in HEIs, including faculty recruitment, training, performance management, and continuous professional development, should be carried out. The importance of HR strategies in supporting and sustaining effective University-Industry Collaboration, which is essential for creating the right environment for experiential learning, as well as curriculum success for industry-relevant skills, has been highlighted in this review. In addition, innovative HR practices centered on the priorities outlined in Islamic societal values can nurture a more balanced and responsible workforce. For instance, aligning the competencies of the Madani Framework to recruitment procedures, these principles can be embedded into on-going faculty development, performance review procedures to assess implementation incentives.

In conclusion, this systematic review has revealed that the full realization of the vision of the Madani Framework is wholly dependent on an extensive and collaborative approach between policymakers, educators, industry partners, and HR professionals. By combining their contributions, HEIs can develop and implement long-term and sustainable strategies that close the gap between higher education outcomes and the industry's needs to improve graduate employability and support Malaysia's shift to a knowledge economy. As Malaysia continues to navigate the complexities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the rise of high-value industries, this review and the recommendations presented therein offer a comprehensive guide for policymakers, educators, and HR practitioners to maximize the strategic value of HR practices in building a skilled, adaptive, and socially responsible workforce to ensure the country's economic transformation and sustainable development.

## Recommendations

To fill the gap between the outcomes of education and what the industry requires, and consequently, improve the employability of graduates in Malaysia, a comprehensive and collaborative strategy by all stakeholders is recommended. At the national level, therefore, a taskforce or an advisory committee to develop and review the strategies for aligning HR practices to the Madani Framework and the industry requirements should be established. Labor market analyses and regular professorial works will maintain regular and constant collaboration with the industries and continuous exchange and improvement of knowledge and other aspects. The recruitment process, promotion, and reward systems within the HEIs should be guided by the competences and values outlined in the Madani Framework. Amid rapidly emerging trends and disruptions due to technology, there should be a near constant workshop and knowledge-sharing –industry collaboration and engagement. Innovative HRM activities – including cross functional works, community engagements, and sustainability-tailored activities – can reinforce the Inci framework. Additionally, developing and regular reviewing policies through research and evaluation can identify best practices as well as ensure the HR strategic direction relevance to the needs of the industries and the country's development agenda. A collaborative effort by all stakeholders can achieve this vision outlined in the Madani Framework, improve the graduates' employability, and facilitate Malaysia's transformation into an ethnographic economy.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express a deepest gratitude to the National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM) for their invaluable support and contributions to this research project. This study would not have been possible without the assistance and resources provided by UPNM.

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## Discovering the Decision-making Processes of Small and Medium Enterprises in Oman

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**Abstract:** This study delves into the decision-making processes of SMEs in Oman, offering insights from the perspectives of SME entrepreneurs in the Sultanate of Oman. It investigates how these decision-making processes contribute to sustainability and innovation. The study is grounded in the belief that Systematic Decision-making enhances organizational flexibility. A scientific philosophy guides the research report design. A robust quantitative case study approach involving surveys administered to various SME entrepreneurs was used for data collection. Correlation analysis is employed to analyze the quantitative data component and to identify the relationship between Decision-Making Processes, Contextual Dynamics, and SME effectiveness. The findings, derived from a rigorous analysis of quantitative data and participants' voices, illuminate the complex decision-making dynamics of SMEs in Oman. They underscore the pivotal role of Contextual Dynamics, encompassing the Regulatory Environment, Market dynamics, and Economic Environment, in implementing SME policies and processes. These insights are informative and empowering for SME entrepreneurs and decision-makers. They clearly understand the value of a conducive development environment in enhancing decision-making capabilities and ensuring organizational sustainability.

**Keywords:** decision-making, SMEs, Business flexibility, Innovation, Contextual dynamism

**Citation:** AL Jabri, S. R. (2024). Discovering the Decision-making Processes of Small and Medium Enterprises in Oman. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024-- International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp.2845-2855), Antalya, Turkiye. ISTES Organization.

### Introduction

Generally, decision-making is the most crucial element in any entrepreneurial activity and forms an inseparable component of any business. Decision-making allows entrepreneurs to integrate their entrepreneurial behavior into developing activities that lead to the business's success. As such, (Settembre-Blundo et al.,2021) indicate that decision-making is a sufficient factor that has been proven efficient in formulating entrepreneurial goals, directions, and activities. As (He et al.,2022) defined, decision-making entails the process through which various solutions are dived and is the central part of any occupation. Thus, it is very complex for any entrepreneurial development. Moreover, the decisions entrepreneurs make in their occupations form the substance of their business development. Srimulyani and Hermanto (2021) explain that business decisions affect the general survival of businesses and affect the behavioral approach of others.

The critical role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in strengthening economic growth has been widely recognized. SMEs have been regarded as the backbone of the economy in developed and developing countries, and unlike big enterprises, they are quickly established with little resource requirement (Gherghina et al., 2020). Moreover, the space requirement for establishing SMEs is always manageable. They usually need small offices with minimal preparation, such as a limited number of required employees and telephone lines. Recently, Abisuga-Oyekunle et al. (2020) have shown that SMEs have been considered the leading solutions that reduce high unemployment and poverty rates and thus lead to improved economic growth. Based on the gross domestic product (GDP), it has been evidenced that small and medium enterprises have been pillars globally.

Development of sectorial economies Of significant value is that SMEs have been essential to the growth and development of the local economy through the generation of employment that helps improve poverty in most countries. A United Nations Industrial Development Organization report indicated that SMEs form about 90% of worldwide business and, thus, an essential part of economic development (Bhama et al., 2024). Since developing countries such as Oman have discovered the critical role of entrepreneurs in industrial success, it is essential to identify the decision-making processes within small and medium enterprises.

### **Research Objective**

The researcher proposes to explore SMEs' decision-making processes in Oman. In doing so, the study identified opportunities and challenges that Omani entrepreneurs face in their struggle to reduce the rates of unemployment among Omani citizens while promoting economic development nationally.

Oman's economic development has significantly influenced SMEs, contributing to a significant portion of employment generation in the area (Alqassabi, 2020). However, understanding the decision-making process within SMEs has remained a challenge.

### **Literature Review**

Various theoretical perspectives have been developed to understand the decision-making process in SMEs. One of the most essential theories regarding decision-making in SMEs is bounded rationality, which indicates various cognitive limitations that decision-makers experience (Drew, 2023). Therefore, decision-makers tend to serve their interests instead of optimizing decisions for the enterprise's good.

Resource-based theory, on the other hand, considers the role of available resources in shaping decision-making (Zahra, 2021). Compared to bounded rationality theory, this theory highlights the role of internal resources as valuable elements in decision-making rather than relying on past business experiences. Similarly, transaction cost theory governance is considered by transactional theory as an aspect that reduces excess costs. The theories, however, need to compressively explain the decision-making processes that entrepreneurs believe in their

enterprises.

Moreover, researchers have considered various decision-making aspects within the SMEs. Nuijten et al. (2020) indicated that SMEs relied mainly on personal judgment in resource allocation within their enterprises. Karamiet al. (2023) further suggested that relying on entrepreneurial orientation was common among entrepreneurs. Comparing the two findings, it is apparent that considering available opportunities is critical for the innovative development of businesses. However, the researchers must elaborate on the specific processes required before establishing SMEs.

Arguments have also been raised about including elaborate processes in decision-making. In their research, Anderson et al. (2022) found that intuition was essential in SMEs' decision-making processes. In contrast, Adam and Dempsey (2020) regard the consideration of intuition despite their stand on systematic decision-making processes. However, Hauser et al. (2020) consider formalized approaches in making decisions based on SMEs. The authors' arguments, however, need to be more specific to business approaches, thus making it difficult for SMEs to base their decision-making specifically on specific techniques as they may not be by their business type.

The reviewed studies offered essential aspects regarding the research topic; however, certain limitations were revealed. It was revealed that the studies mainly relied on self-reported data, potentially introducing response bias. Self-reported data could provide responses that participants perceive as desirable to them and are based on their perceptions. As such, the final results may be skewed, thus compromising their validity. It was also realized that the studies were primarily cross-sectional and needed to capture the relevant trends in the decision-making process within a specified time. Since the decision-making process is leading to changes based on the industry's dynamic nature, it is vital to consider the various external and internal factors that evolve in the decision-making process.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for the case considers two variables: the dependent and independent variables. Decision-making processes form the study's dependent variable and encompass the strategies, methods, and processes involved in the choices that inform small and medium enterprises. The variable is essential in determining SMEs' challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities necessary to achieve their strategic goals. On the opposing, the independent variable is contextual dynamism, which provides an understanding of the various factors that inform the operation environment of SMEs. Contextual dynamism entails regulatory environment, technological advancements, sociocultural factors, market dynamics, and economic environment. Based on the variables, a conceptual model indicates that various contextual dynamism affects Omani SMEs' decision-making process. As such, The relationships between decision-making processes and the contextual dynamics lead to a broader contextual.

## Research Question

Even though the existing research has explored the decision-making aspects within small and medium enterprises, there is still a need to understand the critical decision-making processes. As such, the following research question is proposed to help in investigating and filling the gap;

What decision-making processes are involved in SMEs in Oman, and how does contextual dynamism inform them?

Research Hypothesis to be tested:

A systematic decision-making process is mainly applied to SMEs in Oman.

## Method

### Research Design

The study used quantitative analysis to distribute survey questions to the SMEs. Quantitative analysis was selected because it provides a standardized and structured approach for measuring variables within the conceptual framework. Thus, it will enhance the measurement of decision-making processes, such as the style used and factors considered.

In this study, the researcher focused on SMEs in Oman. As the research rationale already validates, the area offers an opportunity for research based on its unique regulatory and economic environment, which will significantly influence the decision-making process of SMEs.

The research participants were SMEs. Forty participants were selected using distributed random sampling, which ensured representation across various SME sectors and considered diverse firm sizes. Stratified sampling also ensured that participants' diverse perspectives were considered. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher applied strategies such as anonymizing names and secure storage of data.

### Data Collection Procedure

Structured survey questionnaires were used to collect data from the participants. In the survey questionnaire, the researcher organized specific themes, with each question using a 5-point Likert scale and designed as follows 1-strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree. After development, the survey questions were distributed using Google Forms, and the researcher distributed them using WhatsApp. The researcher contacted each participant by phone and recorded their answers, as some were not familiar with using surveys.

A Quantitative case study approach investigates how decision-making processes increase SMEs' performance.

Toward this purpose, based on the reviewed literature and previous studies on decision-making processes, a perception survey comprising 5-point Likert Scale items was distributed to 40 participants in various SME organizations; the survey aimed to collect quantitative data related to the study under inquiry. The survey was piloted, and the version used consisted of three sections apart from the demographic part.

The first section comprised three items and aimed to measure participants' perceptions of the extent to which they understood the scope of the problem. The second section includes three items and measures participants' perceptions of the extent to which the consequences of the problem and impact increase their decision-making processes. The third section of the survey includes three items and measures participants' perceptions of the solution and the effects of solving the issues. All nine survey items were considered on a 5-point scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neither Agree nor Disagree, 4- Agree, 5-strongly agree). The survey includes an introductory section that clearly explains the purpose of the research.

## Results

The collected data were analyzed for the research questions. The first research question asked the participants: How do regulatory constraints affect their decision-making process? For measuring participants' perceptions, the first item of the survey was considered for frequency analysis, and the mean was calculated. To measure participants' perceptions in this regard, the first five items of the survey (1-5) were subjected to the frequency analysis, the average Mean (M) of Excel. Table one presents the descriptive statistics of the first five items.

Table 1. Scope of the Problem

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
To what extent do you believe regulatory constraints affect your decision-making process?	10 (25%)	15 (37.5%)	5 (12.5%)	5 (12.5%)	5 (12.5%)	2.5	1.32
Q2- What is your level of confidence in SME stability?	8 (20%)	10 (25%)	0	0	22 (55%)	3.45	1.75
Q3- There is technological relevance in your decision-making process.	12 (30%)	16 (40%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	0	2.15	1.01
Average Mean						2.7	



Analysis of the first five items of the survey indicates that most participants (37.5%) do not view regulatory constraints as affecting the decision-making process. The analysis results demonstrate an agreement towards levels 4 and 5 (To a high extent and a very high extent) with an overall mean of 2.7. Statistical results of question one indicate that the highest means were for participants' perceptions of the extent to which they disagreed. The lowest means were related to participants' perceptions of the extent to which they strongly agreed.

Question two asked the participants: What is their confidence level in SME stability? The majority of the participants (55%) strongly agreed that they were confident with the stability of SMEs at a mean of 3.45. In the third question, participants were asked: Is there technological relevance in your decision-making process? In response to the research question, 40% of the participants disagreed that there were technologies in their decision-making process. The results also showed an agreement towards levels 2 and 3 (disagree and neither agree nor disagree) with an overall mean of 2.7. Based on the statistical result for question one, it is revealed that the highest means were for parents' perceptions of the extent to which the confidence level was considered on the sustainability of SMEs. The lowest means were related to participants' perceptions of technological relevance in the decision-making process.

These findings are unsurprising given that (Short & Toffel,2010) demonstrated that regulatory frameworks can negatively affect business performance, particularly in industries with strict standards and compliance. However, the different answers can indicate variations in respondents' regulatory settings, industry, or organization size. Research has also shown that SMEs are often more prone to economic declines than larger firms because of their adaptability and creativity (Ayyagari et al., 2011). Moreover, the respondents were confident that their SMEs had a good stability level despite the low technological relevance of their decision-making process. The findings revealed that while there is stability in SMEs within Oman, the decision-making process rarely applies technology.

Research question four asked the participants to rate the level of anxiety experienced in team management. 30% of the participants were neutral on the issues, while most participants 25% agreed with the level of anxiety in team management. In research question 5, participants were asked: What is the extent of their perception of decision-making difficulties?

The response indicated that 25% of the respondents agreed that decision-making difficulties were there, with a mean of 3.175. Research question six asked the participants: To what extent do decision-making challenges affect your financial performance? 27.5% of respondents strongly agreed that decision-making challenges affected their financial performance. This question had a mean of 3.35 compared to the average overall mean of 3.2.

Table 2 demonstrates that the overall mean scores of the five variables were 3.2, and the mean scores of the highest variable were 3.175.

Table 2. Consequences of the Problem and Impact

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Q4-Rate the level of anxiety experienced in team management.</b>	5 (12.5%)	8 (20%)	12 (30%)	10 (25%)	5 (12.5%)	3.175	1.21
<b>What is the extent of your perception of decision-making difficulties?</b>	6 (15%)	7 (16.6%)	9 (21.4%)	10 (25%)	8 (20%)	3.175	1.34
<b>Q6- To what extent do you believe decision-making challenges affect your financial performance?</b>	8 (20%)	6 (15%)	5 (12.5%)	10 (25%)	11 (27.5%)	3.25	1.50
<b>Average Mean</b>						3.2	

Organizational psychology literature often states that the pressures of leadership positions, such as managing a team, can affect decision-making, team dynamics, and overall organizational effectiveness (Montgomery et al., 2006). The decision-making process also affected the SMEs' financial performance. The literature suggests a link between decision-making and economic performance, as late or challenging decision-making can lead to missed opportunities and delays in responding to market changes, which affect financial performance (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011).

Most of the Participants believed that the decision-making process was much more difficult. The diagram illustrates a tendency for decision-making difficulties to exist in the sector. Therefore, the results showed that the consequences and impact of the problem were generally high in their businesses. Organizational psychology literature often states that the pressures of leadership positions, such as the concern of managing a team, can affect decision-making, team dynamics, and overall organizational effectiveness (Montgomery et al., 2006).

It was also revealed that the decision-making process affected the SMEs' financial performance. The literature suggests a link between decision-making and economic performance, as late or challenging decision-making can lead to missed opportunities and delays in responding to market changes, which affect financial performance (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011).

Question seven was: What is your confidence level in implementing decision-making training for SMEs? It aimed to measure the extent to which participants were confident in implementing decision-making training for SMEs. The Descriptive statistics of the five variables of this question (7-9) indicate that 50% of the respondents

believe that confidence level enhances decision-making training. Question eight asked the participants: How do you believe in using market information enhancement tools for better decision-making? 30% of the respondents did not agree or disagree with this issue. However, 25% disagreed with the question. The last open-ended question asked the participant to rate whether there was the potential success of government support in assisting SMEs to overcome challenges arising from decision-making. Most participants (60%) agreed that government support had potential success in assisting SMEs.

Table 3 indicates that the grand mean of the grand variables' scores was 9.1, that of sub-variables 7 and 9 was 3.075, and that of sub-variables eight was 2.95.

Table 3. Solution and Impact in Solving the Issues, Including Variable Testing

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Q7- What is your confidence level in implementing decision-making training for SMEs?</b>	2 (5%)	3 (7.5%)	3 (7.5%)	20 (50%)	12 (30%)	3.075	1.36
<b>Q8- How do you believe in using market information enhancement tools for better decision-making?</b>	5 (12.5%)	10 (25%)	12 (30%)	8 (20%)	5 (12.5%)	2.95	1.20
<b>Q9- There is the potential success of government support in assisting SMEs overcome challenges arising from decision-making.</b>	2 (5%)	3 (7.5%)	11 (27.5%)	12 (30%)	12 (30%)	3.075	1.29
<b>Average Mean</b>						9.1	

Most participants agreed that providing decision-making training for SMEs is one of the main goals of SME development maturity. This continuous training will support SMEs in improving their decision-making abilities and affect the economy's diversity. The Omani government has been focused on growing the SME sector as part of its economic diversification policy (Al et al., 2014). Decision-making training can play a critical role in these efforts by allowing entrepreneurs to make sensible decisions in a competitive market.

In response to Q8, participants were divided between agreeing and disagreeing with market information tools. This variety in responses indicates differences in Omani SME information or experience using these tools. Alternatively, access to correct and sensible market information could significantly increase competitiveness for SMEs in Oman, where the market can be subjective due to local and global economic factors (Al-Mubarak & Busler, 2013).

Regarding the success of government support in helping SMEs overcome the challenges, most participants firmly believed in such an attempt. 35% of participants were primarily worried about the proposed solutions to the decision-making challenges. This result comes as continuous support from the government towards SMEs in many areas, including decision-making, will affect business outcomes. In Oman, the SME development authority, with the government's support, provides entrepreneurs with the financial backing to start up their businesses, workshops, and seminars to help business owners set up SMART and market access facilitation (Al-Sadi et al., 2017). The responses show that these initiatives can improve SMEs' decision-making, competitiveness, and sustainability.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The research found meaningful insights regarding the decision-making processes of SMEs in Oman and how they relate to various contextual dynamics. It is also expected that the various factors that affect decision-making, such as market dynamics, will be exposed through quantitative analysis. Moreover, the researcher found a predominant reliance of SMEs within the country on systematic decision-making processes based on the available opportunities that the country provides to smaller businesses. However, engagement with some form of intuitive decision-making processes is also notable since not all parts of the country have access to formal decision-making structures. The study results identified the decision-making challenges and consequences of such challenges.

The study aims to provide essential insights into the decision-making processes among SMEs in Oman. Based on the results, it is apparent that SMEs in Oman operate within a complex environment characterized by diverse challenges. Moreover, there is a need to have personalized interventions that address the challenges, especially since SMEs do not believe in the role of technology in addressing their challenges. However, The proposed hypothesis was not achieved since systematic decision-making was absent, as evidenced by insufficient technological integration. According to the theory of bounded rationality (Drew, 2023), decision-makers are forced to work under cognitive capacities, which will cause them to make decisions based on a level of satisfaction rather than optimization. According to this theoretical viewpoint, SMEs in Oman cannot completely incorporate technology into their decision-making processes because they believe it is beyond their existing capacity, either from the resources side or from cognitive capabilities. Moreover, more details must be given regarding specific procedures entrepreneurs should consider before starting their SMEs (Anderson et al., 2022).

There may be a weakness in the SME sector's methodical approach to decision-making if there are no clear, implementable standards for incorporating technology into decision-making.

## Recommendations

The study highlights the importance of decision-making processes in SMEs and their impact on economic growth and development in Oman. The findings suggest that decision-making challenges are prevalent among Omani SMEs, affecting their financial performance and overall effectiveness. Potential solutions include providing decision-making training, enhancing access to market information tools, and leveraging government support initiatives.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my academic advisor, Dr. Mohamed Elgeddawy, and extend my gratitude to the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS).

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